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**INTO HIS LIKENESS**  
**Gospel Glimpses of the Life of Jesus**  
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A Holy Life  
Praying in the Holy Ghost  
Etc.

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**CONTENTS**

- 01 -- Prepare Ye The Way
- 02 -- The Call To Repentance
- 03 -- With Jesus At The River
- 04 -- He Shall Baptize You With The Holy Ghost
- 05 -- With Jesus In The Wilderness
- 06 -- With Jesus At The Seaside
- 07 -- With Jesus In The Church
- 08 -- With Jesus In The Home
- 09 -- With Jesus On The Street
- 10 -- With Jesus In Prayer
- 11 -- Leper, Paralytic, And Publican
- 12 -- Power, The Proof Of Pardon

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## 01 -- PREPARE YE THE WAY

"The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God . . . The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord." -- Mark 1:1-3

In the synoptic Gospels we have given to us a threefold picture of our Lord Jesus Christ. Matthew brings Him before us as the Son of David; Luke speaks to us of the Son of Man; while Mark writes "the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." We may, therefore, read this story as a page in the history of the race, as a page in the history of revelation, or as a page in the history of redemption. Luke will tell us how the ideal Man, in whom God's thought about man was fully expressed, lived and worked. Matthew will tell how the Messiah, the anointed of God, fulfilled the predictions of prophecy, and completed God's revelation of Himself. Mark will tell us that for us men and our salvation, the Son of God was made flesh, and went about doing good, and healing those who were oppressed of the devil.

The story unfolded in the Gospel is good news. It tells of God's coming to bless His people. But if God is to bless us, we must be ready to receive His blessing. The Gospel is light, but to receive it the eye must be opened; the Gospel is news, but to hear it the ear must be unstopped; the Gospel is seed, but to receive it the soil must be prepared.

Therefore we can understand how the beginning of the Gospel is a voice crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight."

At the outset of our studies we have to speak of the "way of the Lord." What is this way? It is the way in which the Lord walks; and very specially the path along which He comes to bless His people. It is not the way by which we go to God that is here meant; it is the way by which God comes to us. The way to God we know. It was laid down by God Himself, without any help from us; and so great was God's love to us, that He did not turn away from completing this way, though it had to go through the broken heart of His own Son. All of us who are believers have trodden this path, and by it have been led into the sunshine of God's favor. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom, also, we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:1-2).

And now God is coming to us. Our path to Him He prepared; His path to us He asks us to prepare. The King is coming, and preparation must be made for the royal progress.

How is this to be done? Isaiah tells us in the passage from which Mark quotes, "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain" (Isa. 11:4). If God is to come into our lives in fullness of blessing, then out of these lives we must put everything which is a stumblingblock in His way.

But if we are to remove stumbling blocks, we must first discover them. So the call to preparation becomes a call to self-examination.

The Divine principle of work is the vital principle. God works from within, outward. When God wishes to bless His people, He has first to get into the hearts of His people. It is when He is enthroned there, when He dwells there, that the life of blessing is fully known. If we, therefore, would prepare the way of the Lord, we must prepare our hearts; if we would discover stumbling blocks, we must begin our search here.

To aid us in our search, we shall take the description of the heart which is given by the Lord Jesus in the seventh chapter of this Gospel. Our Lord is there describing not the heart of the atrociously bad, of men who have utterly abandoned all goodness, He is there describing the human heart, your heart and mine, as it is apart from the power of God. Let us read over our Lord's description, slowly and solemnly, asking ourselves if in our hearts such stumbling blocks are found.

"From within, out of the heart of man," says our Lord, "proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts." We do not need to dwell on these. We all recognize that into hearts where such horrible things are cherished the Lord cannot come. But go on.

"Covetousness." You start now, and almost wish you had not begun this work of examination. Covetousness! Is not this the giant stumbling block, the mighty barrier that is keeping God out of the lives of many? Covetousness! Do you know what it means? The Greek term is derived from two words, the one meaning "more," and the other "to have." The desire to have more- that is Covetousness. It is this which makes the man with \$100 wish to have \$1,000, and the man with \$1,000 wish to have \$10,000. It is the spirit that is never satisfied. It is the parent of greed, selfishness, and all the overreaching, oppression and cruelty for which selfish greed is responsible. It is a thing which God abhors, and on which His curse rests. Yet this evil thing is in our hearts. As God's light falls on us, it reveals it. We shrink and wince as we see it, but we begin to understand why for us the beginning of the Gospel should be "Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

But we must go on. "Covetousness, wickedness, deceit." Here we are pulled up sharply again. What a knowledge of the human heart our Lord had! He knew what was in man. He knew that the heart is deceitful above all things. The word "deceit" refers to all the crooked things in life, to all that is untruthful, whether in word or deed. It includes not only all falsehood in the more flagrant form, but all exaggerations, all that we have ever done or said that was intended to give the impression that we are what we are not, and did what we did not.

How terribly common deceit is! You find it in trade as the handmaid of covetousness, and its prevalence can be gauged from the fact that the man who would believe an advertisement or a prospectus to be literally true would be reckoned a simpleton and a fool. You find it in society, in the lady who claims intimacy with people of high rank whose names she has only seen in the Peerage. You find it in the Church, in the endeavor that is often made to show that work which is going backward is really progressing favorably. Such things are in our lives, and if we would have God with us, we must cast them out.

Shall we go on, or have you had enough? The work is painful, but is the necessary condition of blessing. "Deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride." Here we must stop again, for this is a gigantic stumblingblock. There are few things more hateful to God than pride.

How shall we recognize it? In an overweening estimate of ourselves, accompanied with the thought regarding others that they are utterly beneath us; in the readiness to take offence when we seem to be slighted, and in the hate and malice that follows in the path of pride. Pride is simply fatal to growth in grace. It shuts out God, and excludes blessing.

Here then are three stumbling blocks -- covetousness, deceit, pride (and we have touched only on three out of thirteen sins our Lord mentions) -- which lie in the way of the Lord. What are we to do?

1. There must be confession of these sins. We must, at all hazards, be real and true about our spiritual condition.

2. Then there must be definite and determined renunciation of sin. We must not only be real, but repentant. Contrition must accompany confession.

3. Then, as we find we cannot remove these stumbling blocks ourselves, we must come to the King Himself, humbly asking Him by His power to remove them. And ere we are aware, we shall find the stones rolled away, and the Master entering our hearts to dwell in them, and fill our whole lives with light and love.

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## 02 -- THE CALL TO REPENTANCE

"John . . . preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."

"Jesus came saying . . . Repent ye, and believe the Gospel." -- Mark 1:4 and 15.

God's first call to the soul whom He desires to bless is a call to self-examination. The beginning of the Gospel is "Prepare ye the way of the Lord," and that preparation is begun by conscientious and unshrinking self-scrutiny. This is painful work, but necessary, for the foundation of all sound, strong religious experience lies in a deep sense of sin. He, who awakens this within us, though we may hate him for his work, lays us under a deep debt of gratitude. He prepares the way of the Promised One. To day, as long ago, Christ comes not to call the righteous, but sinners.

God's second call to the soul is the call to repentance. Two forms of this call may be distinguished.

1. There is the outer or legal call. This was characteristic of the Old Testament generally, and of the Baptist specially. It concerns itself with actions. It strikes at the life as it manifests itself in evil. Its cry is, "Amend your ways and your doings." I call it legal because it follows so closely the form of the law. It hears profanity and bids us cease from it, saying, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." It sees dishonesty and cries, "Thou shalt not steal." Such, in the main, was the repentance which John preached. The extracts from his preaching which Luke gives us show how faithful and practical he was. He cried, "The kingdom of God is coming; change your lives, lest when it comes you be found unworthy of membership in it."

2. There is the inner or evangelical call. This is characteristic of the New Testament, and was uttered first in its fullness when our Lord, taking up the Baptist's work, proclaimed, "The kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the Gospel." It concerns itself with the inner thoughts and feelings. It strikes at the life ere it manifests itself in action. It keeps close to the etymology of the Greek word. It cries not "Change your actions," but "Change your minds." It does not say, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain"; it says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." It does not say, "Thou shalt not kill"; it says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Its demand is not so much "Do new deeds," as "Act from new principles." I call it evangelical, because it springs out of that doctrine which is the foundation of all evangelical religion: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

It is with this inner Gospel call to repentance that we have to do.

This call comes to the unconverted, What God demands of men, in order to salvation, is "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." But repentance means, as we have seen, a change of mind.

When a man is bidden to repent, he is called to change his mind about God. How false and unworthy are man's natural thoughts of God! Some think of Him as practically non-existent, caring nothing how men live, unable or else unwilling to interfere in our lives. They think of Him with utter indifference. Some think of Him as cruel and revengeful; as a tyrant, harsh and exacting, delighting to lay down laws which they cannot obey, and to demand service which they cannot render. They think of Him with fear. And when they think of their sin, and of God as the Judge who is to punish sin, fear turns into dislike, and dislike into hate, until their hearts would leap for joy were it proved to them that God was a delusion and eternity a dream.

Now, if men are to be saved, they must change their minds about God. They must come to see in God no mere Power, indifferent, cruel or revengeful; but a Father, looking down in pity and love, until they cry, "I will arise and go to my Father."

But the call to repentance is a call to change our minds about righteousness.

Men know that righteousness is required to commend them to God. But they have their own ideas about righteousness. There are certain moral maxims to which men conform. Their conduct is fashioned by the society in which they live. When they conform to its requirements, they lead what are called "blameless lives." They count themselves, and are counted by others, righteous. And they think this is all the righteousness God can require of them. But such a state of mind is fatal to salvation. It is the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, with which none can enter heaven. If a man would be saved, he must repent; he must utterly change his mind about his position. He must be brought to see himself a sinner, and his own righteousness "filthy rags," that he may cast himself utterly on the mercy of God in Christ.

But this call to repentance comes also to the converted. The steps that lead a sinner to life are the steps that lead a believer to life more abundant.

To many of us who are Christians, God's call comes to change our minds about sin.

We all need a deepening and an intensifying of our sense of sin. We all need to feel the guilt and the shame of our present imperfection. In the minds of some people there is a sort of smug satisfaction as they think of their sin. They are pardoned, they are escaped, sin cannot now land them in eternal darkness, and that is their main concern. They hate sin only because of its consequences; because it endangers their happiness, not because it grieves God and dishonors Him. Or if this is not their thought, they limit their notion of sin. They make it to include only deliberate transgression. They call only great offenses sin. Of the guilt of omissions they have no adequate conception.

But connected with our thought about sin is our thought about self. From such ideas of sin as I have referred to springs a subtle self-satisfaction of which we are all more or less guilty, but of which we may be quite unconscious. We are glad we are Christians, glad to know how different our lives are from what they were, and tempted to think all is well with us.

But while we are self-satisfied, God can make nothing of us, and He usually has to make us utterly miserable ere He leads us to full blessing. He bids us change our mind about sin, about its evil, about its extent. He bids us change our mind about our attainments, until we are utterly ashamed of ourselves, and cry, "God be merciful to us sinners."

But when we are broken down in this way, there comes a call to change our minds about the Saviour from sin. We who are Christians, as well as the unconverted, have cause to repent of our thoughts of God. It is natural for man to limit God; he measures God's power by his own. The awakened sinner thinks it incredible that God should forgive him, that pardon should come to him free. It seems too good to be true. The awakened Christian thinks it incredible that God should deliver him from the dominion of his sin, that peace and power should come to him free. It also seems too good to be true. So the call comes, "Repent; change your mind about what you may expect the Saviour to do for you. Cease to limit Him, and believe the Gospel, which tells that He is able to save to the uttermost, all who come unto Him, and able also to supply all our need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

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### 03 -- WITH JESUS AT THE RIVER

"It came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him." -- Luke 3:21-22

In studying questions regarding the spiritual life, it is well to remember that in the experience of the Lord Jesus as man we have the norm of spiritual experience. In life, as well as in work, He left us an example that we should follow in His steps. In what He did, we find the rule as to what we should do. In what He was, we find the rule as to what we should be. This is strikingly true in regard to the relation of our Lord Jesus Christ to the Holy Spirit. A study of what the baptism of the Holy Ghost meant for Him will be our best preparation for learning what the baptism of the Holy Ghost means for us.

From the Gospels we learn that ere His baptism

1. Our Lord was born of the Spirit. The formation of the human nature of the Lord Jesus was in a unique sense the work of the Holy Ghost. The word to Mary was, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: wherefore also that which is to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God" (Luke 1:35, R. V.).

Natural birth and spiritual birth in the case of our Lord were coincident. Though born "from above," He was never born "again." Though born in the flesh, He was never of the flesh. He was from the beginning "the second Man, the Lord from Heaven." But we notice that in His case spiritual birth and the baptism of the Holy Ghost did not coincide. The one came long subsequent to the other.

2. Our Lord lived in the Spirit. His whole life was well pleasing to God, and was kept thus well pleasing to God by the power of the Holy Ghost. The secret of the sinlessness of Jesus seems to be in this, that He was sanctified and kept continually by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwelt in Him, ungrieved, unhindered, ever honored, ever obeyed, and through the power of the Holy Spirit He repelled all temptation. But while this went on all through the thirty years, not until that memorable day at the Jordan was our Lord baptized with the Spirit.

3. The baptism of our Lord Jesus with the Holy Ghost took place when He was entering on His public work for God, and by this He was endued with the extraordinary powers and gifts which were necessary for the discharge of His work on earth.

From the fact that the baptism occurred at this stage, it has been argued that it had reference not to life, but to work, and it has been inferred that if this was the case with the Lord Jesus, it must also be the case with us. Hence, by very many, the baptism of the Holy Ghost is regarded as being an anointing for service and that alone. They almost limit the ideas connected with the baptism of the Holy Ghost to ideas connected with work.

And it cannot be denied that there is a good deal in Scripture to support this way of thinking. The baptism of Jesus was at the outset of His public work; the baptism of the apostles was at the beginning of their worldwide ministry. Again and again the gift of the Spirit is spoken of in connection with service. But to limit the thought to service is to deal inadequately with the subject. We cannot separate life and work in this way, least of all in the case of the Lord Jesus. Our work must be the expression of our life. Work which is in the power of the Spirit is work which is the outcome of a life which has been so filled that it overflows in blessing to others.

No doubt there are unquestionable instances of men being wonderfully owned of God, who were not themselves holy; men on whom the Spirit seemed to rest, but in whom He did not seem to dwell. But such cases are instinctively felt by the Christian consciousness to be anomalous. God is sovereign, and may use such men, but their case is not one from which we can argue. Certainly no one has any right to expect to be used, by God, whose life is not right with God. Only when the life is full may we look for it to overflow. While, therefore, the baptism of the Holy Ghost is often

spoken of in connection with service, we have no right to separate the thought of life from the thought of work. The two go together, and in the order of thought life comes first.

This being so, I think we shall best understand what the baptism of the Holy Ghost meant in the case of Jesus, if we look on it as the outpouring of the Spirit on Him to give Him a deeper, fuller, richer spiritual life than even He had ever known. This event, I believe, marks a distinct stage in the personal spiritual history of our Lord.

Let no one be surprised at this language. Our Lord Jesus Christ was a perfect Man; therefore He had a spiritual history. In his case there was no cleansing, but there was growth. "Jesus increased in wisdom . . . and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2: 52). He was always well pleasing to the Father; but I cannot read my New Testament without feeling that after this wonderful gift of the Spirit, His knowledge of the Father, His love to the Father, His sympathy with the Father's purpose, His trust in the Father, His delight in the Father's will were deeper and stronger than ever. There was, of course, no change in His character, but there was growth. And it was this that fitted Him for His work. It was in virtue of what He became through His anointing at His baptism that He was able to do what He did.

Were there space, this might be worked out in detail.

What our Lord Jesus was, and what He did while on earth, He owed to the Holy Spirit resting on Him and dwelling in Him without measure. It was by the Holy Spirit that our Lord's miracles were wrought. It was by the Holy Spirit that He was guided, directed, comforted, supported in the whole course of His ministry, temptations, obedience and sufferings.

It only remains to notice two deeply significant things regarding the baptism of Jesus:

1 The time when Jesus was baptized with the Holy Ghost was a time of consecration. It was after He had been baptized of John. But think of what that baptism of John meant. It was, as Mark tells us, the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. But repentance Jesus needed not; remission of sins He needed not. Therefore, when He presented Himself for baptism, John shrank back, saying, "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" (Matt. 3:14, 15). It was only the word of Jesus, "Suffer it now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness," that emboldened the Baptist to perform the rite.

But what did this submission to baptism mean on the part of Jesus? It meant the entire consecration of Himself to be the Sin-Bearer. In this act He gave Himself up without reserve to accomplish the Father's will. Here He deliberately took up the cross. The time was a time of consecration.

2. The time when Jesus was baptized with the Holy Ghost was a time of prayer. Luke expressly mentions that it was when Jesus was praying that the heavens were opened (Luke 3:21).

But what is the time of prayer? It is the time of felt need, of conscious helplessness in face of our work. It is the time of desire, when the cry goes out from the heart in passionate longing for the supply of our need. It is the time of trust, when we roll the burden of our need upon our

Heavenly Father, and confidently look up to Him to deal with it. In a time like that our Lord was baptized with the Spirit.

Is not the whole story full of teaching and encouragement? If He needed the Holy Spirit, how much more do we! If He received Him, so also in His infinite mercy may we.

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#### 04 -- "HE SHALL BAPTIZE YOU WITH THE HOLY GHOST" -- MARK 1:8

The principle laid down in the last chapter for our guidance in studying spiritual experience; that the life of our Lord Jesus is the norm or standard of what our life is to be, I regard as a most important one. It shows us how closely our blessings are connected with Him. All our spiritual blessings are "in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). This is especially true of the crowning blessing of the Holy Spirit. This we receive, if we ever receive it, from the hand of the risen and ascended Lord. It is He who baptizes His people with the Spirit. This blessing must not be sought apart from Him, or thought of as something which is to carry us past Him. >From the Lord Jesus the Holy Spirit in His fullness comes; and to glorify the Lord Jesus is His chief work.

With this in our mind, let us proceed to inquire what the Baptism of the Holy Ghost means for the Lord's people. On a subject of such depth and difficulty it is inevitable that there should be difference of opinion. I merely wish to state the view to which I have been led after long and prayerful study of the matter.

It may be well here to indicate the sense in which I use the word "baptism." I think there is a distinction between the baptism of the Holy Ghost and the fullness of the Holy Ghost. As will appear afterward, I believe the fullness of the Holy Spirit is brought about by a special in-coming of the blessed Spirit to our souls; and to His first in-coming in this manner I apply the term "baptism." In my opinion, the baptism introduces the fullness. But while we may be filled and filled again, we are not re-baptized.

A series of propositions may now be made regarding this crowning blessing of Christian experience.

1. There is blessing of spiritual experience distinct from other blessings which may be spoken of as "The Fullness of the Holy Ghost."

The proof of this from the Word of God is to my mind clear and full. In Luke 24:49, we read, "Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." This promise is repeated in Acts 1:5, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." The fulfillment of the promise is recorded in Acts 2:1-4, where we are told that as the apostles were met together "there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." What was experienced by the apostles is promised to all believers in Acts 2:38, when Peter says, "Repent and be baptized every one of you unto the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are

afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto Him." The experience of Paul (Acts 9), of Cornelius (Acts 10), of the Samaritan and the Ephesian disciples (Acts 8 and 9), teach the same thing. The command addressed to believers in Ephesians 5:18, "Be filled with the Spirit," points in the same direction. The Word of God clearly indicates that there is a blessing of the fullness of the Spirit.

## 2. This blessing is distinct from regeneration.

This is proved by the fact that in the Bible we have instances recorded, in which the one blessing was received long after the other. In the case of our Lord, the baptism of the Holy Ghost was long after His birth. But if any one should say that this was before Pentecost, and cannot be used as a guide, then we may point to the cases in the Book of Acts.

The most instructive for our purpose are those of the Samaritan and the Ephesian disciples. In Acts 8:14, we read, "When the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost; for as yet He was fallen on none of them, only they had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." Here we have a band of baptized believers, who were regenerate, and who therefore had the Spirit of God, for "if any one have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His ; yet they had to receive the Spirit. In one sense they had the Spirit; in another they had not.

Again, in Acts 19:1 we read that Paul, having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, " Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" or "did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" The point of this passage lies in the apostle's question. It is inconceivable that he would have put such a question if, in his opinion, regeneration and the gift of the Holy Ghost were one and the same thing, or even necessarily accompanied one another.

The other cases in the Book of Acts showed the same thing. Only those who are born of the Spirit are baptized with the Spirit. But the spiritual birth and the spiritual baptism are not coincident. Usually an interval separates them; but as though to prevent us dogmatizing about the interval, one case is recorded in which the moment of receiving life seems to have been the moment of receiving the fullness of the Holy Ghost (Acts 10:44).

## 3. This blessing may also be distinguished from the ordinary presence of the Spirit in the believer's life.

All believers have the Spirit. As apart from the Spirit there is no life, so apart from the presence, the continued presence of the Spirit, the quickened life would die. So even of very unsanctified believers it may be said, "Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16). It is due to the indwelling of the Spirit that we have any knowledge or love at all. It is due to Him that we are able in any measure to walk well pleasing to God.

But while all believers have the Spirit, all are not full of the Spirit. There are many who are like the disciples before Pentecost. They need to be personally baptized with the Spirit, that in His fullness they may live and work.

4. This blessing becomes ours through a special incoming of the Holy Spirit into our souls.

When He so comes, we are said to "receive the Holy Ghost." It is to this incoming that I apply the term baptism. I believe the actual incoming of the Spirit in this sense may be sudden is usually sudden though the consciousness of it may dawn only gradually on the soul.

If I interpret the Word of God aright, then this baptism of the Holy Ghost constitutes a crisis in the believer's life which is comparable to conversion itself. It is not a second conversion; there is no such thing. It is not a passing from death to life. But I believe it is a passing from life to fuller life. I would almost speak of it as a personal Pentecost. It marks in the individual case a point like what Pentecost was to the disciples. There is an historical Bethlehem where the word was made flesh, but there is a personal Bethlehem when Christ is formed in our hearts. So I think there is the historical Pentecost when the Spirit was poured out on the Church, but there is also the personal Pentecost when He is poured out on the individual believer.

5. This gift of the Holy Ghost we receive from the hand of the risen and glorified Lord.

He has received this from the Father, and bestows Him on His people. He holds this blessed gift for all His people, and is willing to bestow Him on all His people. But I cannot think that all receive Him as a matter of course. I do not think that as believers all are baptized with the Spirit. In John 7:9 we read, "The Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." This, which was true of the Church, is, I believe, true of the individual. Until the Lord Jesus is glorified, until He is enthroned King in our hearts this gift is not given to us. The coming of the Holy Ghost is intimately connected with the coronation of the Lord Jesus.

6. The Baptism of the Holy Ghost is followed by marked results.

Among them we may note the following:

(a) An amazing enlargement of our knowledge. The Holy Spirit, when He comes, glorifies Jesus so to us, and so wonderfully reveals Him to our souls, that we seem to have found a new Christ. Knowledge of Divine things unattainable by years of study may be ours in a short space of time when taught by the Spirit.

(b) A manifest deepening of our love. The Holy Spirit deals with the heart as well as the head. All coldness disappears as that holy fire burns within us.

(c) An increase in our power to do the will of God. The Spirit, when He comes, performs a cleansing work, giving us deliverance from bonds that bound us. We become strong in the Lord, and are able to do His will.

(d) An increased boldness and power in our witness for God. This, in my view, is but one of the results of the Baptism of the Spirit. But it is a result so important that in the minds of some it is the chief end of the whole matter. Some speak of the fullness of the Spirit for life, and the baptism of the Spirit for service. I have already indicated my dissent from this position. We should seek the fullness of the Spirit, that we may be what God desires us to be; and leave it absolutely with Him to determine the use He will put us to. Then we shall find that if He calls us to witness, our witness will be in power, and many will be turned to the Lord.

7. The conditions on which this gift is received have been indicated when speaking regarding the baptism of our Lord. They are, briefly, consecration and prayer. It is as we bow before God in utter surrender, and wait on God in earnest prayer, that He gives us His Holy Spirit, in whose strength we go forth to be all that God purposes, and to do all that God wills.

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## 05 -- WITH JESUS IN THE WILDERNESS

"And immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness; and He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan." -- Mark 1:12-13

Temptation is probably the most familiar experience of the spiritual life. Call that life a life of temptation, and to your description more Christian people will assent than to any other that you can frame. Call it a life of joy, and many will tell you they do not know it as such; call it a life of peace, and still fewer will claim to possess it; but speak of it as a life of temptation, and to your description you may claim the assent of every regenerate soul.

But seeing the experience of temptation is universal, how blessed it is to learn of our Lord that He was in all points tempted as we are, and to be assured that, as He suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted (Heb. 2:18). We may joyfully, therefore, go with the Lord Jesus into the wilderness to see how, in conflict with the great adversary, He became the Captain of our salvation, and to learn from Him the lessons He would teach us as the fruit of His struggle.

With Jesus in the wilderness we learn:

### 1. The essential distinction between temptation and sin.

This we learn when we grasp firmly the reality of the temptation in the case of our Lord. Jesus Christ was really tempted. No theological ideas about the Person of Christ must be allowed to shake our faith in this. It was no sham fight our Lord fought. It was a conflict real and painful. He suffered being tempted. To say that there was absolutely nothing in our Lord's nature to which the tempter could appeal is to empty the story of meaning. There was, of course, nothing sinful. The nature of our Lord was absolutely sinless. But it is not to what is sinful in us that the most skillful temptations are addressed. "Just as the bait allures, and not the jaws of the trap, so the power of temptation is not its wickedness, not the guilty service, but the proffered recompense; and this appeals to the most upright man equally with the most corrupt." [1]

Now, Jesus was perfect Man. It was as Man, not as God, that He met the foe and triumphed. As a Man He felt the stress of the temptation, but was absolutely unmoved by it. The suggestion of evil fell on Him as a spark falls on the ocean, to be instantly and utterly quenched.

But if Jesus, though sinless, was tempted, then temptation is altogether different from sin. Would that all God's children remembered this! Through ignorance of it, or forgetfulness of it, many earnest souls are brought into darkness. In the multitude of their temptations they see a token of their exceeding sinfulness, and an evidence of the Divine anger against them. To such persons this word must be spoken, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations " (Jas. 1:2). Manifold temptation may almost be regarded as an evidence of manifold holiness. For the sinless One was the most tempted of all.

With Jesus in the wilderness we learn:

2. That the hour of blessing is ever the hour of peril.

The temptation follows the baptism. The approval of Heaven is succeeded by the assault of hell. High places are always dizzy, especially when one has just reached them, and the moment of dizziness gives the adversary his opportunity. In such a moment he overthrew Elijah, sending him sulking into the wilderness to request that he might die (1 Kings 19:3); in such a moment he overthrew Peter, drawing on to him one of the severest rebukes that ever fell from our Lord's lips (Matt. 16:23). The place of privilege is always the place of temptation; the hour of blessing is the hour of trial. Let us remember this, for to be forewarned is to be forearmed.

When, by the reception of the Holy Ghost, we have become better fitted to do work, it becomes the more necessary for the devil to seek to destroy our power. A worldly, inactive, useless Christian, he can afford to leave in peace; a consecrated, Spirit-filled Christian, he must withstand to the utmost. The higher we rise into the light of God, the better target do we present to the shafts of the enemy. "Hall-binks," says a Scottish proverb, "are slippery." After times of ecstasy come times of temptation.

But again with Jesus in the wilderness we learn:

3. That the essence of every temptation is the appeal it makes to us to turn aside from the Will of God.

Various as temptations are, this is common to them all. It is this which makes them temptations. The devil's attack on our Lord was marvelously varied. He employed against Him, as Luke tells us, "every temptation" i.e., every form of temptation. He tempted Him on the side of His physical nature, of His intellectual nature, and of His spiritual nature. He tempted Him as Man, as Son of Man, and as God. The temptations were varied, but the aim was one. What the devil sought was to get the will of Jesus to swerve aside from the will of God. We can see this in each of the temptations.

It was the will of the Father that while on earth the Son should live a life of absolute dependence. He was ever to be able to say, "I can of My own self do nothing." It was the Father's will that the Son, while working out men's salvation, should live a human life, not availing Himself of the resources of His Deity. Now, the temptation to turn stones into bread was a temptation to self-dependence an appeal to Him to act for Himself, as one might, who was the Son of God.

It was the Father's will that the Son, while on earth, should be misunderstood, despised and rejected, and that, unacknowledged and unrecognized, He should carry on His work. The temptation to throw Himself from the pinnacle was an appeal to Him to force 'God and man alike to recognize Him, It was the same temptation as that before which the Church of God has so often fallen, and seldom more terribly than at present the temptation to use sensational methods to attain spiritual ends.

Further, it was the Father's will that the crown should be won by the cross, and the temptation to snatch at the kingdom was a temptation to avoid the cross. If one may reverently say it, this seems to have been the temptation which most distressed our Lord. The vehemence with which He repels it here, and when coming through the Apostle Peter, shows this. His sensitive nature, His holy spirit, shuddered at the thought of the cross and the awful contact with sin which it implied, and from our Lord through all His life there seems to have risen the prayer of Gethsemane "Let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Thine be done."

Now, as it was with our Lord so it will be with us. We shall be tempted to self-reliance, self-pride, self-indulgence, and the essence of the temptation in every case will be its appeal to us to turn aside from the will of God.

But, finally, with Jesus in the wilderness, we may learn:

4. That in Jesus who overcame we may overcome.

We may well rise from a study of the temptation with gladness in our hearts, and praise on our lips. It was a true instinct that led our great poet, Milton, to make his "Paradise Regained a transcript of the story before us. Here in the wilderness evil did its worst and was foiled. He, our Lord, was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. Therefore, He is able to succor them that are tempted. Yes, blessed be God, so to succor that defeat is turned into victory. This is the lesson we learn from our Lord as we watch Him fighting the foe for us. We must be tempted, but we need not fall. In all things we may be more than conquerors. Surely this should hearten us, and encourage us, and make us bright and hopeful. Because Jesus conquered we may conquer. His presence will always turn the scale of battle against our foes. He will help us to victory.

We close this chapter by indicating how it is that Jesus helps us. (a) He helps us as a human friend might help us. We all know how a mother's love and sympathy saves thousands of men from ruin. But even a mother's love is weak compared with the love of Jesus. (b) He helps us, as only God can help us, by the impartation of grace in the hour of our need, which strengthens us just where we are weakest, and makes us able to stand.

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## 06 -- WITH JESUS AT THE SEASIDE

"As He walked by the sea, He saw Simon and Andrew, and said unto them, Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." -- Mark 1:16-17

To be used of God for the salvation of men is one of the noblest and strongest desires of the Christian heart. So characteristic a sign of regeneration is this, that it may be gravely questioned whether he is a Christian at all in whom it is altogether lacking. Salvation is an unselfish thing. When God blessed Abraham, His word to him was, "I will bless thee; and thou shalt be a blessing" (Gen. xii. 2); and every child of Abraham longs to know this blessing in its fullness. The soul that has through Jesus Christ received the call to fellowship longs unceasingly to receive also the call to service. Our object now is to discover the conditions under which that call comes.

In Mark's Gospel the account of the calling of the apostles follows almost immediately the narrative of the Temptation. But from other sources we know that by Mark a period of quiet work in Judea and Galilee, covering in all nearly fourteen months, is entirely omitted. Of this period we have the history in John's Gospel.

There we learn that from the wilderness Jesus returned to the Jordan, where He was recognized by the Baptist, and hailed as the "Lamb of God." Here He attached to Himself Andrew and John, by whom Simon, Philip, and Nathaniel were brought to their future Lord. With these disciples our Lord went to Cana of Galilee, where the first miracle was wrought, and from Cana, through Capernaum, to the Passover at Jerusalem. Here occurred the cleansing of the temple, and the interview with Nicodemus. Then came the visit to Samaria, and the healing of the nobleman's son. Some think there was after this another journey to Jerusalem, where our Lord stayed until He heard of the imprisonment of John. Then, as Mark tells us, realizing that the time was fulfilled, our Lord began His public ministry. He first paid a visit to His old home in Nazareth; but being rejected by the people, He determined to make Capernaum His headquarters. It was on His way to Capernaum to begin His public ministry there that He called these men to His side, never to leave Him again. The call was of the simplest and most direct kind. Nothing can surpass the vividness with which Mark brings it before us.

Now, as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets and followed Him.

"And when He had gone a little further thence, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. And straightway He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after Him" (Mark 1:16-20).

From this incident, and the circumstances in which it took place, we may learn several lessons regarding our work for Christ:

1. Christ's call to service does not come to those who are complete strangers to Him.

Simon, Andrew, James, and John knew Jesus Christ, and had personally accepted Him as their Lord ere they received their call to His service. The lesson for us is most important. Personal knowledge of the Lord is the prerequisite of personal service for the Lord. The reason why this is so is plain. The special work to which Jesus Christ calls is the work of witnessing. But a witness is allowed to speak only of that of which he has personal knowledge. It is quite true that God is sovereign, and may use even the words of unconverted men to bring souls to salvation; but we have no right to expect to be means of blessing to others until we ourselves are living in fullness of blessing. The call to fellowship always precedes the call to service.

2. Christ's call to service does come to all who know Him.

What needs to be emphasized here is the universality of the call. The duty of service is really implied in the knowledge. To know Christ is to receive a call to serve Him. The work Christ has to do is so varied; He needs all sorts of workers. The skill and wisdom of Christ is so great that He can employ to glorious purpose what seems the weakest and most inefficient instrument. God has a purpose to serve with us all. It must be ours to yield ourselves utterly to Him that He may accomplish it. God has made us all as vessels in His house; it is ours to see to it that we are meet for the Master's use.

3. Christ's call to special service comes to us when we are engaged in the faithful discharge of our ordinary work.

This is a lesson written large across the page of Scripture. It was when Moses was feeding his father-in-law's flocks that he was called to be the leader of Israel; it was when Gideon was threshing his wheat in the winepress that he received his commission to destroy the Midianites: it was from the sheep-folds of Bethlehem that David was called to the throne; it was from their boats and their nets that the apostles were called to evangelize the world. How important is the lesson this teaches us! Faithful discharge of the task nearest us, however humble it be, is the best preparation for the greatest work God can call us to. The man who thinks his present work beneath him will never rise above it. In this may be found the reason why some of us have never been called to any notable service for the Master. We have not been faithful in the few things, and therefore the Lord cannot make us ruler over many things.

4. Christ's call demands implicit and immediate obedience, no matter what sacrifice such obedience may involve.

There is something peremptory in the call of Christ. He sees Simon and Andrew, James and John, pursuing their calling with their earthly all, around them. To them He simply says, "Come after Me." He sees Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom, occupying one of the most remunerative posts in Palestine, and to him He says, "Follow Me." He does not explain Himself. He holds out no special promise to obedience, no threat to disobedience. He simply lets the call fall on their ears.

But that call compels a decision on which eternal issues hang, and the decision has to be made speedily. If we are not ready, Christ will not wait. He passes on and calls others, and we are

left forever the poorer. Had Peter and Andrew, James and John not been ready, they might have missed the transcendent honor of being the apostles of Jesus Christ. But they were ready, and though obedience to the call involved the surrender of their earthly all, that surrender was made without hesitation. "Immediately they forsook their nets and followed Him."

I fear that, to some, all this may give pain. They will remember that to them the call came, "Follow Me to Africa, to China, to painful but glorious service "; and they were not ready. So they have been left to serve God here, helping a few dozens, whereas, had they been obedient, they might have saved thousands. I trust that to others it will be a word of warning. The call of God may meet you to day. See that you obey it, though it mean the laying down of your life for His sake.

5. Christ's call is ever a call to engage in the work of saving men.

His word was, "Come after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." To Peter He said, "From henceforth thou shalt catch men alive " alive, indeed, because caught unto life eternal.

How blessed it is to know that whatever be the particular service to which God calls us, it is essentially a call to work for the salvation of men. Our call may be to serve in a worldly household, and by the consistency of our life to commend the Lord Jesus; our call may be to nurse a sick mother, or sister, and by the exhibition of Christian forbearance and patience make the Saviour known to some who can be reached by no other means. Or our call may be in Sunday school, or Bible-class, or mission meeting, directly to preach Christ and Him crucified. But in all cases it is a call to bring men to God.

And blessed be God when He calls us, and we obey, His power is given to us, and we know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord.

"Jesus calls us; o'er the tumult  
Of our life's wild, restless sea,  
Day by day His sweet voice soundeth,  
Saying, ' Christian, follow Me.'

"Jesus calls us; by Thy mercies,  
Saviour, may we hear Thy call,  
Give our hearts to Thy obedience,  
Serve and love Thee best of all."

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07 -- WITH JESUS IN THE CHURCH

"And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the Sabbath day He entered into the synagogue, and taught." -- Mark 1:21-28.

The Jewish synagogue must ever be an object of interest to the Christian mind, for in the synagogue, far more than in the temple, do we find the prototype of the Christian Church. The temple was local, the synagogue universal. The temple had the sacrifices which are past, and the veil which is rent; the synagogue had the Word of God "which liveth and abideth forever." In the idea that originated it, and in the service which characterized it, the synagogue was far more akin to our churches than the temple. Therefore, from the relation of Jesus to the synagogue, we may learn somewhat of His relation to the Church.

1. When Jesus Christ entered the synagogue He entered it as Master.

He was its true Lord, and had a right to demand that in it His will should be done.

No doubt this was not always recognized. When He entered a synagogue the rulers did not always perceive that in leading the service He was in His rightful place. When He taught with authority, daring on His own responsibility to change their law, they were filled first with amazement, and then with indignation.

But what was true of the synagogue is true of the Church. Jesus is Master there. Of every church He is the rightful Lord. A church exists only to carry out the will of Jesus. Obedience is the first law of its life, and this obedience extends to matters of detail; for it is the duty of each church not only to do Christ's work, but to do it in Christ's way. This is true, but it is not generally recognized. There are churches in our land where the assertion that the will of Jesus should regulate every detail of church management would be received with scorn. Those in charge prefer to "run" their churches, as they say, "on business principles." They want to make them pay. They want to have them known as flourishing and successful. If this can be attained by doing the will of Jesus, well, if not, other means must be taken. Thus the right of the Lord to rule in His own house is practically denied.

No wonder if in such cases there is little power or blessing. Until Jesus is recognized as Lord in our churches, and the administration of them committed to Him, His full blessing cannot rest on them.

2. When Jesus entered the synagogue He entered it as Teacher.

For the work of teaching He was anointed with the Spirit of God, and this work He delighted to perform in the synagogues. So long as they were open to Him, He took advantage of them. Again and again in the Gospels we read the words, "He entered into the synagogue, and taught."

Among the many lessons which He taught men we may notice two:

(1) He taught men the spirituality of the worship of God. He told them that the day of ritualism was past and gone. He revealed to them that the form of worship is little, the spirit much. He warned them that places and postures were of absolutely no importance, and when they drew attention to themselves were positively mischievous. For the hour had come when "the true worshippers were to worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

(2) He taught men anew the authority of the Word of God. He found a set of religious teachers claiming to believe in the Word of God, and yet making it void by means of their traditions; while they worshipped the letter of the Bible they adopted methods of interpretation which destroyed the force of its plainest commands. So Jesus had to bring men back from human glosses and comments to the Word itself, and teach them anew in that Word to hear the voice of God.

But as with the synagogue so with the Church. If our churches are to fulfill their true purpose, Jesus must enter them as a teacher. We must, as we gather in them, hear His voice.

I cannot help thinking that if He enters our churches to day He will have the same lessons to teach us as of old. In a day when ritualism is taking hold of men's minds, and when worship takes such forms as to make men say, "What a beautiful service!" rather than "What a wonderful Saviour!" we need to hear the Master say, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

And in days when many in our Christian churches, while professing to receive the Bible as the Word of God, treat it so as to make void its authority, and thus weaken its hold on men, we have need to hear the voice of Jesus saying to us, "The Scripture cannot be broken." "The Word of the Lord endureth forever."

(3) When Jesus entered the synagogue He entered it as a Healer.

He came not only to teach, but to save. He found in the synagogue "a man with an unclean spirit." How the man came to be there we cannot tell. Well was it for him that he was in the place of healing when the Healer entered. For Jesus, having discovered him, could not let him go until he was every whit whole.

But as it was then, so it must be now. Jesus must come into our churches as a Healer if they are to vindicate their right to exist. Conversion is the article of a falling or standing church. Evangelization is a church's first duty. To meet for worship is necessary and right. Public worship supplies a need of the spiritual life, and develops graces of the Christian character which nothing else does. But no matter how reverent the worship, no matter how helpful the service, no church is fulfilling the end of its being, unless there is healing work done within its walls. Our churches are, of course, places of worship we have emphasized that when speaking of Christ as Master of the House; our churches are places of instruction we have emphasized that when speaking of Christ as the Teacher in the House; but our churches must also be places of salvation. If in our churches no saving, healing work is done, we had better shut them up.

For assuredly in our churches the need of Jesus as the Healer is as great as ever it was. He never enters our churches without finding many persons needing healing. There are still many devil-possessed men among us. The man who is under the power of lust is devil-possessed; the man who is under the dominion of pride is devil-possessed; the man who is under the dominion of anger is devil-possessed; the man who is under the dominion of the love of money is devil-possessed. All such must be delivered if they would enter the kingdom of God. Yet in all

our churches such men are found. We have sore need of the entrance of Christ as a Healer. But when the Lord Jesus comes as a Healer, the result is the same as it was of old.

(1) His appearance awakens alarm. Whether men believe it or not, devils believe that He is mighty to save. When Jesus comes, the strong man knows that the Stronger than he is present, and cries out in anger and fear, "Let me alone! What have I to do with Thee?"

(2) His Word brings peace. When Jesus comes as a Healer He heals. No case, however desperate, is beyond His skill. He is able to save to the uttermost, and though the evil spirit may cry out and tear us, it must depart.

(3) His power creates astonishment. Salvation is such a wonderful work that we never can get accustomed to it. When the guilt of sin is rolled away, and the power of sin is broken, men are amazed, and glorify God. They speak of His wonderful grace and say, "We have seen strange things today."

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## 08 -- WITH JESUS IN THE HOME

"And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house." -- Mark 1:29-31

Mark tells us that when Jesus went out of the synagogue, He went into the home. How interesting a touch that is, and how suggestive! Had some been writing the story, they would have left Jesus in the synagogue. They would have made Him too dignified to enter the home, and would have confined Him to a properly consecrated building. But Mark tells us that "forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon."

How important it is to emphasize this! Christianity is preeminently a religion for the home. Much of its most precious teaching is about the home life; it regards the family as a Divine institution, and the family relations as having Divine sanctions. To Christianity the home is the best place for the formation of Christian character, and the sphere in which man and woman alike can best glorify God. The most glorious doctrines of the Christian faith find their best application in regulating the details of the home life. This should be specially remembered in a day when a deliberate attack is being made on the very idea of the Christian home.

Of the home before us now, we may note:

1. When Jesus entered the home He found it in shadow.

It was the home of a disciple, yet the shadow was there. "Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever." Discipleship does not carry with it immunity from suffering. Sickness, sorrow, bereavement are oftentimes the lot of the Christian. We may be praying foolishly when we pray to be delivered from them; we pray in the line of God's purpose when we pray to be delivered in them. To escape suffering may mean to miss some of the greatest blessings God has for His children. To

know nothing of life in the shadow is to be incapable of fellowship with the Lord in some of the deepest experiences of His human life. Suffering is one of God's master tools. He rarely employs it on His children, except when especially fine work has to be done. We ought not to pray for suffering, but, did we understand its mystery better, we should rejoice when we felt its touch to know that God was at work on us, tracing more clearly upon our characters the likeness of His own Son.

Suffering is utterly misunderstood if it is viewed only as chastisement. I believe that often, instead of being the punishment of disobedience, it is the reward of obedience. Because we have been faithful in a few things, our God wills to set us over many things; and to fit us for the higher work to which He calls us, He passes us through the furnace of trial.

Suffering, it should be remembered, has a threefold power.

It has an arresting and awakening power. This is the power it exerts when sent as chastisement. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." The stroke arrests us in the way of backsliding, awakens us to the danger of our position, and brings us back to God.

Then suffering has a revealing power. We make discoveries about ourselves in the hour of pain and sorrow which are impossible at other times. And, what is infinitely more precious, we make discoveries of the grace and tenderness of our God unattainable otherwise. The lessons God teaches His children in the school of suffering are of such value, that they more than repay the pain which it costs to learn them. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. iv. 17).

And suffering has a transforming power. This it has in virtue of its revealing power. Nothing changes the soul like the vision of \_ God. The peaceable fruit of patience, meekness, unselfishness, which comes of sanctified sorrow, is the result of beholding the glory of the Lord, from whose face suffering has withdrawn the veil.

If then for the present we be in the shadow, let us even there rejoice. "Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing" (James 1:4).

2. It was the shadow that brought Jesus to the home. Suffering always attracts Jesus Christ. In thousands of cases sorrow has been the handmaid who has opened the door for Jesus to come in. Thus our sufferings oftentimes prove to be our greatest blessings.

(a) They bring us nearer God. They make us search and try our ways, and turn again to our God. They teach us our need of God. They reveal the folly of self-dependence, and the danger of self-guidance. The soul that has suffered learns to obey. "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now I keep Thy word " (Psa. 119: 67).

(b) They bring God nearer to us. God is never nearer His children than when they are suffering. If we have understood what has been said about suffering, we can see why this is so. A sculptor might leave to his assistants the first rough work to be done on a statue, but the finishing touches which make the statue live can come from no hand but his own. God does not afflict

willingly. He is always loath to let suffering touch His children, without seeing to it that they get the greatest possible good out of it.

When suffering is sent to arrest a backslider, Jesus is near to welcome him as he returns; when suffering is sent to exercise its revealing power, Jesus is near to manifest Himself in tenderness and love; when suffering is sent to transform, Jesus stands near to mold the soul, which sorrow has softened, in His own likeness.

Blessed then be the shadow which brings Jesus in its train "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

3. Jesus entered the home to dispel the shadow. It is true that it is the shadow that brings Jesus into many homes. But it is also true that as Jesus enters the shadow departs. He is the Light of the world, and shadows at His bidding flee. Suffering draws us nearer to God, and God nearer to us, but as it accomplishes this blessed work, it ceases, for in His presence is fullness of joy.

Now see how Jesus drove the shadow from this home, and learn how He can drive such shadows from our homes and lives.

(a) He dispelled the shadow by His sympathy. They came and told Him of their fever-stricken friend. He listened to their tale of woe, and went with them. And as they saw Him take up the burden they cast on Him, they became at once bright and hopeful.

(b) He dispelled the shadow by His power. The scene is an interesting one, and the imagination loves to dwell on it. The Saviour entered the room, and moved to the couch on which the sufferer lay. He stood for a moment over her, looking at the storm which raged under His eyes. There was the heaving of the angry billows, the tossing of the waves, the restlessness of the wind-vexed sea. The scene was one of trouble and unrest. Then gently from the Saviour's lips came the words, "Peace, be still." "He rebuked the fever, and it left her." The tossing ceased, she gave a sigh of relief, and fell into a sleep as peaceful as a child's. And those near, seeing their loved one saved, knew that the shadow had left their home.

(c) He dispelled the shadow by His presence. Jesus did not at once depart when He had healed this woman. He remained in the home till the evening. How happy all in it must have been! The gloom in the house was dispelled; the presence of Jesus had banished sickness and sorrow. Andrew and Peter were happy; the woman happy; Jesus happy. Do you not wish you had been among them?

A like happiness may be yours now. If you have no such experience of fellowship with Him the fault must be your own. For He says, "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me" (Rev. 3:20).

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## 09 -- WITH JESUS ON THE STREET

"At even, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased . . . and all the city was gathered together at the door." -- Mark 1:32-34

From the home to which His presence had brought such blessing Jesus passed into the street. After a too brief time of rest He took up again the burden of work. He went into the street because He was so much needed there. The lost were there, and He wished to find them; the sick were there, and He wished to heal them; the dead were there, and He longed to give them life. Alike in the church, in the home, and on the street He had to prove Himself "mighty to save."

He went out in the evening when the Sabbath sun was setting, and darkness was stealing over the land. Amid the gathering gloom the people were waiting for Him. The fame of the morning miracle had spread through the city and into the surrounding villages, and eager multitudes, scarce waiting for the close of the Sabbath, had come seeking the Saviour's aid. From end to end the street was blocked. The rich and the poor, the high and the low, the great and the small were there. From the lowly home and the wealthy mansion they had come, driven by a common need. There was a child leading a blind father, and there a father carrying a sick child. There was a cripple on his crutches, and there a man borne by his friends. Every disease was represented there; fever was there and asthma, convulsions and dropsy, palsy and lameness, deafness, dumbness, and blindness, madness and possession. As Mark tells us, "At even when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were sick, and they that were possessed of devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door." It was, as I said, a diseased crowd waiting for the Healer, a lost crowd waiting for the Saviour, a dead crowd waiting for Him who is the light and life of men.

And to this crowd the Master came. A thrill of excitement passed through the people as they caught sight of Him. On all sides might be heard the cry of the diseased, "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us," and the shriek of the demon-possessed, "Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee, Thou Holy One of God?"

But how did the Saviour meet them? He met them with sympathy. As His gaze fell on that suffering crowd, He was, I believe, the greatest sufferer among them. He was then, as truly as when on the Cross, the Man of Sorrows. He suffered with these sufferers. He made their agonies His. Their cries pierced His heart; their groans pained His soul. "Surely He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows."

He met them with hope. In the midst of that crowd He stood calm, brave, confident, full of hope. He never had any doubt of His power to save them. He knew that all that the worst among them needed for perfect healing was to be brought into contact with Him.

He met them with healing. Few more remarkable nights than this did our Lord spend during His sojourn on earth. When He began His work, what a scene Capernaum presented!

"A Lazar-house it seemed, wherein were laid Numbers of all diseased; all maladies Of ghastly spasm, and racking tortures, qualms Of heart-sick agony, all feverous kinds, Demoniac frenzy, moping melancholy And moon-struck madness."

And when He entered, Capernaum was a new city. By His loving touch and His word of power the Saviour had, for a time, driven weakness, disease, and death from its borders.

Of this healing work we may notice three things. It was individual work. The healing was not thrown broadcast over the crowd. Jesus could have healed the crowd with a word. But He did not do it. One by one the people came to Him; one by one they were healed.

It was personal work. The healing came to each sufferer through personal contact with the Healer. The gift of health was not only brought to them from the Lord, but bestowed on them by the Lord. By this means the souls, as well as the bodies, of these people were reached.

And it was perfect work. Far into the night the Saviour worked, nor did He cease so long as a single person remained unhealed. As Luke tells us, "He laid His hands on every one of them, and healed them " (Luke 4:40).

Blessed be God, what happened then may happen now. There is grave need that it should happen. Between the condition of Capernaum on that Sabbath evening, and the condition of our own land there is a strikingly close parallel. We live in a day of gathering gloom. To many it seems as if the sun of our western civilization were setting in blood and fire. Society, having perfected its weapons of destruction, is now waiting in horror for the signal that is to let loose a hurricane of death on the world. Nations in their mad preparation to destroy one another are rapidly moving toward self-destruction; and within each nation tendencies are manifesting themselves that fill the bravest with fear. The bands of family and social life are being broken. A mad lawlessness that regards neither God nor man is raising its head on all sides, and it seems impossible to check it. Politicians and statesmen are at their wits' end. We seem to be drifting toward anarchy and the void.

But in the gathering gloom men are waiting for the Christ. The fame of His power has reached their ears, and in their despair they come to Him. On our streets the crowd gathers as needy and as clamorous as ever. The criminal is there, and the man of vice; the drunkard and the prostitute; the gambler and the debauchee. The pauper is there and the unemployed, the poor and the aged, the sick and the lonely, the disappointed and the betrayed.

Some as they wait are hostile. The disciples have done but little for them, and they are angry at the Master. They cry, "Canst Thou, O Christ, relieve us? If so, do it quickly, or else disappear." Some are despairing. They cry, "Why do we wait here? The Christ can do nothing for us. His power is long since exhausted, His religion long since dead." Yet still they wait, skeptical of their skepticism, distrustful of their unbelief.

And to this crowd Jesus comes. Out into the streets He goes, as calm and brave, as confident and full of hope as ever. The Lord Jesus has not a shadow of doubt as to His power to deal with the evils of our day. He still proclaims Himself able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him. Would to God that His people had as great confidence in Him as He has in Himself.

He stands in our midst to save, and He tells us that His method of salvation is unchanged.

Salvation is still an individual thing. Men are not saved in masses. One by one men enter this world; one by one they enter the kingdom of God. There is such a thing as social salvation, but it is based on individual salvation. The salvation of the community is reached through the salvation of the individuals composing it.

And salvation is still the result of personal contact with the Lord Jesus. Virtue still streams forth from Him. And He still calls men to Him. The woes of the world would be healed if men would only hear and obey. He would lay His hand on them, and heal them all. Shall we not pray Him to do this for us now?

"Thy touch has still its ancient power;  
No word from Thee can fruitless fall;  
Hear, in this solemn evening hour,  
And in Thy mercy heal us all."

\* \* \* \* \*

## 10 -- WITH JESUS IN PRAYER

"And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." -- Mark 1:35

One of the greatest needs of the world and the Church to day is men who know how to pray. The need is felt and acknowledged, but is not easily supplied. For prayer is a most wonderful thing, and few of us know much about it. When we begin to study prayer, we find it has in it something of the infiniteness of God, and that in this matter the most advanced of us is but a beginner. There are mysteries in prayer that we have never explored; there is a power in prayer that we have never wielded; there are joys and sorrows in prayer that we have never tasted. Though we may have been in Christ for years, we still need to come to Him as the disciples came of old with the request, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 9:2).

In no better way can the Lord Jesus grant this request than by taking us apart with Himself. Here, as elsewhere, He has left us an example; in this as in other things His experience is a guide. What prayer was to Him, prayer should be to us; what prayer did for Him, prayer may do for us. In fellowship with the Lord Jesus we shall learn not only what prayer is, but how we ought to pray.

No one can read the Gospels without marveling at the place filled by prayer in our Lord's Life. It was the atmosphere in which He lived and moved. That He prayed much is evident on the surface of the Gospel narrative, but how much he prayed becomes manifest only as we read between the lines. To Luke we owe most of the notices regarding the prayerfulness of Jesus, and they all give us the impression that the greater part of the prayer-life of our Lord escaped notice, and therefore escaped record. But enough is recorded to show us that our Lord prayed always and everywhere. By day, by night, in sorrow, in joy, amid the praises or the curses of the crowd, Jesus

strengthened and refreshed His soul with prayer. In the home, in the church, on the street, at the grave, on the cross, He poured out His heart to God.

All His greatest experiences were received, and all His greatest works done in connection with prayer. It was by prayer that He cast out the most obstinate demons (Matt. 17:21); it was after prayer that He recalled the dead to life (John 11:41); it was in prayer that He overcame the fiercest assaults of the enemy (Luke 22:41); it was after prayer that He chose those men who were to carry His Gospel through the world (Luke 6:12); it was as He prayed that He was baptized with the Holy Ghost (Luke 3:21); it was as He prayed that He was transfigured till He shone with the glory of God (Luke 9:29). So important was the place occupied by prayer in the life of the Lord Jesus, that it is not too much to say that until we have learned to pray we are incapable of knowing Him, or of having fellowship with Him in His most blessed experiences.

But that Jesus should have prayed so much is to many earnest people a fact both surprising and perplexing. "Was He not God?" they asked. "How, then, could God pray to God? Did not the fullness of the Godhead bodily dwell in Him? How, then, could there be in His nature any need for prayer to supply?"

All such perplexity at the prayerfulness of Jesus, where it exists, will be removed in two ways.

1. By a truer conception of our Lord's humanity. Many in their desire to emphasize the Godhead of the Lord Jesus use language which is fitted to cause doubt as to the reality of His Manhood. They confuse the substances, making the Divine Nature operate on the human nature in such a way as practically destroys our Lord's kinship with us. All such need to be reminded of the words of the Creed, "perfect God, and perfect Man." Our Lord is God as truly as if He were not Man at all, and Man as truly as if He were not God. "In all things it behoved Him to be made like to His brethren" (Heb. 2:17).

As true man, therefore, the source of His life was in God. He was not self-dependent. He had needs which only God could supply, and these needs drove Him to prayer.

As sinless Man, the source of His sinlessness was in God. The secret of the sinlessness of Jesus lay in His unceasing reliance on the power of the Holy Ghost. Perfectly pure as His nature was, He felt the stress of temptation. He felt, we may reverently say, the danger of temptation, and in the hour, and ere the hour of temptation He strengthened Himself by prayer.

Again, perplexity at the prayerfulness of Jesus will be removed:

2. By a truer conception of the nature of prayer.

The general conception of prayer is too narrow. Many Christian people almost limit the idea of prayer to petition. To them the essence of prayer is the asking of God for things agreeable to His will.

But so to think of prayer is utterly to misunderstand it. True prayer does not consist only or even mainly of petition. At its best prayer is the expression of the soul's fullness as much as of its want. It is the outpouring of the heart to God. Prayer, in short, is fellowship. No narrower conception of it will suffice. But if prayer be fellowship, how easy to understand the prayerfulness of Jesus! Nothing is more natural than that His life should have been a life of prayer.

With Jesus in solitude, therefore, we learn what true prayer is, and through learning this learn also the conditions on which alone we can pray aright.

Prayer is fellowship. But fellowship is based on friendship. And friendship between sinful men and the Holy God is possible only on the basis of reconciliation and obedience. For us these are the wings of prayer without which it cannot soar. It is only when we have been reconciled to God through the death of His Son, and as we become His friends through glad obedience to His commands (John xv. 14), that we can pray aright.

Two other things the Lord will teach us as we come apart with Him:

1. He will teach us the value of secret prayer.

Prayer at its best is always secret. It is then most real. When we pray before others, the temptation to unreality is so severe that it is but rarely overcome. This temptation we escape when we are alone.

And it is when prayer is secret that it is deepest. The loneliness of the human heart is strikingly shown by the fact that its deepest things it can share with none but God. It is because of this that the life of the ungodly is necessarily shallow. Human life can only be fully developed in fellowship with God. We must be alone with God in order to enjoy the full blessedness of prayer.

It is this I think which explains the places and the seasons which our Lord chose for prayer. He prayed in the desert, He prayed on the hilltop, He prayed far into the night, He prayed a great while before day. Why? Not because there was any special virtue in these places or times in themselves, but because in such places and at such times He would be more completely alone.

Then Jesus will teach us,

2. The value of sustained prayer. Time is needed for true fellowship. When two intimate friends meet, even though they be alone, their talk is not all at once of that which is deepest in their lives. If the meeting be but for a moment, the conversation will probably be about the health or the weather. It is only when they are long together that they unburden themselves and reveal their inmost souls.

So it is only when prayer is sustained that its deepest joys are tasted, and its deepest glories revealed. Most of us know little of prayer because we give so little time to it. When we begin to pray, I think God begins to lead us along a path of glory in which we may receive new revelations of His character, of His will and purpose. But we fail to receive these because we turn back too soon. Jesus continued all night in prayer getting deeper and deeper into the joy of His

Father's will the longer He prayed. If we only gave ourselves more to prayer, and refused to hurry it, we too would be led into places of blessing to which at present we are strangers.

As we now close this chapter with a deeper sense of the wonderfulness of prayer, and a deeper sense of our ignorance of it, shall we not again come to our Master with the request, "Lord, teach us to pray"?

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## 11 -- LEPER, PARALYTIC, AND PUBLICAN

"There came a leper." -- Mark 1:40

"They came bringing a man." -- Mark 2:3

"As Jesus passed by He saw." -- Mark 2:14

In reading the Gospels it is a wise plan, and one fruitful of instruction, to keep our eyes open not only to the incidents there recorded, but to the relation in which they stand to one another. The comparison between two stories will sometimes teach us quite as much as either of the stories taken alone. Many of the contrasts with which the Gospels furnish us are startling in their significance.

In dealing with the stories now before us we shall touch on three points.

I. We notice the different characters and conditions of the men who are brought into contact with Jesus.

On the one hand, you have the paralytic. Try and picture him. He is a poor man. He is one of the humble classes, so poor and unknown that when he is brought to the place where Jesus is, neither his desperate need, nor his piteous entreaty can induce the crowd to make way for him. He is a helpless man, smitten with palsy, weak, sore, dependent on the help of his friends for reaching Jesus at all. And he is a miserable man, a man who feels his need of healing. He suffers, not only in body, but in soul. He has been a great sinner and knows it, and the cry of his heart as he lies at the feet of the Lord is, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Such is the picture he presents poor, helpless, miserable, yet in God's great mercy brought into presence of the omnipotent Christ.

On the other hand, you have Matthew the publican. He was not poor. Everything points to his having been a man of substance. He presided over one of the greatest tolling places in Palestine, and no doubt a fair share of the money that passed through his hands found its way into his pockets. He was not helpless. He was a strong man, a man whom men hated, but also whom men feared, for he had the power of Rome at his back, and to support him could call in the soldiers who had conquered the world. And he was not miserable. There is no evidence that he was smitten down under conviction of sin. He seems to have been heart-whole. He was dissatisfied, of course. No one can be satisfied who is an object of hate and scorn to his fellow men. But he was proud,

and felt that if men would not associate with him, he could stand alone. He thought little, it may be, about Christ; he felt little his need of Christ; yet he too was brought to His feet.

As it was then, so it is now. Christ still draws to Himself all sorts of men. He will do it through these pages. How diverse are the characters and conditions of those into whose hands these words will fall. Some will read them who are poor and lonely, for whom the burden of life has been too heavy, who have broken down under it, and are filled with a sense of shame at their failure. And some will read them who are young, eager, and inexperienced, who have scarcely yet felt the strain of life, who have scarce felt their need of Christ, and are still blind to what He can do for them. Divers characters, divers conditions, yet both brought into contact with the Lord, who speaks to them and waits till they answer.

## II. We notice the different ways in which men are brought into contact with Jesus.

The Gospel reveals an almost boundless variety of ways by which men and women reached Christ.

(a) Some came moved by their strong desire to get to Him. Of this class the leper is a type. When the multitudes are following Jesus, this man, boldly breaking through all ceremonial regulations, comes and casts himself at the Saviour's feet. It was his sense of need, his desire for healing, that brought him. Thank God, this class is still found among us. The Gospel has many vain hearers, but it has also earnest hearers. There are many conscious of their need of Jesus; there are many yearning for a better and higher life than they have ever known. So at infinite trouble to themselves they seek the presence of Jesus. Are you one of them? Then "be of good cheer," for this place may be the meeting-place between your soul and the Saviour.

(b) Some are brought to Jesus by their friends. Of these, some are brought willingly, some unwillingly. The first class is represented by the paralytic; while, of the second class, we have our best illustration in the demoniac boy (Mark ix. 17). That boy was ill, but so far as we know had no desire to be cured, and knew nothing of, and cared nothing for Jesus. But he was brought into contact with Jesus by the love of his father. You remember how the story runs: "Master, I have brought unto Thee my son." What pain, what sorrow, what love, what hope are wrapped up in that sentence! And that sentence is being repeated in our churches every day. Nothing gladdens the preacher of the Gospel more than to see in his church those who are brought by their friends that they may meet with Jesus. Sometimes a father may be seen with his son beside him. That son has grown up and is passing beyond parental control. He shows signs of being possessed by the devil of unbelief and worldliness. He has almost given up coming to church. But his father brings him, and as the two sit together, from the father's lips come the words, "Master, I have brought unto Thee my son." Sometimes a mother brings a daughter; sometimes a parent is brought by a child. Thank God for the careless ones brought into the presence of Jesus by the loving pressure of friends. If you ever bring any such, believe for them. "Fear not, only believe." To have brought a human soul into contact with Jesus is to have put that soul in the way of eternal blessedness.

(c) To some Christ comes unsought, uninvited, unexpected.

Of these Matthew may be taken as a type. The call of Christ seems to have taken him altogether by surprise. Nothing could have been less expected than that the great Teacher of Nazareth should call, to be one of his followers, a man who belonged to the detested class of publicans. Matthew, when this call came to him, was not thinking of Christ. He was in his usual place, doing his usual work, when Christ suddenly came to him, and looking into his face, with those wonderful eyes that read a man's inmost heart, said, "Follow Me." They were simple words; they were unexpected words. But they were fateful words, and the issues of eternity hung on them. And, like so many words of Christ, they called for instant decision. Matthew, taken by surprise, was called then and there to determine what his life here, and his eternity beyond should be. Thank God he was found ready to make the right decision. He started for a moment, shook himself to see if he were awake, and had heard rightly, looked at the Lord who had called him, and his decision was made. "He arose and followed Jesus." He flung up his lucrative post that he might throw in his lot with the Peasant of Nazareth. But he was not brought to Jesus as the paralytic or the demoniac; he did not come to Jesus as the leper. Jesus went to him.

In like manner does the Lord still deal with men. To some men, all unexpectedly, while listening to a sermon or reading a book, or while engaged in ordinary work the fateful words are spoken, "Follow Me." And when the words are spoken they compel choice, and that choice determines destiny. When the call comes to us, may we have grace to yield to the love of our Saviour and Lord, and to rise up and follow Him.

A word or two may be useful in closing this chapter about:

III. The different ways in which Christ treats those with whom He has been brought into contact.

In one respect all the cases of Christ's dealings with men resemble each other. He always bestows blessing. He always proves faithful to His promise, "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." But in the manner in which He bestows blessing there is great variety. The leper He heals with a touch; the paralytic with a word. The blind man of Bethsaida He heals gradually; Blind Bartimaeus he heals in an instant. And in the commands which He gives to those whom He has healed there is variety also. The deaf man in Decapolis is charged that he tell no man; the healed demoniac is bidden to go home to his friends, and tell them how great things the Lord had done for him. To the paralytic He says, "Take up thy bed and go into thy house." To Matthew He says, "Follow Me."

Surely all this is full of meaning. Christ has different ways of dealing with men. Therefore let us not be astonished if some men's ideas differ from ours, and if their experience does not coincide with ours. Christ may have given them different blessings and different commands from those He has given to us. The great question to ask regarding a man is not what are his views? or what have been his experiences? The great question is, Has he been to Christ? and if so, is he doing Christ's will? Let each of us make sure of this. For if we are believing and obedient, the path we walk in will be ever a path of blessing.

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## 12 -- POWER, THE PROOF OF PARDON

"That ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth, to forgive sins, He saith to the sick of the palsy. Arise, and take up thy bed, and go into thine house." -- Mark 2:10-11

The story of the healing of the paralytic of Capernaum is one of the most striking and instructive in the Gospels. It is a very mine for riches, and sermon after sermon may be preached on it without exhausting its fullness. The point I wish to draw from it now is this, that holiness of life is the only, reliable evidence of forgiveness. That Jesus is able to make us stand perfect and complete in all the Will of God is the proof that He is really able to put away our sins. How the story teaches this will appear as we proceed.

Jesus is in Capernaum in the home of Peter, beneath whose roof he so often found shelter. He has returned from His first missionary tour through Galilee, and the rumor has gone out that the famous preacher and miracle-worker is back again. Instantly the whole city is moved, and a crowd gathers so that there is no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door. Within the house a striking scene is in progress. Four men, carrying a palsied friend, with a daring that ventured everything, and a faith that would not be repulsed, have broken open the roof, and let down the palsied man at the feet of Jesus. "And Jesus seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." But these words only added to the excitement. Immediately the scribes who sat near began to whisper, "This man speaketh blasphemies," and opened an attack on our Lord, which He had there and then to meet.

What His enemies virtually said to our Lord was this, "You claim to forgive this man's sins. That is an easy claim to make, for we have no means of testing it. You say to the man, 'Thy sins are forgiven,' but how are we to know that these words have taken effect? If You are able to forgive sins, You must also be able to heal palsy. Why not try that? Did we see this man healed and walking before us, we would have good ground for believing that his sins have been really forgiven". In short, they flung down a challenge to our Lord.

This challenge He took up at once. He turned to them, reading their inmost hearts, and said: "Your challenge is quite fair. But whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, take up that bed, and walk. But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, look on this."

Then, turning to the paralytic, He said, "Arise, take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house." And immediately the man arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all. Jesus had triumphed. His enemies were put to shame. By bestowing the power to walk, He had proved Himself able to bestow pardon.

We stand to day in the midst of a controversy in many respects similar to the one in Capernaum that day. The most important difference is, that while on that day Jesus was His own apologist, He has now entrusted His defense to us who are Christians. Round those of us who are Christ's the world is gathered, for still nothing interests men more deeply than the Christian religion. In that world there are many as hostile to Jesus as ever the scribes were. And we tell the world that we have been forgiven, and plead with men to believe on the Lord Jesus that they too

may receive forgiveness. We claim that we have heard the Divine voice saying, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," and that that voice has taken effect. But the world smiles when we make that claim. It says, "To make such a claim is easy, for we cannot test whether it is true or not. We do not understand about forgiveness, but we will tell you what we do understand. We understand a clean, straightforward, truthful, pure, loving, unselfish life. We understand holiness." The world says to us Christians, "If you wish us to believe in your Gospel of forgiveness, show the reality of your forgiveness by living a holy life. If your Christ cannot give you power to walk, we suspect He is deceiving you when He claims to forgive."

That is the demand the world makes on the Church to day; that is the challenge the world throws down to those who are Christ's. Can we meet it? Are we meeting it? Can we humbly yet boldly say to the world, "That ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, look on us." Can we rise up before men, freed from the bondage of sin, and go forth so to walk before them as to compel them to acknowledge that Jesus Christ has healed us? Are our lives a challenge that the world cannot meet, a proof of the pardoning, redeeming, saving power of the Lord.

It is much to be feared that in many cases they are not. The lives of many among us do not commend Jesus Christ. Why is this? Is it, as the infidels say, because the claim of Jesus Christ is false? Is it because, although He claims to forgive, He cannot heal? If it is, if the fault of our lives is on the side of Jesus Christ, then I am done with Him. I do not want a Saviour who cannot save. I do not believe in the forgiveness bestowed by a Saviour who cannot also say to me, stricken as I am with the palsy of sin, "Arise, and walk."

But we know well that the fault is not with Jesus Christ. He is able to save to the uttermost. The fault is with ourselves. And the reason why sin has dominion over us, the reason why we are powerless before temptation, the reason why our lives do not compel men to believe in Jesus Christ, is either that we have not yet received pardon at all, or that through unbelief we have not obeyed the word of Jesus.

1. The reason of our want of holiness may be that we have never been to Jesus at all. This is the case with many who little dream it is so. Self-deception in the matter of our relation to Christ is very easy and very common. Many count themselves Christians, to whom at the last Jesus will have to say, "I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." How is it with us? Our lives are not holy. Is it because we are not yet in Christ? Is it because we have been resting on a false hope and nourishing a false experience? "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (2 Cor. 13:5).

2. But if we have come to Christ, and in His great mercy have received forgiveness, and yet continue palsied and unable to do God's will, the reason probably is that through unbelief we have not obeyed the word of Jesus. It is unbelief in the power of Jesus to heal, leading to disobedience of His commands, that is the explanation of our lameness. Jesus Christ has stood over us and said, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," and we have believed it and rejoiced. But when the same Jesus has stood over us, and said, "Rise, and walk," "Be ye holy, as I am holy"; when He has commanded us to do the impossible, we have forgotten that "God's commands are enablings," and we have answered His "Do this" with our "Lord, I cannot do it." We have not believed in His

power, we have not obeyed His word, and so we lie on our couch palsied, unable to walk, unable to work, unable to witness; and meanwhile the world looks on and laughs, and says, "Look at those Christians who claim to be forgiven. They do not seem to be, much better for their forgiveness. The Christ of whom they speak so loudly does not seem to be able to do much for men after all. They say He has forgiven them, but they cannot say He has healed them, for they do not seem to be able to walk straighter than ourselves."

Ah, fellow-Christians, do we ever think of the dishonor done by our lives to our adorable Lord? We are His apologists today. The world judges of what He is by what we are; of what He is in Himself by what He is to us. And the world judges of what He can do for it, by what it sees Him actually doing for us. Could we have expected those scribes of Capernaum to believe in the Divine glory of Jesus, if, after claiming to forgive the man, He had failed to heal him? Can we expect men to believe that Jesus is what we proclaim Him to be, if He prove unable to heal us. Whatever we may pay, power to walk is the proof the world accepts of our having received pardon.

Would you have this power, so to live that your life will be a constant testimony to the Divine glory of Jesus? Do you ask how it is to be got? By faith and by obedience. It is received as forgiveness is received. That is how the paralytic received it. He did not work for it. He did not strive to heal himself. He did not get up, stagger and fall again and again, until after many terrible efforts he found himself able to crawl. He arose immediately and went out before them. Why? Because he believed, and because he obeyed. He heard the voice of Jesus saying, "Rise." He might have answered, "Lord, that I cannot do. I have been brought to Thee because I cannot do it." Had he so answered, he would probably have died a paralytic. But he believed that with the command would come the power to obey. And when his will went into the matter of obeying, found that the power came as the gift of Christ. So it must be with us. What is keeping many of us back is simple unbelief and disobedience. Jesus says to us, "Give up this evil habit." We say, "Lord, I cannot." That is unbelief and disobedience. The trouble is not "I can not, but "I will not." Yet we cry for power. It cannot be given to the disobedient; it cannot be given to him who doubts the Saviour's word. Like the father of the demoniac, we cry, "Lord, if Thou canst do anything, have pity and heal." And Jesus Christ says, "If Thou canst! All things are possible to him that believeth."

Will you not trust and obey now? If you do, the result will be glorious. As in Capernaum of old, when men see you going forth healed, they will be amazed, and will glorify God, saying, "We never: saw it on this fashion."

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#### ENDNOTE

1 Dean of Armagh. Expositor's Bible, p. 14.