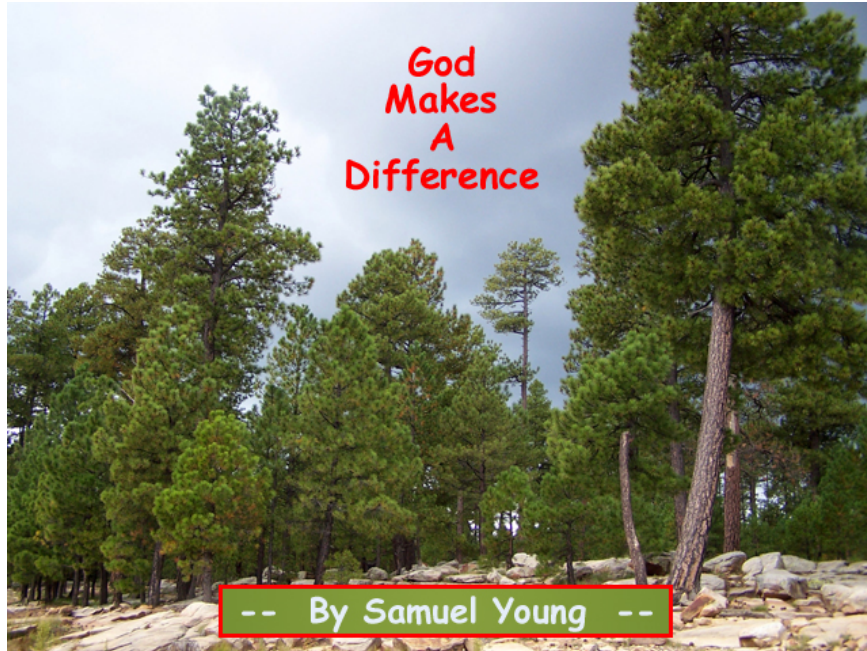


All Rights Reserved By HDM For This Digital Publication
Copyright 1993 -- 2006 Holiness Data Ministry

Duplication of this disc (CD or DVD) by any means is forbidden,
and copies of individual files must be made in accordance with
the restrictions stated in the B4UCopy.txt file on this disc.

GOD MAKES A DIFFERENCE
By Samuel Young



First Printing 1954
Printed In The
United States Of America

* * * * *

CONTENTS

Introduction

01 -- OUR GOD

God Makes A Difference
Behold Your God!
The Power And Wisdom Of God
On The Road To Bethlehem
Returning From Bethlehem
The Borrower Who Gave

The Lamb That Reigns

02 -- OUR NEED

**Despair And Presumption
Pay As You Leave
Appearance For Reality
Occasions Versus Causes For Defeat
Lengthen That Altar!
The Other Prodigal
The Casualty List**

03 -- OUR COMMITMENT

**The Demands Of Love,
The Badge Of Our Discipleship
It Costs Too Much
The Ethical Approach
Risky Business
The Leap Of Faith**

04 -- OUR REDEMPTION

**The Resourcefulness Of Love
How Much More!
Our Common Salvation
Where The "If" Belongs
Heart And Hands Related
Radiant Christians**

05 -- OUR DEVOTION

**Strength For Our Day
Religion For Everyday Life
The Faith That Holds On
The Prayer That Sings.
Petition And Desire
Sound Judgment
Smoking Lights
Flame Throwing**

06 -- OUR TESTING

**Safer Than You Think
Yet Trouble Came
Tiles And Bricks Are Falling Again**

**Standing In The Shadows
Those Haunting Suppositions**

07 -- OUR SERVICE

**Devotion, The Price Of Service
By This Sign We Conquer
The Calculated Risk
A Crucial Prayer
God's Underground Army
Testing Our Maturity**

08 -- OUR PRAYERS

**My Prayer For Today
Our Daily Bread
A Prayer For Guidance
A Sunday Morning Prayer
A Prayer For Service
A Prayer For Our Servicemen
A Prayer For Revival**

* * * * *

INTRODUCTION

At long last General Superintendent Young has put into permanent form some of his writing and thinking and, we may well say, his living. This book, to those who know Dr. Young best, commends itself as an eminently genuine expression of a strong Christian leader.

"God Makes A Difference" -- the title is appropriate. The dominant note of the life of Samuel Young from early manhood has been a sturdy confidence in the truth of God, with a corollary commitment to His will. Everywhere in his book we catch the ring of humble, unwavering -- tested -- assurance of God's unique adequacy.

We are impressed throughout by the clear thinking of a man who faces facts; by the warm sympathy of a man who loves and understands people; by the keen insight and ethical imperative of the experienced, practical Christian. Meaty quotations stimulate thought; the Scriptures are a constant frame of reference.

Much Of the charm and power of the book lies in its concentrated, epigrammatic phrasing; this man has a way with words.

Richest of all are the prayers. These are not made things; they come straight from heart and mind. They grip us and they grip the throne.

This is a book for reading and rereading, the best of a wise, good man's spirit and working philosophy -- a "must" book for us all.

Bertha Munro

* * * * *

01 -- OUR GOD

God Makes a Difference

Without God the holy cities became a wilderness and Jerusalem a desolation. Even the holy and beautiful house of God was reduced to ashes and the pleasant dwellings of men became ruins when God was departed (Isaiah 64). God does make a difference! Actually God does not leave us; we separate ourselves from Him. He does not hide from us; we hide from Him because of our sins.

In the story of the prodigal the "far country" was moral distance from God. The only message, then, that God has for us is the call to return. God cannot and will not conform to our broken image of His likeness. Only the sinfully perverted heart could be capable of such a quip as this: Since God has made man in His own image, man has returned the compliment and pictured God like unto himself.

What makes us try to escape Him? Our iniquities. How those iniquities carry us away even while we repeat the religious forms and shibboleths that we have learned! Then God hides His face and in our anger we bow Him out of our world by our rational conceits. Then the shadows of doubt and fear enshroud us. God is still there, but His silence is awful! Despite the blackness of our despair He follows us through the midnight darkness of our sins. Finally, He runs us down to the end of our own blind alleys until we come to ourselves. Then, seeking Him, we cry, "I perish." Poor in spirit, meek and mournful, we start on the long journey home. Our lips form a prayer and we repeat it tearfully: "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." Now the issues clarify as we discover the true source of all our discontents and defeat. Suddenly, we find ourselves in the Father's arms, for He has not been very far away. He forgives us. Mystery of redemption! He receives us. Inestimable grace! He restores and consoles us, and we hear Him say, "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." Father love!

In His presence mountains flow, nations tremble, and men are restored! He "works for those who wait for Him." He makes a difference in men's lives! But now, O Lord, thou art our father (Isa. 64:8).

* * *

Behold Your God!

God speaks when all the world is silent! He speaks at the new-made grave; He speaks on the battlefield when hell is let loose; He speaks in the rough and tumble of ordinary living. He has something to say when the world about us is dumb with fear and confusion. When the soul in anguish cries out, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" He comes strangely near. When the blackness and darkness of sin's death engulfed the whole human family He lighted a cross on a faraway Galilean hill, and its message comes streaming down through the centuries, undimmed. God loves and cares -- and redeems!

He does not wait for favorable circumstances or for an enlightened generation. He takes us as He finds us. He confronts the wilderness and the solitary place; He faces the desert and the rough and crooked places. Mountains and valleys do not stop Him; He transforms them. The answer and the power are in His own glorious presence. His word is reliable and endures forever.

For all who would follow Him He builds a highway through the desert; He makes the crooked straight and the rough places plain.

What strength there is in His arm! Strong enough to rule undismayed, but tender enough to carry the lambs of the flock. What self-revealing love! It seeks and finds, and saves. Then He gives the redemptive message to those whom He has found. O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! (Isa. 40:9.)

**We've a story to tell to the nations
That shall turn their hearts to the right.**

*** * ***

The Power and Wisdom of God

Though few devout Christians are inclined to doubt the power of God, far too many raise questions about His wisdom, especially concerning the providential circumstances of their own lives. The theology of His omnipotence they accept more readily than the truth of His omniscience. If God can help me and deliver me from this present suffering, loss, or injustice, why does He not do it now? is their secret and anguished cry.

Job had such a struggle in his day. Life came tumbling down, without warning and without precedent. He sought to discern the path or purpose of God's dealings but could not find Him. The steps of the divine providences were too far apart to trace. Then Job fell back on what he was sure of: "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10). Job

seemed to say: "I cannot discern God's direction or location, but He knows where I am and He knows my heart. I am also sure that His ultimate purpose for me is for good."

In our day we have light that was not afforded Job so long ago. We see the power and wisdom of God united in the love of God and demonstrated at Calvary. That message is unmistakably clear. God knows and cares. He has done something about the sin and sorrow of earth, and His love has prevailed.

Our faith is a challenge to the perplexing situations about us, as yet contradictory and unexplained. Nothing in life or death shall separate us from the love of God because that love is made real and concrete through Jesus Christ, our Lord. With the gift of His Son, God assures us that He will freely give us all things.

I will trust Him, because I can afford to wait to learn the path that He takes. My faith sings:

He loves me too well to forsake me
Or give me one trial too much.

* * *

On the Road to Bethlehem

Last night I heard them sing again Handel's Messiah. Today in imagination I have been traveling the Bible roads that lead to Bethlehem.

I journeyed with Mary and Joseph. I watched them approach David's royal city to be taxed and saw the anxiety of Joseph's tender face when he learned there was no room for them in the inn. But love found a way, and soon the little family were housed among cattle and the newborn Child lay in a manger. I discerned something of Mary's struggle concerning this Child of the Holy Spirit. She had queried, "How can these things be?" And when the angel replied, "For with God nothing shall be impossible," she had yielded, saying, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."

Likewise this just man Joseph had had his misgivings but, having accepted the angel's message as from God, he took Mary as his wife. Then all was well, for this Holy Child was to be called Jesus, Son of God.

I traveled fast that night from the Judean hills to keep pace with the eager steps of those shepherds of the horny hands and glistening eyes. They had heard the angel's message and went seeking the "babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." Soon they found Him and presently began to tell all who would listen, and the people who heard them wondered.

Some weeks passed by. Again I saw Mary and Joseph, in a home now, and the crowd had gone away. Three men were traveling toward Bethlehem. For months they had been following the "star of wonder" that would lead them to Palestine. They believed they would find the newborn King of the Jews and were on their way to worship Him. Herod, the king, could tell them nothing, but those skilled in the Scriptures declared that He would be born in Bethlehem. Thus enlightened they journeyed on, and the directing star led them to the very place where the young Child lay. Then these wise men rejoiced greatly and presented their treasured gifts as they worshiped Him.

The next scene is on a dusty road to Bethlehem by night. A stern captain leads a band of soldiers as they swoop down on the quiet city of Bethlehem. They have grim orders to kill every child in Bethlehem of two years or less. By noontime the wailing of those comfortless mothers has not died nor their sobbing ceased. Surely God will repay this dastardly crime. But Mary and Joseph fled the country a few nights before and are safely hidden in Egypt.

I journey again, but this time to Calvary, and see a strong young Man, Him who was once the Babe of Bethlehem, hanging on a cross. They buried Him in a rich man's tomb and sealed the stone that held it. I tarried there, to see Him rise again on the third day and later ascend up on high.

Now I am looking for Him to return again any day, for He has promised: "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3).

* * *

Returning from Bethlehem

All roads lead from Bethlehem. Today I have seen on their way home from Bethlehem those who have seen the Babe.

I saw the shepherds, unspoiled and simple men who listened to the angel of the Lord and took him at his word. According to directions they found Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem, and the Babe lying in a manger. Then followed the shepherds' witness, unaffected, unrehearsed, and spontaneous, as they spread the tidings of this new-found Saviour, Christ the Lord. On their return journey they praised and glorified their God "for all the things that they had heard and seen." Theirs was the gladness of revelation, confirmed in experience by an obedient faith.

I saw the three wise men return from Bethlehem another way. They had inquired of Herod, the king, where the young Prince was to be born and promised to bring him word again on their return trip. At the place of revelation they were warned not to journey via Herod, and so returned home another way. They traveled in peace, for they had found the Infant King, had knelt before Him, and He had

accepted their gifts. These who had followed the "star of light" now listened to the voice of God and the road home was bright with promise.

I watched the tenderhearted, bewildered parents flee from Bethlehem in the nighttime. Joseph, too, had heard the angel of the Lord in a dream, saying, "Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt; and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him." Frightened but determined, they obeyed this new and strange command. What a paradox! The Child of the Highest must flee to a heathen land for safety!

In my imagination I covered that same dusty road soon afterward and watched sullen soldiers pass by on their return from the slaughter of the infants. Their swords were bloody and their hearts troubled. Curses and drink could not quell the voice of conscience, although they had merely carried out Herod's command. The cry of dying babes, like unto their own, and the shrieks of frightened and aroused mothers still rang in their ears. The wicked king would soon be dethroned, but the evil deed was done.

At last the sound of horses' hoofs died away as the cavalry of death disappeared. Again I listen for the heavenly choir that the shepherds had heard:

Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace, good will toward men.

* * *

The Borrower Who Gave

The Son of Man, who gave so much, was himself a Borrower. When He came to earth on that fateful day (or was it night?), His parents had returned to Joseph's native Bethlehem in order to be taxed. But "there was no room for them in the inn," for the home town was filled to overflowing. When the Christ child was born, Mary "wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger." Thus He began His earthly pilgrimage in a borrowed shelter and in an improvised bed. But the lowliness of this setting became the sign of authenticity and identification to humble shepherds.

Throughout His ministry He confessed that His home was always a borrowed one. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

Once He borrowed five loaves and two fish from a lad, but He fed five thousand men with it.

He begged a cup of water from a woman by Jacob's Well, and when her racial and religious prejudice repelled Him, He replied, "If thou knewest the gift of God,

and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." Before the incident closed He had completed a two-day mission to the Samaritans of Sychar, many of whom accepted Him as the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

During the so-called Triumphal Entry, the ass and her colt of the royal procession were borrowed. His word, "The Lord hath need of them," seemed to be sufficient authority to the owner to release them. Then the hosannas rang and the people shouted and sang about the royal Son of David. Meanwhile, metropolitan Jerusalem and the leaders among the Jews despised and rejected Him.

Finally, they condemned Him as an outlaw and hung this Sinless One on a cruel cross, to die. Then kind hands laid Him away in a borrowed tomb, belonging to Joseph of Arimathaea. But He did not need it long, for He rose again on the third day, even as He had promised.

Borrowed manger, borrowed home, borrowed bread, borrowed cup, borrowed beast, and now borrowed tomb! His moral venture had cost Him His all, but He rose victorious, triumphant!

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich (II Cor. 8:9).

* * *

The Lamb That Reigns

A Lamb upon a throne! Strange paradox indeed that a Lamb should reign. The Offering and silent Victim has become Ruler and King.

This was the Lamb that John saw, who would take away the sin of the world. As He hung on Golgotha's brow, resourcefulness and love met in His offering for sin. Majestic condescension! The Word that was God had become flesh and dwelt among us. One of us, Child of Mary, Son of Man! God in our midst, Emmanuel, Son of God! Glorious self-revelation! On that cruel tree God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.

Understanding Saviour! Tempted in all points of His nature, yet without sin! Satan tried Him but found no response in Him, for He kept the Father's will supreme to the very end.

Never man spake like this Man. He put reality back into a decadent religion. He made purity, sincerity, obedience, love, and truth count. These, He insisted, constitute a divine minimum. He valued inward cleanness above outward appearance. Even earthly things like money He used to reveal the true man within.

Two mites given out of love and sacrifice outweigh larger gifts when the heart is not in them.

This is the One they nailed to a cross until He died. But through that cruel deed the light of divine purpose soon shone through, for in that very hour Jesus of Nazareth did "taste death for every man." Now the promise was fulfilled, and the Seed of the woman had bruised the serpent's head.

Then the miracle of miracles took place. On the third day He arose from the tomb and showed himself for many days. Following that, He ascended to the Father. Now He reigns, the Lamb victorious. His throne is built on holiness, love, righteousness, and truth, and it is secure, for these abide. "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." His home is a place of many mansions, and His people are filled with songs. His very presence has dried their tears and banished all sorrow. He is their great Provider and also their Sun. No night dwells where He abides.

Worthy is this Lamb to reign: Jesus, our Saviour! Hallelujah!

*** * * * ***

02 -- OUR NEED

Despair and Presumption

Augustine once observed, "One dying thief was saved so that no one would despair; but only one so that no one would presume."

It was a dark day in that tight little land of Palestine. The sun had hidden her face in mourning, for the moral lights were low in the land where God's light had formerly shined in truth. On crosses erected outside the gates of Jerusalem, two men were paying for their crimes. They had emptied the values out of life, and had lost their way. Society had ruled they were impossible and irredeemable, and must die. They had thought they could get away with it one more time, but things had caught up with them at last.

Between them was a third -- a strange Man of pure countenance, highly intelligent, young, and likewise on a cross. His enemies who knew Him not had put Him there -- the iniquitous, hating mob; the cowardly, corrupt court of the reigning government; the depraved religious hierarchy which had plotted His death.

The Son of Man, this One on the middle cross had called himself; Son of Man, but also Son of God. He was dying sooner than the other two as He prayed: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." That prayer reached to heaven but it also touched one of those malefactors. In a burst of moral light he cried, "This man hath done nothing amiss." Revelation; then confession of his need; then, even in

the hour of death, birth of a faint hope as he prayed to the Sinless One, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

The moments were running out for the strange Prisoner, but He rallied to assure the penitent one, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." The words were faint, but clear. Let no one despair!

On that other cross hung another thief, a cynic and a schemer to the last. He had mocked, "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us." But for him the Gentle One had no message, no hope. Silence was the answer of God's Son to that impenitent heart; and then eternal void. He died as he had lived, defeated. Let no one presume!

*** * ***

Pay as You Leave

Sin is of such nature that it seldom demands, on first indulgence, full payment of the attendant price. Often it asks a small down payment, to be followed by the inevitable, regular installments that are never paid off. Sometimes after a period of light payments, a large demand note appears. But whether gradual or sudden, the breakdown always follows. Then comes the shocking revelation of sin's folly. The gaiety of the prodigal son disappeared with his money. But with the awakening, wisdom asserted itself. Penitent, he arose and went to his father.

Today there are too many who never seem to realize their need. At least they crush any feeling of guilt as ignoble, throw off hint of their own inadequacy as expression of weakness. These are they whose bank balances remain until the end. After they have paid for the drinks there is still enough money left for tips and then another spree. They are too clever to run afoul of the law; they know the right people. Even when their own homes fall apart for lack of integrity, they try again with another partner whose record is equally shoddy.

Even God seems to have nothing to say to them, for they won't listen. Sunday is a convenient accident of industrial life, for pleasure or for overtime. The Bible itself seems archaic and rather dull, likewise the church and her ministry; for while they sing the story of the Cross, it all seems so whimsical, so curiously unreal. Sin is so fashionable.

With such as these Augustine described God's helplessness: "God wants to give us something, but cannot, because our hands are full -- there's nowhere for Him to put it."

But the crash will come. These moral houses must fall, for they are built on the shifting sands of sin's false security. Winds, rains, and floods are inevitable. Only those who have built on Him who is the Truth will abide. In that fearful hour of judgment the recent comfort of company will dissolve with the storm. Alone, every

man must face God with his own sin. Oh, while there is yet mercy, flee to the Rock, for that Rock is Christ!

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 6:23).

*** * ***

Appearance for Reality

How easy in the religious life itself to substitute appearance for reality, form and ceremony for repentance, faith, beauty, and order for obedience and truth! The place then becomes more important than the Divine Presence, and we build shrines to the ancient prophets even while we ignore their living principles. We shout the shibboleths of the church but deny their daily implications.

In Israel's history the ark of the covenant was the sacred symbol of God's presence, but in a day of extremity the people undertook to use that symbol as a weapon in battle. Its very appearance at first gave them courage, for it spoke of a former day; but in the end they were thoroughly defeated, routed. Their disobedience had emptied the ark of God's presence.

The Psalmist, too, saw the fallacy of substituting sacrifices for confession and repentance when he wrote: "For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51:16, 17).

In our own day we need to be on our guard lest prayer itself should degenerate into an Aladdin's lamp and the Word become a magic wand for our capricious desires. Prayer is not a labor-saving device for a machine age; it brings us into the will of God and makes that will supreme. We learn by the light of His Word, through faith, that peace is not obtained without wholehearted obedience, or holiness without a complete commitment to His will, or power without inner purity. Also, we discover that the reality of the Divine Presence attends only those who walk by faith and not by sight; who say the "daily yes" to the divine will and Word after they have said the "eternal yes." In the process, the providences of God sometimes amaze us, but we face them cheerfully, knowing that our view of things eternal is sometimes made clearer by the loss of things temporal.

In His day, Jesus pointed up the supreme fallacy of the scribes and Pharisees, the so-called religious leaders of His time. They paid tithes on the minutest income, but "omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith." Their prayers were all public and wordy, but the reward they sought was human praise and emulation. They accepted appearance for reality, but their maximum was less than Jesus' minimum: Except your righteousness shall exceed

the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:20).

*** * ***

Occasions Versus Causes for Defeat

How to keep men in the way after they have made the start to serve God is one of the vital questions confronting every true shepherd of souls. Also, "What are the fundamental causes for 'lapsing'?" is a burning and inescapable question of all who care. Too often we blame the occasion rather than seek out the cause. The occasions are varied and usually incidental; the causes are rather constant and fundamental. The occasions are beyond us; the causes lie within us. There is a citadel within man's soul that cannot be taken until he opens the door himself. He is never entirely defeated until his surrender is complete.

In actual life, the temptations that confront a Christian are complex and varied, as depicted by Bunyan in his famous allegory, Pilgrim's Progress. Sometimes he describes the archenemy as Apollyon, then again as Giant Despair or Prince Beelzebub. The types and methods of temptation vary: perhaps open conflict, or a well-concealed trap, or the assailing of repeated doubt.

As we view it, there are three principal places to guard if we would be conquerors in the spiritual life: (1) at the place of truth, (2) at the point of faith, and (3) at the heart of life, our love to God and man.

Someone may disappoint us, one we had counted on and trusted; but if we will follow the truth as God gives it, we shall not fail. In His light we shall see light. Reverses and upsets may come, but if faith remains unbroken and an utter reliance upon God is kept alive, ultimate victory is assured. Even when the unbearable becomes the inevitable, the controlling issue is that of love. Nothing else really matters. Love never fails; it enables us to carry on.

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin (I John 1:7).

*** * ***

Lengthen That Altar!

Some time ago one of my colleagues, Dr. D. I. Vanderpool, was lecturing a group of ministers in the Northwest concerning the slump in response to the evangelistic appeal in the Sunday night service. As a practical plan, he suggested to the ministers that they might try shortening their formal discourse or message and lengthening their altar call, and make their appeal an impassioned one. When I presided at a district assembly in that area soon after, I heard several pastors

testify that they had followed this advice and that it worked. The point was well taken.

Now I am wondering if there is not a definite need in our Zion today of lengthening the altar itself; that is, of extending the altar call to areas of our spiritual defeat that are too frequently ignored. How easy it is for us all "to shout loud on safe subjects," and even be guilty of "playing to the galleries" by accepting the well-accepted shibboleths that are not too dangerous because they do not touch the sins of many in our congregations! It is relatively easy to be down on the sins our people are not up on. Possibly even in an effort to preach principles rather than things, we may omit a well-chosen illustration or two, lest we be guilty of being "personal" in our preaching.

Why not extend the altar call to include the whole scriptural range and revelation of heart need? Include the sins of the spirit as well as the sins of the flesh. Name covetousness and backbiting as well as adultery and worldliness; envy and jealousy as well as drunkenness and gambling.

Likewise in our effort to uphold the divine standard of holiness may we be ever on our guard through prayer and a careful study of God's Word lest we give the impression that holiness in practice is a form of smugness. Let us openly acknowledge by word and attitude that our cleansing springs from the atoning death of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our gospel is more than a reaction to sin; it is a deliverance. The altar speaks not only of spiritual need and confession; it speaks also of divine intercession and deliverance.

Jesus Christ is our true Altar (Heb. 13:10). His atoning death is more than adequate for all our sin.

* * *

The Other Prodigal

The sins of the hot-blooded man are fairly well known. How devastating! What of the sins of the cold-hearted man? How withering! Jesus tells us of both in the story of the two prodigals (Luke 15:11-32).

The younger brother wasted life in riotous living in faraway places, until famine overtook his land of romance and he turned to herding swine. There among the husks he came to himself, and resolved to return to his father's house and take the blame for his own failure.

Now watch the father, running to meet him while he was yet a long way off. See the compassionate kiss of his forgiving heart before the son could make his confession. Then followed the rejoicing around the banquet table. Just at this point the other prodigal appeared -- the elder brother. Startled by the music and revelry,

he learned quickly from one of the servants what had happened. Anger broke out on him and he would not go in, for his heart was cold. Then came the rejoicing father to entreat him.

Note the shifting drama of the scene now. Bristling with self-righteousness, the elder brother complained, "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment." His scorching words about the sins of his brother left nothing to the imagination concerning the nature of the transgression. With utter contempt he cried out, "Thou hast killed for him the fatted calf."

This elder son, too, had lost his way. He longed for a fatted calf but disowned his own brother. He failed to discover that this feast was redemptive and that all the father owned was his. The story ends without revealing whether or not this other prodigal ever repented.

O God, our Father, save us from the sins of the cold heart. May we acknowledge with sincere humility that our salvation comes from Thee and not from ourselves. Teach us how to restore our defeated brother in the spirit of meekness and of love. Save us from the sins of self, and identity our total life and resources with Thy redemptive purpose. Make us soul winners today. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

* * *

The Casualty List

The casualties in the Church's holy business of saving souls come high. The Master himself warned us of this falling away, in His celebrated parable of the sower. There He classifies hearers of the Word of God according to the soil of their hearts in which the seed is planted. The seed never varies: all of it is good, all of it from God. The difference is in the heart where the seed is planted-in the attitudes toward God's Word, and the degree of obedience to it.

First, Jesus describes the casual hearers. He likens their hearts to the wayside soil, where the Word is devoured by the birds and soon taken away. Such response to God's Word yields at best a scanty crop.

Then, the temporary believers. Their hearts He likens to rocky soil, for they receive the Word with joy, but the seed soon withers from lack of depth and moisture. In the hour of testing and temptation they fall to defeat and despair. They abandon the moral and spiritual task. What a large number of casualties are in this list!

Next, the unfruitful Christians, whose thorny hearts choke out the fruit of the seed. In the deepest sense these are worldly Christians, for they bring not forth fruit to perfection. They are "saints of the world." Cares, riches, and temporal pleasures

choke their spiritual life. God and His truth take second place. The casualty list here is exceedingly high.

Finally, the fruit-bearing Christians. These Jesus likens to seed sown on good ground which brings forth fruit an hundredfold. The factors involved in their survival and in their victorious and fruitful lives He describes as sincerity, faith, obedience, and patience, with special emphasis on the day-by-day transactions. All of this is living built upon God's Word that makes His will imperative on the daily level. These are those who survive the hazards of life's ordinary perils. May their number be increased and multiplied. "But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15).

* * * * *

03 -- OUR COMMITMENT

The Demands of Love

Ye cannot serve God and mammon (Matt. 6:24).

The deliverance of God in the redemption from sin is adequate for the depth of our need. Not only has the Word of God revealed sin as more than an act, a decision, a series of habits, an accumulation of wrong; but our own experience has also shown us that sin is a disposition, a principle of evil, a rebellion against the divine will, a conflict against the pure, the holy, and the good.

Surely the love of God is displayed in Christ and climaxed in the revelation of Calvary. God in Christ was there reconciling the world unto himself. The haunting light of the Cross reveals the depth of our depravity and the true nature of our sin. It lays bare the sins of the spirit as well as the more familiar sins of the flesh. It shows up worldliness as a cowardly, deadening spirit; discovers our conflicting loyalties and inward rebellion. That light runs us down until we must choose between God and mammon.

This unrelenting love accepts no bribe. He paid the supreme and awful price for our redemption, and He would make it complete, actual. He cannot be cajoled or deceived, for He is no opportunist or false god. He knows that mammon will operate like a moth. He sees that pride will engender strife and many will be defiled. Because He knew that our inner nature must be cleansed, thoroughly purged, He suffered without the gate that we might be sanctified. Following His ascension, the promise of the Father was fulfilled: the Holy Spirit came -- to make us holy. But first He must reveal to us the darkness and subtleties of our depravity, and He must personalize the need. What a sepulcher of horrors! Then the divine enabling, the cleansing -- equally personal. He brings us low, to the humility of faith, until we cry out, "Purity at any price!" Love then demands an absolute commitment. All inner

impurity must go. There can be no holiness with a little sin in it, and no indwelling Holy Spirit with the carnal mind acknowledged as contender or rival. In George MacDonald's words, "Out Satan must go, every hair and feather!"

Only then can pure love, without a rival, reign supreme.

*** * ***

The Badge of Our Discipleship

The cross of Jesus Christ is the badge of our discipleship. Its thoroughgoing demands not only follow conversion; they precede it. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me (Matt. 16: 24). The cross of Jesus, our Lord, assures our forgiveness and peace and affords a new order of life. Herein lies the test of our obedience and faith, for Christ would lay His cross on every one who would follow Him.

His call is not to asceticism, not to other-worldly isolationism, nor piety through penance self-imposed. Rather, the call is to all-out obedience -- the obedience demanded of a runner who would win the race regardless of personal cost. This universal gospel call makes rugged discipleship an imperative for survivorship and for victory; there are no exceptions. The higher and lower orders in discipleship are man-made escapes, arbitrary and unscriptural.

To be sure, one rich young ruler was required to sell all to follow Him, although a tax collector gave away only half of his immediate estate at the moment of surrender. But for both men the terms were the same: absolute obedience, childlike faith. Some have sought for the cross in their lives but have failed to discover it. Such seeking is actually unnecessary. He who would do the Heavenly Father's will and follow Jesus in this sinful world will find his cross without looking for it; it will find him. Again, he who would go on to know his Lord in sanctifying power will discover what it means to be crucified unto the world.

The cross is inescapable, but it may be avoided. It may be denied; it cannot be ignored. It is always voluntary, but its power is also related to our moral identification with it. Herein lie our glory and the mark of our discipleship. Ease and luxury, self-willing and self-aggrandizement will not do for builders of the Kingdom that shall know no end; it requires cross-bearing Christians who have discovered the power of His resurrection.

May Dr. Benner's prayer chorus be our prayer today: Not my will, but Thy will, be done, Lord, in done.

*** * ***

It Costs Too Much

The siren call to ease as the giver of peace and happiness is as unreliable today as ever. After Israel's brief civil war that divided her into two kingdoms, Jeroboam discovered himself to be the new king of a new Israel. With a strategy born of undiluted self-interest -- for he feared the two kingdoms would reunite if they worshiped together--he decided to set up his own religion and to create his own gods (idols), like those of the nations round about.

In convenient, accessible places -- at Dan and Bethel--he placed two golden calves, and to the people then announced, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (I Kings 12:28). Historically it was a lie, but it sounded good, for it appealed to their softness and love of ease. It worked! The trickster had duped them with an overdose of self-pity.

What a bargain they made! Religion that came cheap! To be sure, Jerusalem was not so convenient for them, and the divinely ordained sacrifices could be costly at times. Jehovah's moral laws were a bit strict, too. However, God had met them in the holy city with the shekinah of His presence, and at the Temple worship they had felt a sense of atonement for their sins. Now they had traded for convenient places and for gods whose moral code was not too demanding.

But what did they receive in return? The moral degradation and destruction that follow inevitably in sin's wake. Now their new-found gods stared at them with eyes that could not see; mocked them with forms that were lifeless, and with ears that could not hear. Their gods did not care because they could not love. These were no gods at all, because they were made by man's own hands.

Even so today, there is no easy way to salvation. It took the death of God's only Son to bring us from our sins. The way to God is still by the rugged road of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. How humbling but how delivering! The Spirit-filled life is the Christian's heritage but only after a commitment that is limitless and sincere. Faith then lays hold of the promise and the work is done.

The reward of God's own Spirit makes the full consecration demanded a "reasonable service."

* * *

The Ethical Approach

That God has a way of breaking through the confusion and darkness of man's mind and heart is a fact of historical record as well as of current Christian experience. This revelation or discovery of truth may come in a flash, or in an hour of explosive light. Whereas a moment before all was darkness with forebodings and uncertainties, now all is light with perspective and peace. Isaiah's revelation

(chapter 6) is a case in point. At the high noon of his vision he declares, "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up." Then for the first time Isaiah saw clearly his own uncleanness and found no refuge in the sin and wickedness all about him.

"Likewise Saul of Tarsus, the persecuting Pharisee, when he took that fateful trip to Damascus. Seeing the divine light, he fell to the earth and heard the inescapable voice condemning him. When he answered back in honest query, "Who art thou, Lord?" he received the manifest revelation, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest" (Acts 9:5).

I have seen this bursting forth of the divine light on the lives of men even in this century; have known them, casual and even indifferent, to drop into a gospel meeting and then go home awakened and converted -- the same night.

But God also has a way of unfolding truth to the human mind and heart in answer to a ready obedience. There is a spiritual darkness born of willful sin. Jesus reminds us that "men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Augustine in his day prayed: "O God, make me pure." But when the grip of his sinful desires took hold of him again, he added quickly, "but not now."

Jesus himself revealed that the basic reason why the Jews rejected Him was that they had already rejected the truth of Moses. "But if ye believe not his [Moses'] writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (John 5: 47.) Again, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

We need not ask God for a display of stunts or skywriting as a spur to faith or medium of revelation. Let us do His will as we know it now, and He will come in blessed, full assurance, bringing light and peace.

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine (John 7:17).

* * *

Risky Business

Prayer is more than our own sublime desire; it is an exposure to God that probes our moral order to the very quick.

Jesus found fault with the current prayers of the scribes and Pharisees, who were in His day the authorities on such matters. He observed that the distinguishing characteristic of their prayers was their length, for they were full of vain repetitions. They were also offered in public to be heard by men. In contrast, Jesus voiced His model prayer which we usually describe as the Lord's Prayer. Long prayers, Jesus

seems to teach, are no substitute for sincere prayer. He also insisted that the only audience we should seek in prayer is God; hence the logic of the secret place.

Think of it, audience with God! Risky business, frightening thought, that a man should come before the presence of the Judge of all the earth and there express his thoughts and desires! Someone has said, "God is a disturbing Person to meet." True enough, when we reflect that He sees through us when we pray. There can be no "front" or "parlor manners" with Him. The "psychological approach" will not impress Him. We have to come just as we are, for that is how He sees us. Sunday piety or prayer-time devotions will not do.

I read of a man recently who was a leader among men, in big business circles. He confessed: "I cannot pray as a child; I do not know how to pray as a man." I suppose he referred to his memorized prayers from childhood, rather than his humility and sincerity as a child. But what of the grown man? What could he bring to God in prayer? His knowledge, his resources, his purity, his truth? Or should he bring his needs, his sins, his defeats, his longings? Would the maturity -- say of fifty years -- impress the Eternal God? Would the words of a man who was born naked impress the Almighty even if he wears ermine while he prays? Would the Moral Ruler of the universe feel the pressure of bribery if the petitioner had a few hundred thousand at his disposal when he entered His presence?

Look at the Lord's Prayer. It begins with the tender name of Father but moves on to the world-shaking thought of God's will. It deals with common needs like bread, trespasses, and temptations. But how wonderful to stay with it until we feel His hallowed presence and become acquainted with His kingdom! Kingdom business is big business. Who will dare become personal with God on the issue of sin and tell Him the worst about himself; then rise in faith until he prays for deliverance? Then should follow the note of praise: "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever."

Lord, teach us to pray, today!

* * *

The Leap of Faith

The realism of our age easily lends itself to the mood of pessimism if faith is denied. Men do not live very long until they discover that the world is too much for them, and even those who romp through life undismayed find a formidable barrier in death. The man of the world also discovers that his own desires are hard to control or educate. He may even adjust to the climate of defeatism which surrounds him and more or less abandon the moral task.

The life without God is a gamble; it identifies man as a playboy and life as a stage. The providences of God are but dice in the great game of chance. This life is

well characterized by the facetious story of the man who jumped out of a ten-story building and shouted as he fell, "Everything is all right so far!"

The Christian life is a challenge to build on faith in God. It posits ultimate realities that extend beyond the present system of experience. It always gives meaning and worth to the present day, and relates man to his Creator and to the moral world about him. Its source and great exponent is Jesus of Nazareth, the God-Man born in Bethlehem.

I read how ancient Israel struggled to face up to the life of faith. She had been promised Canaan as the land of heritage, but when the time came to cross into the country the leaders hesitated. Instead, twelve spies were sent to explore the land and discover its inhabitants. They were unanimous in their report that the land was full of plenty, and they brought samples of fruit to corroborate their word. Ten of the men pointed with fear to the giants that dwelt there, and counseled that Israel should return to Egypt, even to slavery. Only two of the men mixed faith with their realism and declared that these giants could be "bread for us." They insisted, "Let us go up at once, and possess it." After a struggle, their faith prevailed.

True Christian faith never rests at ease because of the peace and shelter of divine forgiveness and cleansing. It always moves over into the area of conquest and service. Kingdom building becomes serious business -- the true business of life regardless of vocation. The price to be paid is often that of self-sacrifice and always entails complete abandonment to the highest. The only adequate and permanent motive for such a life is born of love-divine love which springs from simple faith in God.

A wise man wrote his epitaph for the special benefit of his son and ordered it inscribed on his tombstone so that all might read: "My son, if you would preserve the heritage which I leave you, you must build it anew yourself."

Each individual of each succeeding generation must make the leap of faith for himself if he would learn the true life of God.

* * * * *

04 -- OUR REDEMPTION

The Resourcefulness of Love

The blackness of man's moral despair and the depth of his sinful depravity are best seen in the light of God's redemptive provision for our deliverance. It was His only begotten Son that God gave, to die on the cross for our sins. His death was no moral necessity; rather, it was prompted by redemptive love. Such love -- so adequate, so free, so full!

The language of redemption is always in the superlative degree. "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He is also our unchangeable, eternal High Priest. Glorious provision!

Divine forgiveness and assurance overwhelm the penitent heart. The Father, seeing the prodigal afar off, runs to meet him. He answers the wanderer's plea for a servant's place with the kiss of forgiveness, the feast of the fatted calf, and the proffer of the best robe. Herein is love's extravagance. Full sonship is restored and all heaven rejoices. Oh, matchless grace!

The Holy Spirit's work of redemption offers the same generous, unfathomed love. He comes as a Gift -- the promise of the Father. He rewards the simple, childlike faith that receives when it asks and finds when it seeks. Our assurance of this Gift lies in the nature of God himself as Heavenly Father. He provides; we receive. Again the provision and invitation are universal -- all needy souls may come and receive. Herein lies the abundant life!

Even at the close of mortal life's short day the unmeasured provision of God's love is overwhelming. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Cor. 2:9). The power of unconquerable love brought our Saviour again from the dead and assures us of the home of many mansions. Soon that love will bring Him back again to receive us unto himself. Oh, blessed reunion!

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

* * *

How Much More!

The basis of our assurance concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit to the believer's heart rests upon what? Not alone upon the desperateness of our human need, Jesus himself pointed out, but also upon the revelation of God as Heavenly Father. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:13.)

The argument here seems to be twofold; it is one of similarity and also one of contrast. Jesus reasons: "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?" (Luke 11:11-12.) An early Christian philosopher observed: "God is most nearly like the best that I can think of." Jesus seems to say, "Credit God, your Heavenly Father, with being at least as good as a

normal parent." If we are persuaded that He is, we should be able to believe that God will give us the Holy Spirit according to His own power, wisdom, and love.

But the appeal is even stronger than that. It is an argument of contrast. God is better than we are, better than the best we know. Parents are earthly, evil. Our Father is heavenly, good. Parents are finite; He is infinite. God's willingness and power are greater: "How much more"! Here the distance is both qualitative and quantitative -- the distance between the created and the Creator, between man and God.

How often the gifts of earthly parents have proved to be gifts of self-indulgence, or at best of misguided love! But not so our Heavenly Father's. The gift of the Holy Spirit is as essential and vital to the inner man as bread, fish, and eggs to our physical life. May we ask with sincerity today, seek with earnestness, knock with abandon, until He comes in answer to the divine promise. Our Heavenly Father will not fail!

* * *

Our Common Salvation

The genius of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ lies in its ability to meet the needs of the human heart and life everywhere, in all generations. Whenever a gospel is preached that requires a religious genius or a special temperament to meet its terms or follow its call, then it is "another gospel" than that recorded in the New Testament. Likewise, whenever a gospel is propounded and offered to a limited order or state in society, that gospel is thereby less than Christian.

In this vein Jude writes of "the common salvation." Here the reference is not to the commonplace or cheap, but rather to the resourcefulness and adequacy of divine grace.

The Scriptures themselves are clear in declaring that all mankind is under sin -- heathen and favored Jew alike -- but they are equally emphatic in asserting that Christ died for all and that His salvation reaches to all both in intent and in power.

The truth of God's grace revealed in the gospel has always been in more serious jeopardy from its friends than from its enemies. It is more readily thwarted or corrupted by the Church than by the world. In the first generation after Pentecost the most serious danger that the Church encountered came from those Jews who had accepted Christ and who then endeavored to make the gospel an enlarged Judaism rather than an emancipation message for the whole world, untrammelled by the trappings of Judaism.

Even in the holiness church of the twentieth century how easy to indulge our own temperament and to reflect our own sectionalism or nationalism rather than to

give free rein to divine grace! How easy to divide into "camps" or "schools of thought" and pronounce anathemas upon others, rather than share in the benefits and fellowship of our "common salvation." With fear and trembling we should work out our own salvation, for we know it is God who works in us to do His good pleasure.

It was Jude who also wrote: "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (verses 20-21).

*** * ***

Where the "If" Belongs

How easy it is to misplace the "if" in religion and hang it on God or upon others! If only God would do some skywriting or work some needed and unexpected miracle, we might believe. Or, if there were not so many hypocrites or "hollow" Christians in the church, we would become identified with God's kingdom enterprise. But God puts the "if" where it belongs, on us and upon our sins.

His Word reveals that the way to God is by the route of sincere confession. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (I John 1: 9). Here confession is more than a ritual; it is an attitude of heart and mind. It implies that all sin is rebellion against God and His laws. God asks that we make an open acknowledgment to Him of all the wrong in our lives. He insists that this confession be personal and specific.

The Bible idea of confession always implies an open break with sin, including its disavowal. Only then may we turn to God as the true source of peace and cleansing. We confess direct to the One who forgives, for He alone understands the depth of our pollution and provides the cleansing.

How often we struggle and seek a subterfuge! We try to compromise the terms, give something less than a complete confession. But God's "if" is relentless and unyielding. We point to wrongs all about us and endeavor to divert the divine monitor. We continue the struggle for a better record of achievement, only to fall back again in despair over the wide gap between our knowledge of the right and our power to achieve it. But when our refuge of deceits and partial truths has broken down and we "come clean" with God, what deliverance He brings!

Faithful to His promise, He bestows forgiveness and cleansing. Old guilt is canceled, new moral strength is born. A new life, not our own, He affords. Faithful and just is the promise of His Word concerning His ways with sinful man. How can these things be? "Christ died for our sins," is the word of reassurance. Unfailing word, even when our mind staggers at its sweep! Forgive sins, even when we cannot forgive ourselves? Cleanse us from corruption that baffled our persistent

efforts? The divine affirmative rests on His nature rather than on our mood or desperation. God cannot, will not lie.

Let our fears flee and our tongues confess. He is faithful that promised. His holiness guarantees His truthfulness; there is no strain on Him to be reliable. Receive His Word today!

* * *

Heart and Hands Related

Although the second crisis in Christian experience, the work of entire sanctification, is separate and distinct from the new birth, it does not follow that holiness is an afterthought with God. His Word makes it inseparable from all true Christian living. When the Psalmist in that ancient day cried out, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?" the unmistakable answer came back, "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart" (Ps. 24:3-4).

Heart and hands are inseparable. Clean hands (or good living) can be realized only by the pure (holy) in heart. Man's outer conduct, Jesus said, springs from the inner citadel of man's soul, the very fountainhead of his living and being. "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things" (Matt. 12:35).

Happy is the Christian to whom God's illuminating Word and the enabling Holy Spirit have revealed the inwardness of his own sin. This inner lawlessness (the carnal mind) must sooner or later assert itself and embarrass the Christian's witness. It is enmity against God and the clash is fundamental and irreconcilable. Frustrations follow when the beloved ego sits in the saddle and rides the soul. But there is a better way. When the self takes the "death" route and becomes identified in spiritual reality with Christ's crucifixion, the newly resurrected life will be lived by faith in the Son of God.

But never must purity of heart and motives become a defense for careless living. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak, the hands will perform -- their patterns coincide. The Sermon on the Mount will become practical and imperative. No longer will the pure heart look upon Jesus' instruction as mere counsel of perfection, to be lost in vague generalities. His truths grip, control, direct. Their day-by-day implications are illuminated by the indwelling Holy Spirit, who now rules as uncontested, yet gentle, Sovereign and Lord. The happy life of balance and harmony results as heart and hands become one in the beauty of holiness.

* * *

Radiant Christians

It is difficult to read the Book of Acts and entirely miss the impression that first generation Christians were "absurdly happy." Their lives were radiant and their witness bold and contagious.

This element of joy that accompanies the presence of God in the soul is also not foreign to the Old Testament scriptures. The Psalmist wrote: "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing" (Ps. 126:1, 2).

Nehemiah felt it in his day when, bidding the people dispel their sorrow, he said, "For the joy of the Lord is your strength."

Isaiah too recognized it: "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation" (12:3). He also prophesied: "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (35:10).

All these promises were fulfilled in the angel's message to the shepherds: "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10, 11).

Concerning the Church's faith in the resurrection of their Lord, Chesterton wrote: "A real Christian who believes should do two things: dance, out of the sense of sheer joy; and fight, out of the sense of victory."

This is what the first century Christians did. They believed in rejoicing always; they knew that giving thanks in all things was God's will for them (I Thess. 5:16, 18). Their Lord had told of a coming day when no man could take their joy away, and they believed that day had now arrived. Through faith they rejoiced "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." No matter whether the converts were Samaritans or new-found Gentiles, the results were always the same -- they had "great joy," or were "filled with joy." Even after the apostles had just received a beating in reinforcement of the warning not to speak further in the name of Jesus, "they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5: 41).

They were radiant, irrepressible Christians. May God's Spirit give me strength today to carry on their radiant message and bold witness.

*** * * * ***

05 -- OUR DEVOTION

Strength for Our Day

Our last line of defense these days, so someone has observed, is the faithfulness of God. But why not make it our first line and meanwhile enjoy peace and security within? Why not live daily in that place of inner fortitude where we are overanxious in nothing because we have learned to make our supplications known to God and have found in Him the release for our tensions?

Life itself brings "hard weather." Tragedies come without warning. Suffering may be our lot even when we can trace its immediate source to no personal wrongdoing. Injustice abounds even in areas where we would expect something better. Death itself with its muddy boots stalks uninvited into the home. In our dismay the lights about us seem to go out. What to do then? Go directly to God without intermediaries and rest on the clear revelation of His Word concerning himself. He is altogether reliable, faithful. He will not deceive, for He cannot deny himself. He will not forget us, for He has a care for all His children. "Ye are of more value than many sparrows." When we are at our wits' end, God is not perplexed. He is the changeless One. We may draw on His power in life's darkest moments and in our lowest moods if only we will trust Him. Let the weight of our care rest on Him now. "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."

Is this religious stoicism with a touch of fatalism? No, it is using Christian truth in all its practical implications to meet any crisis that life can bring. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Peace comes to us as we give primacy to spiritual values and put God first. Thus through His enabling grace we see all losses as temporary. May we find strength this day in the everlasting arms, and allow God to put an edge to our souls by the very providences that perplex us.

It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect (Ps. 18:32).

*** * ***

Religion for Everyday Life

The genius of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ lies in its power to meet the fundamental needs of men everywhere, in all generations. Jesus himself was a Palestinian Jew but His message fits every nation and century alike. His home country is about the size of the state of Vermont, but He is never a provincial. His psychology and analysis of human nature is never outmoded, for He knows what is in man. He took a group of ordinary men, several of them fishermen, made them leaders of a world movement, and staked His kingdom on their devotion and efficiency.

While traveling among the Cape Verde Islands several years ago, I found reconfirmation of this universality of the gospel. One of the ushers in our humble

church on the island of Brava was the government administrator. Immaculate in his white linen, there he stood, intelligent, cultured, and influential -- an example to all. He served humbly because he was redeemed.

On the sailing vessel in which I traveled among those islands was a sailor, recently converted. His clothes were a blotch of patches; his daily diet consisted of beans and corn, with black coffee and near-black bread in the morning. But he was a radiant Christian, spending his off hours on the deck in seclusion somewhere, reading his Bible with considerable effort, but with great delight. The gospel had found him, too.

This very resourcefulness of the gospel carries with it the sense of responsibility for all. Every man is important, for Christ died for all; but every man must also give account of himself, his stewardship. In Jesus' parable of the talents, the one-talent man is on his own, but he is responsible. He can do something -- he can pray, witness, work, and give. He must invest himself on the basis of what Christ can do for him and through him. Such commitment makes for radiant living. Clement wrote of the Christians of his day: "Plowing, we praise; sailing, we sing."

Perhaps we have been too much inclined to judge our religious life in relation to the high day of crisis, when actually there are few such days for most of us. It is the ordinary day that reveals the quality of our lives. Nearly a century ago Doris Greenwell wrote: "The Christian ideal alone meets the habitual, the practical, meets it while immeasurably transcending it embraces it, and walks with it hand in hand. The Christian must be friends with every day, with its narrow details, its homely atmosphere; its loving correction must make him great."

The little child and the cup of water are important to Jesus, and we are to be judged in relation to them, for they make up life. He speaks as with inexorable law: He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much (Luke 16:10).

* * *

The Faith That Holds On

The amateur and the artist differ in at least one essential. The amateur depends more upon an ideal setting for faithful interpretation, but the artist relies upon his greater resources within. In this sense the Christian is life's true artist; he can carry on in the hour of darkness and loss, knowing that the rightness of his cause and his never-failing God are greater than all odds against him.

Abraham raised living to the level of art. His light was shadowy against ours, yet we call him the father of the faithful. How rugged God's test -- offering up Isaac, his beloved, the child of promise, as a sacrifice! Early in the morning of the fateful day Abraham arises, saddles the ass, loads the wood. In perplexity and great

anguish of heart he sets out with Isaac and two servants to find the mount of worship yet to be revealed. Three days they journey to the place of sacrifice. Then parting company with the servants, Abraham says with quiet assurance, "I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." The tension mounts as the lad questions, "Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Still holding on by faith, Abraham replies, "God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering."

Then the crucial hour. Father and son reach the place of sacrifice. They build the altar, lay the wood in order. Now Abraham binds his own son to that altar, and raises the knife. As it is poised in the air, God intervenes at the last moment, but not too late. There, caught in the nearby thicket, a ram! God has provided the sacrifice. What an hour of worship! God has recognized His servant's obedient faith. Abraham reveals the triumph of that struggle by naming the place Jehovah-jireh: "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen" (Gen. 22:14).

Oh, for a faith that will not shrink,
Though pressed by every foe,
That will not tremble on the brink
Of any earthly woe!

A faith that shines more bright and clear
When tempests rage without;
That when in danger knows no fear,
In darkness feels no doubt.

* * *

The Prayer That Sing's

And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them (Acts 16:25).

They prayed at midnight, these partners in distress, Paul and Silas. Chosen for the hard task of the pioneer, they came through when the pressure was on. God had warned that Paul would be shown "how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." Silas, too, was handpicked. One of the "chief men among the brethren," he was elected by the mother church in Jerusalem for a diplomatic mission to Antioch. Later Paul chose him for this second missionary journey when he knew the going would be rough. They were both "recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God."

That grace was now put to the test at Philippi. Here they were manhandled by the unthinking mob, beaten with many stripes by the order of the magistrates, and thrust into the inner prison by the jailer, where he made their feet fast in the stocks - all without trial or hearing.

In the moral order, too, it was the midnight hour. Unscrupulous men who had exploited a young woman for gain had won. Prejudice against the despised Christians had prevailed. Roman justice was dissolved for the time being. It was time for these evangelists, with their bleeding backs and biting pain that robbed them of sleep, to think things over. Instead, they prayed and praised until the confining walls could not smother their songs, and the other prisoners heard them. They had "praised" their way through. Then came deliverance in all its blessed detail: the earthquake that opened the doors; the jailer, a near suicide, and his family, won to Christ; the jailer himself tenderly bathing his released prisoners' wounds; then the baptismal service for the jailer's own household. At last, honorable release, and a visit to Lydia's house to comfort the believers before taking off on another lap of this breath-taking mission of proclaiming the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

O God, our Father, teach us how to praise Thee in the midnight hour of our souls' distress. In our days of loneliness and deep need, give us of Thy invincible presence. When the moral lights about us are low and our own pain is real, give us songs that the sinners may hear. Teach us the meaning of rejoicing in the Lord always. In Jesus' worthy name. Amen.

* * *

Petition and Desire

Too frequently of late I have discovered that my prayers were made up largely of things I wanted God to do for me, along with my own advice on how He might get these things done right away. Of course, I am aware of the urgent, divine invitation to come boldly to the throne of grace with my petitions and needs, but I must also come into His presence with reverence and humility if I am to realize His will.

We are never more sure of the divine purpose than when we pray for the unsaved all about us. Certainly it is in divine order to thus pray for our own loved ones. But what to do when those on our prayer list harden their hearts and spurn His mercy, when their rebellion seems to increase as our prayers increase?

Some sixteen centuries ago in northern Africa, a brokenhearted mother, Monica by name, prayed thus for her wayward boy. Early in life he was bright with promise and childlike in his faith. But sin entered and "the thorns of lustfulness grew over his garden." This only son soon became a debonair skeptic who did not blush to scorn his mother's prayers and faith. She wearied the preachers of her day with requests for help for this only son until one of them consoled her with the assurance, "It is impossible that the son of these tears should perish."

Then the crisis came when the young man determined to flee the country and shake off the past and also his mother's tearful annoyance. Immediately increasing her prayer vigil, she begged God to intervene and not allow the boat to leave. But the boat departed on a favorable wind, and the prodigal was aboard. Meanwhile, Monica, almost frantic in her cries, was convinced that there was no hope for his salvation if he left the country. Her prayers continued, however, and it was not long before the son of those tears found a garden of repentance and faith on that foreign soil. Commenting on the boat scene years afterwards, Augustine, the bishop, wrote (for he was that wanderer): "God denied her petition, but granted her desire."

May God edit my prayers today!

* * *

Sound Judgment

The religious life is fraught with peril even after one has committed himself to follow the good way. There are those who would say, "Love God, and do as you please." But following this philosophy will not rule out confusion, contradictions, and carelessness, unless the word "please" receives careful examination.

There are some who have a passion for outward conformity to law or code. These are usually zealous to convert others to their views. Their approach, however, often develops into a cumbersome, even irksome system that demands for its survival authoritarianism and a fictional infallibility. Their rule book, which is either ever-expanding or archaic, tends to replace or outweigh even God's Word itself.

One of the keenest questions asked of Jesus by His contemporaries was, "Which is the greatest commandment?" He replied by naming the most foundational one, to love God with all the heart, mind, and strength. But in His choice of the second great commandment, Jesus was careful to point out the social implications of the first, to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Jesus revealed that the infallibility of His own judgment of values was based on personal and inner conformity to the Father's will. He also pointed out that His guiding principles in discerning the right from the wrong were learned by a supreme desire to please His Heavenly Father. This same purposefulness will afford us a key to sound judgment.

In our own generation there are those who try to answer the question, "What is right?" by withdrawing from the world. As a result their Christian witness is spasmodic and sometimes silent. Their monastery is their own church or home. Others dismiss the problem lightly by reducing ethics to a relativism born of geography and cultural background. When in Rome do as the Romans do, is their philosophy.

Jesus' life was a condemnation to those about Him. He drove the money-changers from the Temple and purged His Father's house. He also shocked the legalists by what He did on the Sabbath day. When they complained about acts of healing on the Sabbath, He countered with, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." He seemed to say, "I do only the kind of thing My Father does on the Sabbath day." Back of all the moral choices of Jesus was a fellowship with the Father.

My judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me (John 5:30).

*** * ***

Smoking Lights

A neighbor I once talked with confessed that the conduct and spirit of certain members of the church he attended during his tender adolescent days had caused him to stay away from that church for twenty years.

It seems that this church had become so engrossed in malice-bearing strife that this teen-age boy left in bewilderment and rage because he concluded all church members were hypocrites. My neighbor, now a grown man with sons of his own, has resumed his church attendance at a nearby Sunday school because of a growing conviction that he needs the help of the church in the moral education of his own two boys.

But what of the church whose light was smoking and dim during that controversy? And what of the Christians who failed in their God-given mission at a critical hour in a teen-ager's life? How often have good people fought for a good cause in a bad way! They have forgotten Jesus' words: "How can Satan cast out Satan?" Their weapons became carnal, and the young and the lame in the church were soon turned out of the way.

How easy to forget that there is an orthodoxy of the spirit as well as of the letter which even the worldling and the youth can discern when they are unable to define! John wrote with finality: "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother" (I John 3:10).

During the early Christian centuries one who had wandered from the church into deep sin was later reclaimed. After years of a fruitful ministry and church administration he confessed: "I had not believed the gospel unless the church had persuaded me." The impact of the body of believers whom he had once despised had restored him. Their redeemed lives, their prayers, their faith, and their love had overwhelmed him.

For the Christian it is crusade or confusion. We must let our lights shine in humble personal witness now, or they will be darkened by the smoke of contention and the blackness of malice. May our lights so shine before men that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven.

*** * ***

Flame Throwing

In the political world today name calling is a familiar weapon used to destroy one's enemies. If the name sticks, regardless of the truth of the case, the enemy is consumed. For a long time this intellectual flame throwing has been evident even in religious circles. They used this device on Jesus, calling Him "glutton, . . . winebibber," "blasphemer," and "devil-possessed." These burning epithets they hurled at Him who knew no sin.

The twentieth century church, and our own in particular, is not free from this name calling. In some circles today "liberal" and "Pharisee" are two common titles carelessly hurled in times of provocation. The so called "liberal" might actually be a careful New Testament Christian who simply reveals his background and early training (or lack of it) in the ethics of his daily life. We must be careful not to despise one of God's little ones, lest His judgment fall upon us. In the words of Paul: "Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died."

Likewise the name "Pharisee" is a tag too often pinned on a conscientious Christian. The Pharisees were not altogether bad, according to Jesus, but they misplaced their emphasis. They stressed outward righteousness for appearance's sake but passed by inner iniquity. They emphasized tithing but "omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these," declared Jesus, "ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." They strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel. According to John Wesley the distinguishing mark of the Pharisees was this: "They trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." May we ourselves not become pharisaical by readily casting this name upon others.

Jesus warned against the evil consequences of name calling when He said, Whosoever shall say, Thou fool (moral imbecile), shall be in danger of hell fire. The flame thrower may find the flames returning upon him.

*** * * * ***

06 -- OUR TESTINGS

Safer than You Think

You are safer than you think when you are in the will of God. The Psalmist confided, He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty (Ps. 91:1). This ancient worthy had felt pressure from the snare of the fowler, had witnessed the harmful pestilence. Terrors by night and by day were common. Trouble was on every hand. There was no earthly place of safety. Truth alone was his shield and buckler, and nothing short of the Divine Presence could afford him permanent refuge. This was more than a shelter from a passing storm; it was a way of life that counted on the faithfulness of God at all times.

How prone we are to measure life by its inconveniences and extremities rather than to seek and secure the poise and courage needed to live above them! The Man who had nowhere to lay His head gave His followers unqualified peace, and without price or partiality offered to a sinning world forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among the sanctified.

George MacDonald dared to say, "The Son of God suffered unto the death, not that men might not suffer, but that their suffering might be like His." The New Testament Church that followed Jesus was poor, but made many rich; had nothing, yet possessed all things. The Apostle Paul, an early leader among them, learned to count everything but dross that he might win Christ and receive the righteousness born alone of faith. Apprehended by Christ, he became His ambassador and traveling evangel of the earth. His missionary journeyings afforded him perils in the city as well as in the wilderness, on land and on the sea. Weariness and pain, cold and nakedness, hunger and thirst were his common companions. Eight times he received official and legalized beatings, and once was stoned and left for dead. Three times he was shipwrecked, but always he came through. Finally death caught up with him, and he knew his hour was come. But from the point of completed assignment he could look back with rejoicing upon a good fight that had left him with faith untarnished and allegiance clear. He died as he lived -- triumphant! He had found freedom from the fear of fear through faith in the living God!

*** * ***

Yet Trouble Came

He was a man of exemplary character: good, devout, unselfish, and humble. He rated high even in God's book, for the Lord testified of him to his enemies: "There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil."

Yet trouble came to him!

He had a large family, seven sons and three daughters, and he was careful to set the right example before them. He was virtually a priest to his own household. He was a wise counselor to many and always strengthened the hands of the weak.

He was rich, intelligent, industrious, enterprising; a successful ranchman, an honorable citizen. Then trouble came in torrents, without warning! First an enemy came upon his servants while they plowed peacefully in the fields. Then fire consumed all his sheep with their shepherds. On the heels of this dual tragedy, a second enemy carried off his camels in a raid, but first killed their drivers with the sword. Finally, a wind of hurricane proportions blew down the house in which his sons and daughters were feasting, and destroyed them. In deep agony of spirit this ancient patriarch bowed and worshiped, saying, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Then sickness came, causing sore boils to break out all over his body. At this point his wife's weak faith failed and she cried out bitterly, "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die." But to this philosophy of despair he answered, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

Next the arrows of temptation came flying at him from religious circles. There appeared three would-be friends in all their wordy condescension -- friends suspicious of his sincerity and nearsighted in their judgment. Through the smoky confusion of their pious phrases he cried out, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

Then the test of long delay and unrevealed providences. He sought for God's path but confessed, "I cannot see him." With courage he added, "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

Finally, God broke through to helpless Job when he became fully submissive and teachable. The drama moves to its climax: "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends."

Trouble also comes in this atomic age! But the God of Job still lives, loves, and cares, and the clearest message of this truth speaks to us from Calvary.

* * *

Tiles and Bricks Are Falling Again

Nearly forty years ago when a lad living in Glasgow, Scotland, I was delivering milk in long-handled cans during the early morning hours in the midst of a gale. Slate, tile, and bricks were falling. More than once those missiles came uncomfortably close to my vulnerable head. That evening while recounting the day's events and my narrow escape, I was questioned by my mother's cousin, a Salvation Army officer, who thought to impress me with God's providential care over me by asking, "And who saved you this morning, Samuel, when those slates were falling?" I replied promptly, "I saved myself -- I ducked." My elders did not fail to remind me of my blatant unorthodoxy by their shrieks of laughter.

I confess now I was wrong. During the intervening years things have continued to happen, and the falling bricks and tiles of life's sorrows and losses have occasionally found me. Not always have I been able to "duck" them. Bruises have been my lot from time to time, and in the midst of my hurt I have not always asked the right questions. Why me? What have I done that this should happen to me? These have been my readiest questions. In devious ways God's Spirit has taught me to ask the deeper question: Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do in this situation?

Often I have puzzled over the implications of Rom. 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." I have openly confessed my love to Him but have been slower to identify "his purpose." I have had confidence in the truth of this faith expressed, but at times have almost staggered at its inclusiveness-its "all things." More than once I have seen an undesirable situation transformed into His redemptive purpose, and out from the shadow of my cross has shone a light that was His.

Our Heavenly Father, sanctify to my good, to Thy glory, and to the extension of Thy kingdom the things that have happened to me today. They seem so painful, so undesirable, and so void of spiritual meaning. The tiles and bricks are falling again, and some have bruised me, and they hurt. Heal me, Heavenly Father, and show me Thy way, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

*** * ***

Standing in the Shadows

The dauntless Apostle Paul, who had just survived two days of rioting, barely escaped with his life. With all good intentions he had gone to the Temple to participate in Jewish rites for purification in accordance with Mosaic law. But Asiatic Jews saw him in the Temple, screamed for help, and shouted something about "polluting this holy place." The riot was on and the mob pulled their helpless victim out of the Temple court for the kill. Presently Claudius Lysias, tribune of the Roman cohort, swooped down on the milling crowd, for the whole city was in an uproar.

When rescued, Paul did not wait much for ceremony or preparation. Standing to defend himself before his accusers, he had scarcely finished the outline of his own conversion before the crowd were screaming again, tearing their clothes, and throwing dust in the air to express their hatred and contempt.

Next the tribune brought Paul to the castle and would have examined him by scourging in order to get at the truth had Paul not let it be known discreetly that he

was a Roman citizen. Frightened with this unexpected news, the tribune called it a day.

The second day was not much better. It began with a hearing before the tribune and the chief priests and council, but it ended in another riot as Paul was hurried off again to the castle for safety.

That night "the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome" (Acts 23:11). The One within the shadows had spoken and Paul was encouraged. He had received commendation and a new assignment.

Then followed the murderous plot involving more than forty hateful Jews and the council leaders who became party to their plans. But unexpected deliverance came when a bodyguard some eleven hundred strong aided him in his escape by night.

Then after months in prison, Paul on his promised journey to Rome was shipwrecked en route. Once again, in the darkest hour, the angel of the Lord appeared, speaking words of reassurance that contradicted the immediate circumstances. The next day Paul witnessed to all that they would be saved, except the ship. And he added, "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me" (Acts 27:25). The record concludes, "And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land." But the boat was lost, even as he had said.

This Watchful One within the shadows is still standing by His children in the day of trouble. Just last night, when perplexed, I heard His message of reassurance and it met my need. I will dare risk my future on His reliable word.

* * *

Those Haunting Suppositions

In the history of the Church, the Eastern branch has tended to emphasize the Bethlehem scene in the life of our Lord, while the Western church has tarried long at the scene of the Cross. But the story of redemption is not actually complete until we reach the place of the empty tomb.

It was a dark morning on that first day when Mary and the other women hurried to the tomb of their recently crucified Lord. Because His burial had been hasty on account of the Sabbath, they came now to complete the last rites of devotion. As they journeyed they pondered about how to remove the huge stone that blocked the entrance to the sepulcher.

How shocked they were when their sleepy eyes saw the stone already rolled away, and the tomb empty of the body of their Lord!

Then Mary, running until she found Peter and John, reported breathlessly, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him." How logical, how realistic, how inescapable, how irrefutable! What other conclusion could one reach?

Of course He was dead, for He had been dead when they laid Him away. Those who hated Him, who had carried through His death until they did away with Him, must now have taken away His body to add this new turn to their cruelty.

After Peter and John had seen for themselves the empty tomb and had noted the graveclothes folded and in order, in true man fashion they left. But Mary tarried behind weeping. Through her tears she saw two angels in white in the very place where He had been. Then suddenly, another voice spoke, this one from the rear: "Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?" Supposing He was the gardener, she replied, "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away."

Another supposition, but not unreasonable. Who else would be around at such an early hour, except the gardener? Maybe this man knew, for someone had taken that body. Dead bodies don't move themselves.

What agonies we endure by our suppositions and presuppositions! Our minds plunge like dive bombers into the depth of our realism. We reconstruct the scene, and offer our own explanations. If our minds ask for the why and God does not answer, then we must furnish our own replies.

At the critical moment Jesus spoke one word, "Mary." Simple, brief, yet how revealing, how reassuring! Now faith was restored and she replied, "Master."

Then followed her revelation to the disciples, who for the most part were skeptical, except the women. But Mary knew. Now she was sure. The stolen body was in truth a resurrection, the would-be gardener her risen Lord! It was not possible that the grave should hold Him! (See Acts 2:24.)

*** * * * ***

07 -- OUR SERVICE

Devotion, the Price of Service

Service is not a substitute for devotion; service expresses devotion in practical living. If any man serve me, let him follow me (John 12:26). Here Jesus

indicates that devotion is the true price of service. We cannot serve God our own way; it must be His way.

There are rigors to this call which we must face unhesitatingly if we would be obedient. The world hated our Lord and Master; it will hate us if we follow Him truly. "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me" (John 15:18). Do not be surprised or confounded; the moral issues of right and wrong are timeless -- forever the same. True holiness, likeness to God, our Father, is incompatible with the prevailing spirit of our age. Men still talk about the "foolishness" of God and the "reproach" of the Cross.

Self-denial is inevitable if we would follow our redemptive mission. Our path we cannot choose, nor would we if we could, when we follow the meek and lowly Nazarene. His ways are still higher than our ways and His thoughts than our thoughts. If we would lay claim to God's resourceful strength, then we must follow the Master in complete commitment. "All mine is thine" must be our prayer before we can have faith to believe "and thine is mine." We must not be deterred by those within the ranks who would make a fair show in the flesh but who would depart from the simplicity of the gospel. "Not my way, but Thy way" must become a song in our lives, not a dirge.

Jesus, our Captain and File Leader, places supreme value upon souls. "All souls are alike to Him"; each one is important. The potential of every living soul is rich, eternal. He would give us an emancipation from things, for "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12: 15). This is life made radiant by the indwelling power of the Spirit. After we have said the "eternal yes" in full surrender, the "daily yes" of obedience becomes relatively easy.

Our view of success now is in terms of His will. Our reward is the Divine Presence. If any man serve me, him will my Father honour (John 12:26). That is enough for me.

*** * ***

By This Sign We Conquer

The badge of victory in the Crusade for Souls is the cross of Jesus Christ. But it is more than a lifeless symbol; it motivates and empowers. This is our message, received from the past, pertinent to our present generation: Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures (I Cor. 15:3). We must keep the Cross central or lose our way.

The light of the Cross exposes the darkness of the human heart; it reveals our own righteousness in terms of "filthy rags." It shows us how coarse sin is, how perverse. It condemns us for our own sin and makes us to 'feel that it is personal

and wicked. Our violation of God's moral order stands in ugly contrast to His holiness. The Cross probes us further until we see sin in its essential lawlessness within. It refuses to let us find the promised land of deliverance without passing by the judgment of Sinai. Jesus "became sin" for us on that cross.

The Cross brings us to our knees until we confess one by one, "I have sinned." It denies refuge based on the multitude of transgressors all about us, for Christ died for all. There is no easy way out; it cost God His only begotten Son. He became our Mediator -- the Man, Christ Jesus. He affords us reconciliation as well as forgiveness through faith in His name.

Christ's sacrifice is our message, and the whole world needs to hear it from ordinary men and women who have experienced His redemptive power. Here is the why for soul winning by lay Christians. We need to witness that our new-found cleansing is as thoroughgoing as was our sin. We are made new creatures in Christ Jesus. He renews a right spirit within us. He purifies by His indwelling Spirit in response to obedient faith. In the final day it is God's plan to receive the conquerors around His throne, but the secret of their ultimate victory is an open one -- "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony." We must tell it out.

The sign of the Cross is all-conquering, for there are no impossible cases with Him; He died for all. But we must show others the way of faith, which is the way to victory, and often we must lead them in one by one. This is the task of the whole Church all of the time.

Victory is assured, for even now the Lamb is on the throne. Hallelujah!

* * *

The Calculated Risk

The concept of the calculated risk is inescapable to anyone who undertakes to be a New Testament Christian. The Master declared unequivocally, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me (Luke 9:23). Of course there is always the temptation to cut down on this risk in order to make the gospel more congenial, especially to youth. But such an approach misrepresents as well as deceives. In actual life, youth has always responded to the way of the Cross because of the challenge of its self-denial.

Also, in seeking the deeper life in God, that experience beyond initial cleansing, forgiveness and peace, the Christian is confronted with what it means to be "crucified with Christ." He discovers that there must be a bottomless and timeless depth to his commitment if it would be entire. Likewise it must be specific, without mental reservations. Again he is faced with the calculated risk. He asks, What if God should call in areas I would not go? What if His plans and purposes should cross with my own dreams or desires? But before consecration can become

sanctification, faith must lay hold of the divine promises. Then the Spirit comes to the humble, obedient heart.

Then what of Kingdom building? Again the calculated risk is unavoidable. Jesus himself committed His ministry and message to a frail and faulty humanity. Even the men He chose to be the leaders for His cause do not rate too high by ordinary appraisals. Likewise His methods were unpretentious and simple: personal work and preaching of the Good News. Yet their contemporaries testified: "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also" (Acts 17:6).

We of this present day and those of succeeding generations -- all of us must decide for ourselves whether or not to be genuinely Christian, whether or not we will take Jesus seriously with regard to the Great Commission. Each generation must face the calculated risk deliberately and cheerfully.

Leaving all to follow Jesus,
Turning from the world away,
Stepping out upon His promise,
All I have is His today.

* * *

A Crucial Prayer

It happened atop Mount Carmel. The prophet Elijah had just returned from his hide-out. Three years he had been gone, throughout the entire drought. He challenged the wicked King Ahab to call the people together on the famous mount. When Elijah saw them coming with the prophets of Baal, he called for a showdown: "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him." After this sharp challenge had stunned the people into silence, Elijah made his proposition,

Let the government provide two bullocks, one for the prophets of Baal and one for Elijah. Let each sacrifice be prepared with wood under it, but no fire. Let the prophets then pray to their respective gods, and the God who answers by fire shall be considered the true God. The drama pleased the people and they agreed.

Elijah let the prophets of Baal go first, all 450 of them. They chanted in sonorous tones, from morning until noon, "O Baal, hear us." But nothing happened. Then the intrepid prophet mocked them and suggested that they pray a little louder, for perhaps their god was talking, or traveling, or asleep. Thus goaded, the host of professional prophets began to cut themselves with knives and lancets and to scream louder, until their chant became a dirge, while the blood flowed. This orgy continued until evening. Still no response.

Now it was Elijah's turn. After he had prepared his altar and sacrifice he called for water. Despite the extreme shortage, they furnished it, all twelve barrels full, until the sacrifice was water-soaked and the trench round about the altar was full. Elijah's prayer was short and to the point. He asked God to reveal himself through the fire and let the people know that what he had done was in His name. Then the fire fell and the flames licked up everything, water included. The people themselves, who had rejected the judgment of drought and famine, now fell on their faces crying: "The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God." Soon, led by Elijah, they were slaughtering the false prophets at the foot of the mount.

Next we see Elijah on his knees atop the mount again, praying this time for rain that God had promised. It came in torrents!

The God of Elijah lives today and answers prayer for those who follow Him, according to their day. Oh, let us pray!

* * *

God's Underground Army

It was one of Israel's darkest hours. The moral lights had burned down low and were flickering. Civil war had divided the nation permanently into the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Wickedness had so consistently marked the reigns of the rulers of both kingdoms that the consequences were depressingly monotonous. Assassinations and suicides were not unknown, even within royal families.

Now Ahab became ruler over Israel. For twenty-two years his reign excelled in evil. He had married a Phoenician princess, Jezebel, whose Oriental corruption was exceeded only by her diabolical cruelty. In her hand Ahab became a mere puppet. Out went the prophets of God; in came the prophets of Baal with all their attendant degradation. Most of God's prophets were slain with the sword, but not the underground band of 100. They took to the caves and were fed there by Obadiah, Ahab's governor.

But now appeared God's rugged prophet, Elijah. By promising a prolonged drought, he dared announce God's judgment upon a derelict nation. Barren months followed. The prophet himself was fed miraculously by God, who sent the ravens and the devout, unknown widow. After months of famine, rain came again in answer to Elijah's prayer; but still the nation did not repent.

Before the drought had ended Elijah challenged all the prophets of Baal to spiritual combat atop Mount Carmel. Although outnumbered 450 to 1, Elijah emerged victor with the seal of fire upon his water-soaked sacrifice. Now the people were convinced and the false prophets were slain at the foot of the mount. Even Ahab was cowed, but not Jezebel. She countered with a threat on Elijah's life, and he fled to the wilderness. Again, miraculous feeding and prolonged fastings -- forty

days and nights in all -- with the inevitable weariness and exhaustion. At this point Elijah succumbed to a peril peculiar to the holy and the brave -- he despaired of deliverance. He complained, They have "forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." Hear God's answer: Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him (I Kings 19:18).

Elijah had forgotten the underground! Their knees would not bend, neither would their lips kiss, for they loved God with a pure love.

* * *

Testing Our Maturity

One major test of a Christian's maturity is his ability to build the kingdom of God in his own corner with little regard to credit or recognition. To be fully convinced that remoteness does not connote insignificance is a mark of the mature mind.

The temptation to indulge in vainglory and to call attention to one's self is common to those who would win men to the Lord Jesus Christ. Professor Denney wrote decisively at this point when he observed: "No man can bear witness to Christ and to himself at the same time. No man can give the impression that he himself is clever and that Christ is mighty to save." The Apostle Paul faced the same issue when he cried out: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14).

Surely those who are the sons of God must do the work of God. Jesus himself declared, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21). But a measure of the self-emptying that the Son of God evidenced in His redemptive mission must be found in His messengers if the gospel is to be carried undiluted to those in need. This selflessness makes for teamwork and Kingdom building. Our service is co-operative and venturesome. We honor God as the only true source of life and fruit. One plants the seed of God's Word, another waters it, but God alone gives the increase.

Likewise, the mature mind sees the value of a single soul, though unredeemed, and discovers infinite worth even in a child. Kingdom business is big business to him; all other business is secondary and contributory. Mark the patience of Jesus as He sat by Jacob's Well laboring to win an unorthodox Samaritan, sparkling in personality, but shady in character. But He won her and many of her friends besides out of the nearby city. It was also the Master who said: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14).

As Robert Browning put it:

**All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me.
This, I was worth to God,
Whose wheel the pitcher shaped.**

The mature Christian sees every man through the eyes of God.

*** * * * ***

08 -- OUR PRAYERS

My Prayer for Today

Heavenly Father, I seek Thee in the morning hour before the rush of daily schedule clouds my vision of Thee. Above all my needs, I seek Thee for Thy very self. May the light of Thy countenance, the purity of Thy presence cleanse my very prayers until I shall ask for nothing amiss. The compromises of daily life crowd upon me like grime from the soot-laden air of this busy city. Let me not wait for heaven to bar from me that which defiles or makes a lie. Keep me clean. May there be on my pilgrim's path Thy light shining. If Thou wilt walk with me, then I shall see the beauty of holiness and be satisfied.

But I cannot make it through today without Thee. Thou knowest my assignments. Men with confused minds, broken lives are seeking me. My wits will not do; Thy wisdom I crave. Some have used sharp words, and I must face them today. Give me the answer that destroys wrath and dispels confusion.

I must also face the consequences of some of my own blunders today. I am ashamed, but help me to acknowledge them without excuse. May I be honest with myself and with those concerned in these failures. Grant us the healing of Thy grace and may Thy work among us be established in righteousness and truth.

Some who are dearer to me than life itself will today face temptation, both subtle and fierce. I cannot speak, but Thou art near. Light up their pathway by Thy Word and mark well those pitfalls standing by. Remember those who seem to forget Thee, who admire Thy truth but shun Thy cross. Some are so kind and friendly to me personally, but let me not be satisfied until Thou hast won their hearts and changed them inwardly. Use me as Thou wilt. When this day is done, bring me again to this quiet place. "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." In His worthy name. Amen!

*** * ***

Our Daily Bread

Our Heavenly Father: We would begin this day with Thee. Early would we seek Thee, with all our hearts. Our sense of need is real this morning; give us this day our daily bread. Our souls are thirsty; give us of the wells of Thy salvation. Supply our every need, both temporal and spiritual, but teach us contentment with what we have because Thy abiding presence transcends all else.

Save us this day from any sense of frustration. We have made the great commitment, and Thou hast answered our cry with personal cleansing and divine power. Now reveal to us what it means to walk with Thee in the furnace of affliction. Thou dost know the recent happenings that have piled up like a weight upon our heads. We cannot bear this burden alone; we bring our need to Thee. If it be Thy will, remove this oppression from us today. If not, grant us a renewal of strength so that our witness shall not be dimmed. Today, life seems too much for us, but save us from our fears. Make us more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

Some about us are sick with the poison of hate; give us in abundant measure the antidote of Thy love. Some are bruised by their own sins and many by the sins of others. Make us healers of souls today like unto the Great Physician. Let our lives breathe confidence and serenity amid these tensions. We readily confess our lack of wisdom for these tangled skeins of life, but save us from the mood of despair. Let us not live this day "problem-conscious"; rather, give us faith until we can say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Give us patience for the trying situations. When Thou dost employ time for the healing, help us to acknowledge Thee in the process. Where our petitions are not properly expressed, be pleased to edit them. When our most personal prayers are denied, do grant our supreme desire, to serve Thee each day with a pure heart, fervently. In Jesus' worthy name. Amen.

* * *

A Prayer for Guidance

Heavenly Father, we draw near today in earnest prayer for the coming General Assembly. May Thy presence be felt in the midst of our church family soon to gather from the far corners of earth, for we meet in Thy name. So manifest thyself to us all that our deepest thought shall be an awareness of Thy Spirit's presence.

Guide us in all that we do and say. Give such unity of heart and mind as only Thou canst impart. Let us exalt Jesus, our risen Lord, and may none of us be guilty of despising one who would follow Him. May divine love prevail in our midst until Christians of every land shall feel at home in Thy presence.

Let Thy praises be sounded even in the business sessions. May nothing be done through strife or vainglory, even for a righteous cause. Let the destiny of Thy

kingdom rest with Thee and not with us. Banish from us all divisive influences and petty notions, and help us to plan wisely with the long-range view in mind. Save us from the hysteria of our fears. Be especially near when the right answers are not obvious and when good people are at variance with each other in their judgment. Light up our path with a sure and reliable word, for in Thy light we would see light.

Renew our great convictions and mark well our paths with holiness unto the Lord. Keep our battle line short, for the enemy outnumbers us. Separate us from all worldliness, both in spirit and in practice. May we not consume our Christian heritage upon ourselves by careless or selfish living; rather, let us reinvest it in a needy world.

Enlarge our faith and vision, that we may enter every open door for service at home and abroad. Teach us how to bring our great commitment up to date, and make it personal. Make us willing in this the day of Thy power. In Jesus' worthy name. Amen.

* * *

A Sunday Morning Prayer

O God, our Heavenly Father, I must face another Sunday morning congregation in an hour or so. I need Thy help and undergirding. Illuminate my mind to understand the inner meaning of Thy Word. Show me how to dispense that truth in fitting portions so that those who hear may want to partake. I am far from home today, but these people are well known to Thee. They are needy, hungry-hearted, and some are heavy laden.

Thy Word is a Lamp; make it a Light to us today. Give me a sure word, untainted by speculation or closet-room philosophy, for these men and women are troubled and vexed by suffering and sin. Help me to make Thy Word plain today, so that children will understand and old folks will not go away disappointed. Help me to challenge strong men and women with a word that is timeless and eternal.

Give me an assuring word. Some will be there who have lost their way. Give me that redemptive word that will bring them back, penitent. Perhaps a little mother is fighting overwhelming odds. Her home is broken and she is laboring night and day to raise her children for God and holiness. Master, do not let me fail her. Give me Thy Shepherd's understanding heart. Let my words be reliable and sure.

On the edge of the city there may be a new-made grave where, this past week, a member of this congregation has been laid away. My words will not do for those who mourn; my own experience is not enough. Give me Thy unchangeable Word. Some are bearing burdens and losses that seem worse than even death itself. They have prayed long for deliverance but their desire has not come. May they not find my words brassy or frivolous. Give me the understanding of Thy love.

In sincere humility and personal need I bend my knees, but I lift my hands in prayer and faith. Go with me this morning as I stand behind Thy sacred desk to face this congregation. Help me to win some soul today. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

*** * ***

A Prayer for Service

O God, our Heavenly Father, strengthen our hands today for Thy service. Our assignments seem too much for us, but help us to face up to them with courage and not with fear. Thou hast delivered us from sin; now renew our strength for this holy warfare. Not for easy places we ask Thee, but for the reassurance of Thy presence. When the sharpness of the conflict seems to overwhelm us, give us the resourcefulness of love. When the humdrum of daily tasks would wear us down, give us the patience of devotion and the persistence of fidelity.

Let us not dream of easy conquests by novel methods; rather, teach us how to win men in personal encounter, as the Master did. Make this the day of opportunity, for many are passing over to the land where destinies are sealed.

May we not run from the difficult or disagreeable because of the sharpness of men's tongues or the bitterness of their hate. Show us how to do our duty even when the world opposes. Give us patient strength to wait for Thy verdicts, in both time and eternity. May we not dread the disparagements of men, but seek only to please Thee. Let not the base ingritudes of men turn us from Thy holy will. Forbid that we should turn aside for any earthly gain.

Give us the zeal to pursue Thy work so that being colaborers with Thee shall become our joy and crown. Keep our motives pure so that we shall serve Thee because we love Thee and not for any earthly prize. Keep the romance of our redemptive mission fresh; show us again the delight of doing Thy will.

May life's inequities never rob us of the true inner ethic of Thy holiness. Forbid that we should become accustomed to sin. Show us again its devastation and its curse. We are outnumbered; we need the reassurance of Thy voice. So many have gone back of late, and some have let their love grow cold. Turn our weakness into strength, lest we too fail.

Help us to remember this day whose we are and whom we serve. Go before us in all our assignments. When Thou art done with us here, gather us to the home of many mansions, where Thy eternal presence will be our true reward. In Jesus' worthy name. Amen.

*** * ***

A Prayer for Our Servicemen

O God, our Heavenly Father, bless the youth of our nation in these days of unstable peace. Especially bless these servicemen who have been so recently taken from the shelter of their homes. They seem bewildered and uncertain. Give them poise and make them strong, according to their needs.

This new way of life brings many new temptations that lie in wait to deceive and ensnare them. May they not cast off restraint despite the pressure and popularity of sin. Be Thou their Defense and Light. Show them the snares of evil and let them anticipate its cunning. Reveal to them the lurking dregs of the social glass, and may they not sell their manhood for the glamour of a night. Follow them to faraway places and may they not forget Thy law. May they not yield to social pressure. Especially help those who have taken Thy name. Reveal to them the secret of Thy presence. Give them strength to stand alone and not feel sorry for themselves. May their lights shine wherever they are.

Bless the mothers of these young men. Their hearts are tender and their pain is real. Tears flow unchecked, for they feel the pangs of sorrow. Also, many of these :: young wives stand with babes in arms. They are very much alone now; do Thou be their Strength and Shield. Bless the fathers, too, who stand with brave faces but with anguished hearts. Give to all these troubled ones the rest of faith and, when the days and nights seem long, let Thy love shine through.

Turn the nations of this earth away from the folly of sin. Give us a lasting peace that is real. This cold war hangs over us like a pall. Forgive and cleanse our own nation, for our sins are strong and deep. This sickness is too much for our skill; be Thou our Great Physician. Forgive and cleanse us before these sins destroy us. In Jesus' worthy name we pray. Amen.

*** * ***

A Prayer for Revival

Our Heavenly Father, this new year we would begin with Thee. Life's shadows fall as the old year fades away. Give us the light of Thy presence. Thy grace has been abundant and so free. Thy mercies have not failed. We offer Thee our thanks and sincere praise. We feel unworthy of all Thy benefits, but we are truly grateful.

To please Thee is our deep desire; only be our Guide and Helper. Forbid that we should wait for tragedy or disaster to turn us to Thee; keep our faces heavenward and our knees bent.

Our supreme desire this morning is for a thoroughgoing revival that will reach our entire church. Our slow progress this past year and our small gains

shame us. Our need is deep; a slight blessing will not do. Give us showers of blessing today!

Expose our needs to the light of Thy Word, and let not ecclesiastical pride or love of praise hide from us our true condition. Let us not be lost in the vagueness of generalities or in the shelter of previous accomplishments. Put Thy finger upon our idols wherever they are, and cast them out every one. Let all wickedness, in high or low places, be banished from us. Make and keep us pure within. Deliver us from all spiritual dullness and sluggishness.

Give us a far-reaching revival, so that no country or corner of our Zion shall be missed. We all need Thy quickening, empowering touch. Teach us to do Thy work in Thy way. Show us how to win men one by one wherever they are found. Let us not be content to pray for the heathen far away while we neglect the godless on our own street. Give us a new sense of urgency, born of faith and clear insight and not of fear or hysteria. Send us a revival that will renew our primary motives; these secondary motives do not wear well.

Teach us how to put Thee and Thy kingdom first and make all else a well-removed second. Save us from love of ease and from all self-pity. Let us not boast of our spiritual heritage while we squander it upon ourselves. Show us how to reinvest it in the lost of earth. Teach us again the value of one immortal soul, and give us new confidence in Thy unfailing power.

Give us the will to perform as well as to pray. By the oil of Thy Spirit, anoint our hands and our feet for service, and not our heads only. When life's short day is done bring us to Thy everlasting home, where we shall serve Thee days without end.

Send our needed revival now, Lord, and begin it today in me! Amen.

*** * * * ***

THE END