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RELIGION AND EVERYDAY LIFE

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1

Religion and Everyday Life

A Thoughtful man of affairs advises us to be careful about trusting a man of unsound religion. He says that a man who is not true to his God cannot be depended upon to be loyal to his fellowmen. Ambassador Kennedy, speaking at a dedication service in Scotland, urged a renewal of faith as the remedy for the world's fundamental difficulties. Soon after the upheavals in France following the Commune of 1871, a distinguished American visiting Paris was asked why the American Republic was so stable. His answer was that on the whole our people believed in and practiced the Ten Commandments. "The Ten Commandments!" exclaimed his French friend; "and what are they?" "That," said the American, narrating the incident, "is what ails France." And that is what ails any country whenever there is moral and spiritual collapse. When men cease to fear God, property and human life lose their value. When men cease to believe in God, their oaths become valueless, and justice becomes impossible. When men cease to love God, they become hard and indifferent toward their fellow men. The old Huguenot was right when he demanded a receipt of the Paris landlord as soon as he found out the landlord did not believe in God. Religion is not that detached and indifferent thing that many worldlings would have us believe. It is at the foundation of stable civil government. It is the constitution of successful business. It is the "sheet anchor of our liberties."

The preface to every ethical, political, economic and educational collapse the world has suffered has been moral and spiritual neglect. People worry about the collapse of civilization, but they are hard pressed when they are asked, What is civilization? The reason for this confusion is that civilization as we know it is but a by-product of Christianity, and when men reject or neglect the source from which it springs, there is little reason for wanting to preserve the by-product. Christ came that we might have life, and that we might have more abundant life. And when He is sent away, life in all its essential content goes with him.

But we would not generalize. We would come to the personal element and the personal responsibility. The religion of our Lord Jesus Christ is intended to meet the needs of a work-a-day

world. It is intended to give us courage to meet the monotonous and the disagreeable. It is intended to restrain us in popularity and prosperity that we become not intemperate. It is intended to purify all human relations and make us better members of society in every sense of the word. It is intended to elevate our motives and enables us to live for the good of others, and for the glory of God. It is intended to console us when we are sick, and to assure us when we are dying. Christ and His holy religion are adapted to our needs in the everyday life.

* * * * *

2

I Shall Not Want

The word want has a variable meaning covering a scope beginning with mere weak wishing and extending to the most extreme need -- as when we speak of a family as being "in want." It would be ruinous to us for God to meet our passing whims and unsifted wishes. For this very reason we should inject "according to Thy will" into every petition. But God does propose to meet those wants that are real.

Sometimes people say, "We are bound to live." But that is not quite true. As Christians we are bound to do right, even if doing right means that we must die untimely. We cannot, therefore, claim that our mortal life is unconditionally assured, but we can claim that grace is vouched unto us to enable us to live the days of our mortal life in righteousness and true holiness.

"The Christian's secret of a happy life" involves and demands the elimination of weak and passing wishes, or at least the submerging of them in the will of God, and the exchanging of them for things that really matter. One description of a good man is that "He is a man of simple tastes and few wants." One of the early Methodist poets sang, "Man wants but little here below, nor wants that little long." All this explains why a devout Christian can still say, "I shall not want," when at the moment he is poor, sick, and friendless; for every desire and thought of his is made captive to the will of Christ.

But there are wants that are real, and their character is such that none but God can supply them. Every sinner wants (in the full sense of dire need) pardon for his guilt. Every believer wants purity of heart and life. Every Christian of whatever rank wants strength to sustain him in the hour of temptation and trial and to uphold him in his daily task, and God will supply all these needs for those who trust Him. "Godliness with contentment is great gain."

Eternal life is both a state and a duration. That is why we may sing of "Eternal life begun below." In such lines we are describing the state. Such a state, as suggested by Professor Henry Drummond, involves the removing of spiritual friction; for friction causes wear, and wear means ultimate collapse. And then eternal life has respect to duration -- to live without friction forever. It is said of the people of heaven that they "shall never hunger." By this we do not understand that they will be without cravings, but rather that the means for satisfying these cravings will be immediate and abundant. They will always be close to the tree of life from which they may eat; they will always be near the river of life from which they may drink; they will be monumental

pillars in the house of God, and hence shall have a home forever more. They shall behold the face of God. That is, they shall be in His full favor, and beyond this they ask no favor at all.

* * * * *

3

On Being Too Agreeable

Perhaps nothing contributes more to the making of a grouch than being compelled to live with a Pollyanna who claims immediately to see good in everything. He rejoices when you bump your head and when you "hit the wrong nail," and enjoys the sight of your discomfiture. He drives you to distraction, and you become homesick to hear some weak, but familiar voice saying, "Oh, that's too bad. I am so sorry for you in this matter."

A person's character may be judged by the things which please, and by the things that offend him. It is a good thing to take time out for counting our blessings, and it is an enlightening thing to observe the type of things which we list among our blessings. Passing over these things which we list as temporal blessings, and which are pretty much the lot of men without regard to their moral and spiritual character, it is encouraging if we find that prayer and Bible reading and testimony and the fellowship of the people of God are pleasing to us. It is encouraging if we find that we can rejoice when others have good fortune, without being envious of them; and if we find that peace and good will toward men find their ready abode in our hearts and minds.

But it is also well to be encouraged by the type of things that offend us. Personally, I am glad that I am offended by rough and careless language, jazz music, by everything that has to do with liquor from the sight of its advertisement in the papers and along the highways to the sight of its "finished products" in the drunkard and his family, by the proximity of men and women who engage in smoking ill-smelling and health-destroying tobacco, and by the flaunting of scanty and gaudy dress. I want to be offended by insincere flattery, the slander of absent persons, the useless wounding of persons present, and by the gushy manners of those who heap praise upon themselves. I don't want to like language that encourages doubt about God or which reflects dishonor upon Christ, the Church, the ministry, the home or the nation. I want to be stung when vile and shallow people question the purity of good women and the honor of good men. I want to live so it will hurt me when men lie to the injury of the good name of another or to the unearned advantage of any deal or party or purpose. I do not believe the end justifies the means in every case. The means too should be right.

And here I close the activities of the day, within five minutes of midnight. I pause to thank God that good things please me and evil things offend me. I do not want to be so agreeable as to risk being taken for a friend by the devil and the wicked world. And I want my resentment against evil to be inward and real, and not just shallow and passing.

* * * * *

4

Visions of God

I saw visions of God (Ezekiel 1:1).

Vision is defined as "the act or sense of seeing." Its simplest application is, of course, to the functioning of the physical eye. But vision is also a function of the mind and heart, and in this sense its basis is either one's imagination or a revelation from God. Within limits, even the first mentioned form is useful. The engineer sees the bridge in his imagination before he draws the blueprint and before the contractor drives a nail. The artist sees the picture before it is painted, and then proceeds to paint what he sees. The sculptor sees the angel in the stone before he begins with hammer and chisel. The statesman sees the republic before the constitution is written. It is to those who see visions that we owe every venture which stands for progress.

There are visions which have to do with moral and spiritual accomplishments, and with soul victories. These are visions of God. Sometimes they have God for their object, but always they have God for their source. Isaiah had a vision in which his own personal need of holiness was discovered (Isaiah 6), and his duty of preaching to others was made known. Peter had a vision on the housetop at Joppa which taught him that the gospel of Christ in all its fullness and power is for all men without respect to blood, language or color of skin (Acts 10).

No one ever had clearer visions or more lasting impressions through visions than Paul, the philosophic son of a Pharisee and pupil of the scholarly Gamaliel. On the road to Damascus, whither he went on a mission involving the persecution of Christians, he saw a light that rivaled the sun for brightness. That light made him temporarily blind to the things of the physical world around him, but its gleams guided him thereafter in every important choice, made clear the reason for all that happened to him until even in a Roman dungeon he could ignore Caesar's part in his situation and dub himself a "prisoner of Jesus Christ"; and that light sustained him in a deathless devotion that arose in triumph above the bloody chopping block of Nero. It was his "abundance of revelations" that became his defense when legalists denied his claim to apostleship on the ground that he had never seen Jesus Christ in the flesh.

But what of ourselves? "Where there is no vision the people perish." Where there is no vision there is no conviction, no leadership, no certainty of the course to pursue. It is said that a man of vision sees before others see, sees more than others see, and sees more clearly than others see. But ability to see like that involves altitude. No one can see far who lives in the valley. If we are going to see enough to save ourselves and others from perishing we must ascend into the hills of God from which eminence our perspective will enable us to see how and why things are so, and also enable us to see the way that we and others should take in order to escape destruction and reach the land of everlasting safety.

* * * * *

5

The Worst Can Happen to Me

What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? (Job 2:10).

Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof (Matthew 6:34).

The great majority of us live in mental detachment from the evils which come upon men generally. Others get sick: but we offer suggestions for avoiding such diseases, and even prescribe remedies without waiting to be employed as physician. Others have accidents: but we have a feeling that "nothing like that can happen to me." Others lose their money and even their source of livelihood: but we stand up as financial advisers to point the way to safe and sane prosperity. Others are mistaken by their friends, find their enemies irreconcilable, and are voted out of their offices; but we write books and papers on "How to get along with people," and recite the instances in which our tact and prowess gave us the lead and brought popularity and election. Members of the families of others get into trouble, are caught in the meshes of the law and are forced to serve prison sentences, marry unfortunately and suffer the disgrace of divorce; but we recount the generations in our families in which there were no such misfortunes, and feel that our line is immune to social disasters. Others are forced to stand by and watch their loved ones sicken and die; but we stand up in the testimony meeting and tell how prayer and faith brought us and our loved ones out even from the valley of shadows -- all with the air and bearing "that cannot happen to me."

But it is well in times of health and happiness to remember that God has promised us no physical or temporal immunities, and that under a government where the spiritual good is the only good, the worst may come to me. Today my car may be wrecked, my fortune may fly away, my position may fold up, my child may sicken, my health may permanently fail, my dearest loved one may die -- I may die myself. If no calamity comes, even then I must not take this exterior good fortune as sufficient evidence that God is for me. Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad -- with power. And if the worst comes to me I must not falter in faith nor for a moment entertain the thought that God has forgotten or is no longer fair. He has not promised immunity to passing sorrow, but has promised that joy shall follow sorrow -- after which there will be no sorrow. He has not promised that our mines shall yield nothing but gold; but He has promised that we ourselves shall come out of the furnace as refined gold. He has not promised that we shall not be separated from our loved ones; but He has promised that we shall be united with our loved ones after the separation, and that after that there will be no more separations. He has not promised that we ourselves shall not grow old, sicken and die; but He has promised that we shall arise in eternal and painless youth to live in His company forever more. Therefore, even though the worst that can come to mortals may come to me, I shall yet have the best that comes to immortals in full compensation, and I shall be glad forever.

* * * * *

6

Outward Appearances

God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God (Luke 16:15).

There is a true outward appearance, and there is a mere outward appearance. A true Christian appears as a Christian, professes to be one, and is one. The hypocrite puts on the

appearance, makes the profession, but is not sincere and right in his heart. Outward appearance, therefore, is important, but it is not sufficient. It is important as a sign announcing what is within; but if it belies the content of the heart it is at its best worthless. It is required of a Christian that he dress with the simplicity that becometh godliness, but an unbecoming coat may sometimes cover a proud and unregenerated heart. Humility is a pearl among virtues, but when one becomes conscious of his humility the gem is likely to slip away.

I once heard a minister warn the people in judgment tones that God looks upon the heart, but as I thought of the matter, I reached this conclusion: I am glad God does look directly upon the heart, and does not have to approach through words and deeds as men have to do, for I know my heart is sincere and right. If He looked upon my words and deeds, I fear I should not rate high, for these are but poor channels through which my love for Him must flow. My deeds are faulty, my words are weak. Only my love is strong, and I am glad God looks upon that. Reputation is what people think I am, character is what I really am, and God knows what I am. I do not always make a good impression on those I meet, and they go on their way rating me low, but all the time God knows what I am and what I long to be.

Once the prophet came to David and offered the king his choice between defeat before his enemies and a plague at the hand of God. Without a moment's hesitation, David chose God. Instinctively and logically he was sure God would be more merciful than his enemies. But God will also be better than friends and loved ones, for all it takes with Him is that we love Him with all our hearts and sincerely strive to please Him. Our friends and loved ones require a certain degree of efficiency, in addition to sincerity.

I am glad that for the moment I have a body because it enables me to serve those who are in the body, but I am glad also that my body is not myself, and that in the body or out of it, I am saved through the blood of Jesus Christ, and that my heart is assured by the presence of His Spirit. It is well with my soul.

* * * * *

7

Facing the Everlasting Light

Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end (Isaiah 9:7).

The thesis of juvenile debate as related to pursuit and possession was, I think, misstated. It is not pursuit and possession, but anticipation and recollection -- for in reality everything is past or future, the present is too brief to count. The true form, therefore, is, "Resolved that the joys of anticipation are more satisfying than the joys of recollection." The blessings of the past suffer much demotion just from the very fact that they are past; for we all know now that the past can never be recalled. And often the joys of the past turn to miseries just from the consideration that they can come no more.

But the crescendo of God's orchestra points its two horns toward the future, and the form of the crescent suggests the encompassing of infinite blessings in limitless time -- there shall be no

end to the increase of His government and peace. The joys of anticipation are rightly more satisfying than the joys of recollection, because they are fuller.

Bright light causes sharp shadows, and from this there is no escape during the period of mortal life. The shadows must fall, it is ours to determine that they shall fall behind us. To accomplish this we must ever keep our faces toward the light. Time cannot turn backward in its flight, and if we turn backward, we must still walk toward the future, and because we are walking backward our faces must be in the shadow.

Normally the "path of the just is as the shining light" which shineth more and more until there shall be no shadows anywhere. But that shadowless day is in the future, not in the past, and the spectrum through which the white light shines is the imperishable Christian hope which even now does not let us down in shame; for earnest is found in the love of God now already shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given unto us. We need not deny there are shadows; but let us keep our faces toward the light so the shadows will fall behind us. Some day we shall have transparent, glorified bodies. Through these the light can shine unhindered, and then, and forever after that, there shall be no shadows.

* * * * *

8

Dig, Beg or Steal

What shall I do? I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed (Luke 16:3).

Besides digging (working) and begging, there is only one other way of getting along, and that is to steal. If you read the story behind the verse which we have given at the head of this article, you will find that stealing was just what the lazy, vain steward in this case did. Work, hard, sweaty work is the price of every worthwhile success. Those who are too lazy to work often take to begging, and those who are too vain to beg are driven to stealing.

The man who works may not merit all the success that comes to him, but he does pay the price required. It must not be said that prices and the articles purchased must always be of equal value. In fact they should not be so. If the money one holds has power to bring more happiness and usefulness than the things for which it can be exchanged, then trading is losing. And the man who works may earn more or less than he receives in return for his labor, but he is engaged in legitimate trade.

The beggar shares in the fruit of others' labors with their consent, but he has to gain that consent by humiliation and shame, for he must ask another for a laborer's share without rendering any labor. The fact that he meets benevolent persons does not remove the fact that he is willing continually to take more than he gives. So begging is always shameful.

The thief takes a share of the fruit of others' labors without the consent of those who earn; and thus the shame of begging is turned to knavery, and embarrassment gives way to guilt. Both beggars and thieves are menaces because they compel the fruits of the labors of some to supply the

wants of those beyond the bounds of their rightful responsibility. Only the digger (worker) is an asset, and he only when his productive labor equals and surpasses his consuming wants. The student who takes shortcuts to scholastic honors, and substitutes "credits" for faithful study is either a beggar or a thief, as are also the penitent who hope for pardon without true repentance; the Christian who expects to be made holy in heart without bringing a full consecration of all his ransomed powers; and those who hope for spiritual freedom and power without rendering instant and unflinching obedience. I am thinking of those who would win the crown without bearing the cross; who would lead souls to Christ without prayer and earnest testimony; and who would accomplish wonders by faith without bearing the burden of intercessory prayer. All these things savor of begging or stealing.

Begging is indeed shameful; stealing is a crime. It is foolish and sinful to seek escape from genuine digging and hard work. Let us stand and sing, "We'll Work Till Jesus Comes!"

* * * * *

9

Praying in Secret

Jesus advised us to go into our closet at the time of prayer and "shut to the door." The purpose of this is twofold: to shut the world out and to shut ourselves in with God. It is important to get away from the distractions of the world, but it is just as important to get alone with God.

It seems a strange thing to say, but the truth is there is a tendency on our part to hold ourselves in reserve in the presence of God, as though we could keep Him from knowing the deepest secrets of our hearts, and we have not really "prayed in secret" until we have opened our hearts fully and freely in communion with Him.

Any kind of ostentation, any use of high sounding words, any tendency toward recommending ourselves -- anything that might look well in the same list with these is forbidden by the very idea that we are "alone with God." The vocabulary of a solitary soul at secret prayer is not voluminous anyway. Sometimes the deepest earnestness is better expressed by groanings than by words, and by silences than by sentences.

At the time of secret prayer one must not only hush the voices without, but he must silence the voices within. Our thoughts have a tendency to stray in a time like that, and planning may try to crowd out praying. Distraction must be overcome, invaders must be driven off, and every thought and imagination must be brought into the captivity of obedience to Christ.

"God is everywhere, and yet is not seen among the occupations of time and its affairs." It is not enough to accept the truth that God is everywhere in the perfection of His attributes. We must pass on from this abstraction to conscious fellowship with God in person. This step is much shorter than that required in passing from atheism to faith, but sometimes it is almost as difficult to make. But if we would really pray in secret, we must push on into the holy of holies until we are indeed "alone with God." And having done this once, we will find the joy of it sufficient to entice us there frequently. There is no man who can live so well or die so content as that man who really

has a secret understanding with God. Public prayer, family prayer, and prayer in the company of one's dearest friend -- one of these or all of these cannot substitute for that form of prayer that is possible only when the whole world is shut out and you are shut in -- with God.

* * * * *

10

Feed Is More Effective than Whips

In the old "horse and buggy days" there were some horsemen who spent considerable money for whips with which to drive their horses along. But there were some who found the horses would possess good spirit and get along with speed only if they were just well fed and properly cared for. I think churches are like that. Some preachers try to drive the church, others just feed the church well and get good service without much whipping.

Today a preacher came to tell me how poor his church was, and I was not surprised to hear that it had become impossible to raise the denominational budgets, and that it looked doubtful whether it was going to be possible to meet the local bills and keep the doors of the church open. I soon discovered that this preacher had preached poverty to his people until they had become really poor -- financially and spiritually -- and that from him they had caught "the poor mouth," so that they felt even poorer than they were. There is not much that can be done there, so far as I can see, except to find a richer preacher, so the people will get their courage back.

Some shallow preachers tell the people to "give until it hurts" in support of the program of the church. This is not standard -- some people hurt too easily. People must be taught to tithe and to support the work of God faithfully and regularly and joyfully. Even the preaching of tithing must be done in the spirit of love and the anointing of the Spirit. Tithing can be taught so legalistically that all will look upon it as a burden and wish most heartily they could get away from it. The tithe is the minimum -- there is no maximum, except the full amount of one's possessions. People who are full and overflowing with the love of God find tithing and giving both easy and desirable, and such people do their part gladly. The joy of giving is greater than the joy of receiving -- but only when the giver loves God and gives as unto the Lord.

In the whole of the Christian service, duty is to be swallowed up in privilege, and, like the machine with plenty of good oil in the crankcase, the fuller the joy the less the friction. And if we really believe God we must allow the poor widow to give her last handful of meal to the work of God in the full confidence that this is the way to prepare for the coming famine. Devoted, happy people are hilarious givers.

* * * * *

11

"Never Man Spake Like this Man"

Jesus was the leader of the most radical revolution this world has ever seen; for He was not content with a revolution in practice, but insisted upon the complete regeneration of the heart.

And yet in a day of political tyranny, He never suggested uprising against the Roman government, and He escaped from those who would have taken Him by force to make Him the center of such revolt. He was the author of the fullest liberty ever conceived in the minds of men. And yet in a day of universal slavery, He never preached once on abolition. He had little to say on social reforms, quoted no statistics, and never discoursed in generalities and abstractions. He used no graphs and acknowledged no forbidding externalities. When He talked of men at all, He talked only of their hearts.

Christ's. method of evangelism was the very simplest. He won the heart of one man. and sent that man to win the heart of his brother. Then the two joined hands to go and win the third. And by such a method He planned to win all He would ever win. Others discourse learnedly about methods, but Christ's method is a man.

Every disciple is attached directly to his Master. There are no supers and no subs in the family of faith. Each is equal with any other, and Christ alone is Master. Believers are branches in a vine, and draw their sustenance from sources within. Exterior attachments do not count.

The way into Christ's kingdom is difficult for the strongest and most learned, and yet it is possible to even a little child. Both obscurity and fame are matters of indifference. Christians do not strive simply to think little of themselves, but find their best refuge in forgetting themselves altogether. In the estimates of Christ only goodness differentiates: meekness is strength, gentleness is greatness, dependence is wealth, simplicity is wisdom, purity is power, and service is promotion.

Today, as in the past, Jesus challenges the weary and heavy laden to come to Him for rest. He would answer the prayer that all things might be new by changing the heart of the one that prays from sin to holiness. He would bring to bear upon the heart of a single individual all the force required to transform the universe, and in the heat of this furnace He would burn out all sinful alloy, and set up in the individual heart a throne upon which God can reign without a rival. This is no time to sit about waiting for the dispensations to change. This is the time for coming to Christ for pardon and purity and for all grace required to make our individual hearts moral and spiritual types of heaven. No man ever spoke like this Man, and this Man is the God-man. Let us hear and heed His voice.

* * * * *

12

We Must Not Forget

The servant who says, "I forgot," is making poorest possible excuse; for forgetting is more often a result than a cause. We forget because our interest has lagged - we remember that which concerns us. When an old acquaintance fails to recognize us we are humiliated, because we know, instinctively, that he has not been thinking about us since we saw him last, and we realize that we do not fill a very important niche in his life. We remember the things upon which we are accustomed to dwell. That is why failure to know the Disciples' Prayer (commonly called the

Lord's Prayer), the Twenty-third Psalm, and John 3:16 bespeaks more than mental weakness -- it bespeaks religious indifference besides.

If we would remember the Lord we must think much upon His name, and recount His blessings anew every morning. If we would remember His Word we must bind its precepts like a frontlet upon our heads and meditate upon its promises in the night seasons. If we would be always aware of the divine, protecting providences, we must encircle our necks with them as though they were priceless pearls. God made a strong and pathetic complaint against His people when they forgot Him. This sin moved Him in olden times to compare His people with the domestic beasts -- to the disadvantage of His people. The oxen and the asses serve their masters because of the master's care -- "but my people do not remember."

How can we ever forget the mercies of God, the kindness of friends, the thoughtfulness of loved ones, the graciousness of those who overlooked our faults, the sorrows we missed, the joys we found, the friendships that did not fail us, the hate that was transformed into love, and, above all else, how can we forget the loneliness of alienation which gave way to sonship! How can we forget God in the midst of ever so much activity and absorption!

And I wonder if we shall not furnish the measure for our own blessing here as elsewhere? "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom!" And shall not the answer be, "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you again." If you have not forgotten God, He will not forget you.

And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward (Matthew 10:42).

* * * * *

13

Highest Motives in Simplest Tasks

The recipient was but a little child, and an insignificant and ordinary cup of water was the gift, but oh how the giver was honored and rewarded! The child may have been too small to say "thank you," or he may have been untrained even as to the emotion of gratitude -- that did not matter. Perhaps the cup was small, and it may be the water was not difficult to obtain. The action could scarcely have had less significance. It was such a deed as one might do without putting any particular thought into it. It was such a deed as one might himself soon forget. Ah, but it is the motive that counts. It was a Christian who did this little kindness to a little child, and he brought to bear the highest possible motive. He did it as a disciple. He did it to honor Christ. Christ was honored, and He noticed, remembered and rewarded.

My life as a Christian has been quite uniform might even say it has been monotonous. I have read of "the battle that made history." But I have not been a soldier, and I have had no military glory. Some people have made princely gifts to charity. But I have had no silver or gold beyond the daily need. Others have rescued the drowning, brought the endangered down from burning buildings, or given instant aid to the victim of accident, thereby saving a life. But no

opportunities like that have fallen to me, and if they had, I am not trained to do such work. Men of science have discovered serums and isolated and identified disease germs, and so have been used to stay epidemics and save multitudes from suffering and have prolonged many lives. But I have neither gifts nor training for such work as that. There have been few instances in which I have had "the opportunity of a lifetime." For the most part, my life has run along like a monotonous plain, rather than like an undulating mountain range. I have had as many ordinary days as any one of equal life-span, but those outstanding days on which a man, once and for all, proves himself a hero and does a deed so worthy that his life is justified whether he ever does anything more or not have not been mine to see. But this I can say: I love God with all my heart; I love God's people without regard to their race, nationality or station in life; and I love all the souls for whom Christ died. What shall I do to prove my love and my loyalty? This I will do: I will do all the myriad of little things with which God entrusts me, and I shall bring to bear upon these little deeds the highest possible motives. I shall do them as a Christian. I shall do them to honor Christ. I shall live my simple life inspired by a martyr's motive -- then I shall wear a martyr's crown.

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14

The Journeys of Jonah

Jonah never did get to Tarshish, nevertheless, "he paid the fare thereof" (Jonah 1:3). The shipmaster was wise in collecting in advance-men who are running away from God are poor risks. If they promise to pay when they return, that is not much consolation, for the great majority of them do not return. Even if their promise is to pay at the end of the journey, their course leads through storms and tossings overboard, and only a few of them find a whale at the convenient time.

There may be difficulties and hard problems in the way of duty to God. But these do not compare in either number or force with the besetments which await the disobedient, and the disobedient are denied the strength of an assuring conscience. God had commissioned Jonah to Nineveh, and Nineveh was nearer than Tarshish, and the fare was easier paid. Besides, when one pays the fare to Nineveh, God guarantees to get him to his destination; while paying the fare to Tarshish does not mean either that you will reach your destination or that you will get your money back. Jonah started to Tarshish by sea. But he encountered storms. If he had tried it by land he would have found the road unsafe and he should have traveled at his own risk.

The origin and destination of all journeys of disobedience are strikingly similar. From Eden to Egypt; from Jerusalem to Jericho; from peace to perdition; from plenty in the father's house to the pods of the swinepen; from the keeper of the treasurer's bag to the suicide's hangman's noose; and from Lucifer the lightbearer to Satan the king of night! Always it was from a good beginning to a bad ending. Surely no one can justly envy the impenitent sinner or the pitiful backslider. Their ways are the ways of seduction, and their feet take hold of the domains of death.

But Jonah turned from the way to Tarshish to Nineveh road. He found opportunity to retrace his steps in repentance and obedience. He lost his fare to Tarshish, but he did not lose his immortal soul. He was wise in forgetting the lost fare, for he did not want to go where he started anyway. There is hope for the backslider who turns again to the way of God. It is the voice of

Infinite Love that cries, "Return, O backsliding children, for I am married unto thee." "Turn ye; for why will ye die."

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15

Shadows and Substances

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1)

Seeing visions and being visionary, although the language is similar in sound, are antipodal ideas. The first has to do with the highest verities, while the second deals only with figments of the imagination. One sees visions only when realities are beheld in proper perspective. He is visionary when nonentities parade through his mind as fragmental battalions in immethodical step. Substances sometimes cast shadows, but there can be shadows without substance. Those are wise who refuse to be influenced by the unreal, but they are foolish who suppose that because some shadows have no corresponding substance no substance exists anywhere.

At the funeral of Louis XVI, in an atmosphere of dazzling royal splendor, the preacher said, "Only God is great." In that same relative sense, "Only God is real." For back when there was nothing else anywhere -- "In the beginning God." And once again, when the heavens and the earth shall wax old like a garment and be folded up as a vesture, God will remain. Those who adore nature and bow down to the stars have seen but the fringe of His robe -- God is within, and beyond.

Just as the fish is adapted to the sea, the bird to the air, and the eye to light, so surely is the constitution of man adapted to God. The sun is not a more essential complement of the solar system than is God to the moral and spiritual complexity called man. The mariner who puts out to sea without either chart or compass is not more at the mercy of the elements than is the godless soul to the forces which make for his spiritual and eternal undoing.

It is not enough to know about God, as we may do through the medium of nature, books, and the testimonies of others. We must know God through the revelation He makes of Himself to our inner spiritual nature. Theory and logic have their places, but we must see God in the vision of the spirit. Theory and logic are lamps whose light helps us to find the peak from which to see the sunrise, but unless we do see the sunrise, the secondary lights will have shone in vain. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." "This is eternal life, that they might know thee, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Let us insist on the substance. Let us not rest until our feet stand upon the solid ground of glorious, eternal Reality.

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16

God's Perennial Mercies

The Lord's mercies . . . are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22, 23).

There is no monotony in the way of Christ, for the course leads on, ever on and on, and there are no detours and no backtracking. No day of the past was ever just like today, and "It's better farther on."

Even the mercies of the past are born anew in grateful memory every morning. Life and pardon and peace and purity and fellowship -- these can never get old or become commonplace. "Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise!"

Age cannot attach to the romance of divine love; for this love loses none of its freshness while yet it gains richness and maturity. The wonder of redemption! The measureless love of God! "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God."

Grace is always unmerited favor, no matter whether bestowed in crisis upon a believing penitent sinner or given in constant stream to the obedient disciple of the Lord. And to such favors none but an ingrate could ever become accustomed. Unearned blessings, like the wells and vineyards of Canaan which the Israelites inherited without either digging or planting, encompass us, and unmerited joys, like manna from heaven, fall upon us in the desert places. Wages! Ah, no, wages is what the sinner gets in terms of guilt and fear and death. Our returns are all gifts, and are computed in terms of life and peace. Grace! "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!"

"And the end is not yet," for hope springs eternal in the Christian's breast. Not hope of pardon and peace, these have already been received. But hope of deeper peace and fuller joy without limit. Hope is the hand which faith uses in reaching out to bring the joys of tomorrow into the scope of today. Every morning hope is new. After every night of sorrow and disappointment and bereavement there is a morning when springing hope brings returning joy into the banqueting hall where "His banner over us is love." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

There is, they say, a strange animal in Australia, which habitually travels backward, and seems more interested in where it has been than it is in where it is going. Let us not be like that. The newest, brightest mercies of all are yet ahead. Already shafts of light are streaming forth over the hills of God. The glad morning of immortality is dawning, and when that comes, it shall be morning forever.

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17

The Twofold Hope

The hope of the world and of every man in world is in the coming of Jesus Christ the world as a sin-bearing Saviour, and the substance of that hope is within the reach of us all. Jesus Christ so died for all men as to make salvation possible to all. None need now perish. All may have

eternal life. The deepest-dyed sinner may repent and live. The most empty-hearted Pharisee may be truly born again. The weakest Christian in the world may now have the sanctifying power from on high. There is hope for each, there is grace for all. Yes, there is full salvation for all. Christ is the hope of all men.

The blessed hope of the Church is in the coming of Jesus Christ in the glory of His second advent. Others suggest their panaceas for personal poverty, social insecurity, and cosmic evil, but the Church looks for the kingdom only in connection with the coming of the King. If the suggested panaceas of men do good, it is but transient good. But when Christ comes He will "make all things new. The physical earth will get rid of thorns and thistles, of swamps and deserts, of seas and polar wastes. All shall be so changed that the ferocity of beasts will give way, the lion shall eat straw like the ox, the wolf and the lamb shall become friends, a little child shall play in safety near the den of the cockatrice, and "Nothing shall hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain." Death among good men shall pass, moral evil shall be banished, Satan, the beast and the false prophet shall all be incarcerated in the pit. God's tabernacle shall be with men. Righteousness and peace shall dwell in the new heaven and the new earth. Such glorious hope is fully justified, for help has been laid upon One who is mighty.

We would not pass the day of personal hope. "Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Today is the day of good tidings for all who will come to Christ in repentance and faith. Today is the best day of grace the world has yet seen. And no one can have a sound hope for the better day ahead who is unwilling to receive in full measure the blessings offered today.

But those who have brought today's hope into transforming faith have yet another hope -- the hope of the Golden Day of the King's presence. Hail that glorious day! Sound abroad the joyous tidings that that day is at hand! Announce to all "The blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." As members of His bride, let us put on the virgin robes of white, and let us rejoice while we wait. "Lo, He comes! Lo, Jesus comes!"

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18

Exchanging Gold for Brass

Solomon decorated his palace with three hundred shields of gold (I Kings 10:17). Later, when the king of Egypt sacked the palace and took these shields away, Rehoboam replaced them with shields of brass (I Kings 14:25-28). Burnished brass has very much the same appearance as gold, but there is no comparison between the relative worth of the two.

Gold is an element -- one of the less than one hundred elements of which all known material is composed. Brass is an alloy of copper and zinc. Gold is genuine and intrinsic. Brass is a pretense. The symbolism is easy. Gold stands for substance; brass stands for shadow: gold is reality; brass is appearance: gold is character; brass is reputation only. Solomon gave his decorations genuine value, Rehoboam gave his but apparent value. Solomon's shields represent true religion, Rehoboam's represent mere profession and formality.

All the values of life may be classified under just the two heads -- gold and brass. The appearance of value is not wrong within itself. It is only when the appearance is misleading that the element of evil is injected. Gold appears to be gold, and it is gold. Brass appears to be gold, but it is only brass.

Carlyle, emphasizing the distinction between possession and profession, said, "What you are speaks so loudly I cannot hear what you say." But this is the position of the sage as he observes other people. Our interest is with regard to ourselves. But here too we have to contend with the inner voice of personal consciousness whenever we attempt to talk. We cannot forget our unpaid bills while flashing the new clothes and the late model car: therefore we are aware that our prosperity is brass, not gold. We cannot forget the slighted study while we are bidding for expert standing in some field of science; and the odor of brass disturbs us in the midst of a brilliant period. We are aware of blemishes hidden under an artificial complexion; so we know our comeliness is alloy. We are aware of inward jealousies and traits of selfishness that detract from our enjoyment when others assign us a seat among the saints. Gold may not look more beautiful than brass, but it will buy more, and those who care for real values are insistent upon gold.

Therefore, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see" (Revelation 3:18).

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19

I Know God Is My Father

Two or three of us stood by in wordless grief and sympathy while the fond mother endeavored to go yet farther into the narrows of "the valley of shadows" with her fourteen-year-old son. Over and over she called to him, and as she stroked his pallid face, she said, "Oh, Claud, please smile again and make me know you realize I am your mother." The fact that she was his mother did not fully satisfy her. She wanted him to be conscious of the relationship, and she wanted him to confess it.

And how dull are the compensations of those who discourse upon the Fatherhood of God in the atmosphere of cold logic and documentary evidence! This situation too calls for consciousness and confession. I am thankful for the logic by which the fitness of things is made to show that we are God's offspring. I am thankful for the documentary evidence, especially for that which is found in the Holy Scriptures, which warrant the assumption by which I am enabled to say, "Our Father which art in heaven." But even these are not enough. Perhaps it would be presumptuous beyond defense for me to say they are not enough for the heavenly Father, and that He, like the mother at the bedside of her dying boy, longs for our recognition that He is our Father. But I can speak quite freely concerning the human side of it, and say that my own heart requires full and direct assurance.

God promised Abraham that he should possess the land of Canaan, and that his descendants should be his heirs of the same patrimony. The noble patriarch entertained no doubts as to the

validity of the promise, but in a matter so vital, he felt that he should have assured knowledge. And in such a spirit and temper, he cried out to God, "Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it,,' Answering this, God came in the symbols of the smoking furnace and burning lamp, and met Abraham between the pieces of the bisected sacrifice and sealed the promise with solemn guaranties.

God is my Father -- the Bible justifies my making this claim upon my meeting certain conditions, and logic sustains me in such a testimony; but whereby shall I know that this is true? Whereby shall I find personal consciousness that the general principle has personal example in me? It will require the smoking lamp and burning furnace of God's Holy Spirit to bring these tokens, and I am happy to say this proof is mine today. God is my Father, I feel it and know it by the witness of the Spirit which He has given me. I confess this relation and give testimony to it that others may hear and come to know the same full assurance that my poor heart has found.

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20

The Paralyzing Effects of Moral Requirements

Seeking for the reason for King Saul's visit to the witch, we think we found it in his desire to possess the benefits of supernatural ministrations without paying the price in moral and spiritual rectitude. He could have heard the voice of God through legitimate channels, only he would have to repent and turn back to God in heart and life, and that he did not want to do. Saul's case throws light upon all cults and fancies which seek to know the peace and help that God promises without themselves meeting the demands of the prerequisites in repentance and devotion.

In the markets of this world there are perhaps none who do not prefer first quality, but they shy away when the price is named, and they take the inferior article because it can be obtained at smaller cost. Bargains have a tremendous appeal, although the thoughtful person knows they are scarce. Usually we get about what we pay for; sometimes we get less, but we seldom get more. Even the thief or bandit who thinks to get something for nothing usually wakes up when it is too late, and says what the great majority have known all the time, ""Crime does not pay.

In the world of religion there are those who make a graft by proposing to offer men just as good religion as they get elsewhere, and at a much lower cost. Some propose to let men in on the supernatural, where they can communicate with the dead, and find out much about the future life without demanding that the candidate turn from his wicked ways or make amends in any sense. Others lift up a banner announcing "no creed but Christ, no law but love," and tell the people to come with them where there are no rules to observe, no budgets to pay, and where religion is offered on a free and easy payment plan. But here, just as in the markets of this world, the cheap is more expensive in the end, and "There is no substitute for quality."

Speaking from the standpoint of the merchant, it has been found that the steady customer who returns again and again is of more value in building a dependable business than the passing trader who comes in just for prices and who may be cheated upon the ground that he probably will not come any more any way. "Good goods at a cheap price" is an appeal to many, but the

dependable customer believes it is better to say, "You will remember the quality after you have forgotten the price."

Speaking as a customer, old-time repentance is the prerequisite of old-time religion, and continual obedience is the price of victory. But to have a religion that satisfies in life, furnishes a bridge over the stream at death, and gives assurance of everlasting blessedness in heaven is worth all it costs. Let us forsake all we have that we may be His disciples.

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21

Only All Is Enough

The widow's mite was enough because it was all she had. The gifts of the rich that day were abundant, but they were not acceptable because there was still so much left.

The plowboy exhorter pours out his soul and is rewarded by seeing souls saved and the kingdom of God built up. The seminary graduate does well, but reserves somewhat of his power and his heaven remains brass. The little child comes in all sincerity and full desire and enters immediately into the kingdom of God. The learned statesman prays in stately words, but does not come to the full measure of his force, and sees no miracle. And because the less fortunate have outnumbered the well favored in the attainment of grace and blessing, word has gone the round that the rich and wise and noble are not adapted to the Christian calling. But the fact is, possessions hinder only because the possessor allows them to become substitutes, and the fortunate measure their bounties instead of weighing their residue as the poor widow did.

There was a rich man who entered the kingdom of God -- his name was Job. There was a wise man who became an example of prayer -- his name was Daniel. There was a noble man who attained to the status of "a man after God's own heart" -- his name was David. There was a man whose pedigree, learning and practice gave him high standing among his fellows, but that man counted all these things as loss and refuse that he might gain Christ, and he did gain Christ -- his name was Paul. It is not how much you give, but how much you have left that measures your devotion to Christ.

Every man has enough to bring the good favor of God, and no man has any to spare. The little of the poor will be accepted, and the much of the rich must all be given. The few flat cakes and the small fishes which a small boy brought for his own lunch were, when freely given, sufficient to feed the hungry multitudes. The contents of the bursting barns of the rich fool perished with their owner and left no trace of blessing behind. Vanity has kept out many a wise man and many a man who just thought he was wise, while all who count wisdom as naught for Christ are found to possess the highest wisdom known. The pride of many a Pharisee has barred the doors of the kingdom, and many who boasted of blue blood that they did not actually possess have likewise missed the way. But no matter what the pedigree, the blood of Jesus Christ has been found to be sufficient.

What shall I render unto God? Shall I pine for the good I would do if I were able, or shall I pour out the fullness of such life's treasure as I do possess? I have determined to do the better. I may not rate high on the basis of the amount of money, wisdom or influence I am able to give, but I plan to make my stand on the basis of what I have left. At Thy feet, my blessed Lord, I pour all the treasure of my heart and all the force and usefulness of my life. "Not a mite will I withhold."

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22

The Creed of the Theocrat

With the entrance of sin into the world, man lost his sovereignty over the world, and Satan, the great usurper came into power. But to spare the society of men from complete chaos, God in mercy gave civil government to the world. Civil government has existed in different forms down through the ages of human history, and although many instances of tyranny, cruelty and injustice may properly be laid to its charge, it still was better than chaos, and God's people have always been taught "that the powers that be are ordained of God." This has called for obedience to the laws, and for the best form of patriotism.

In the earliest days of which we have knowledge human government was autocratic. That is, it was government by one man who was lawmaker, judge, commander and protector. The earliest forms were followed by the aristocracy in which there was government by the few. Then came the constitutional monarchy, and finally the democracy. Strict democracy is not possible in the instance of large populations and huge geographical divisions, and this makes way for the republic, which is the representative democracy. Thus human government has gone the cycle and in the modern day there is a tendency to start all over again. We call them dictators now, instead of calling them kings and emperors, but nevertheless the tendency is to return to the one man form, which means but starting where we were in the days of Nimrod who was the founder of the first empire and the political forebear of Babylon.

As a mere expediency human government has done good service, for it has saved the world from complete collapse and chaos, but it is not permanent in any of its forms, and crowns and thrones shall perish and kingdoms rise and wan -- the best as well as the worst. And what shall we say? Is there no king who is both wise and good? Is there no hope for the government of the world? Answering from the purely human point of approach, we have to admit that the prospect is forbidding. No, there is no permanent hope in autocracy, aristocracy, monarchy, democracy or in any other humanly devised system. The history of the world is the record of decay, and the end will be failure and chaos.

But there is a government which is not included in the list above. It is the theocracy -- the God-rule. That was the system under which man started out in Eden, and it is the system that will return and succeed. This order will be set up when Jesus comes in the glory of His second advent, and that is why troubled men who care can say so devoutly, even in the midst of war and bloodshed and tyranny, "Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus."

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Our statute books, they say, are burdened with laws. Some of these laws are fundamental and important, some are local and of little value. The lawmakers themselves admit that the maze is baffling, but some of them explain that it is the fault of the people, for as soon as a citizen is irritated by some minor infraction of his neighbors, he sets up the cry, "There ought to be a law against that," and he is not content until provision is made for collecting penalty from any who further invade the heritage of liberty at that particular point.

But there are those who think law is nothing but the will of some arbitrarily enforced upon the conduct of others. Such people commonly suppose that the offender is immune if he can escape detection.

But in the true sense, law is fundamental. That is, order is superior to chaos. In the beginning "the earth was without form and void," but God brought order out of confusion. This is law only in its simplest form. The moral law, which is the law with which we are especially concerned, is what it is because God is who and what He is. The commandment to be holy is not based upon the ground of God's infinite wisdom or power, but upon His absolute holiness -- "Be ye holy for I am holy." Codes, like the Ten Commandments, are useful not only in condemning those whose motives are bad, but also in directing those who will to do right. The cry, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" demands a concrete as well as a general formula in answer, and that formula is imbedded in the rules of conduct passed on by the Lord, and agreed upon in the congresses of righteous men.

There is a law against sin, although men sometimes forget that it is so. It can never be right to do wrong, and a man's sin will find him out, whether the officers of the law can locate him or not. The fundamental law involved in the statement, "The wages of sin is death," is written in our physical, mental, moral and spiritual constitutions just as truly as it is written in the Bible. "He that sins must suffer," and there is no exception. There is, in the atonement of Jesus Christ, provision for substitution in penalty and for pardon for the sinner's guilt, but even this does not save from all the penalty of sin, for sin's effects outlive its guilt, and it is a maxim as applicable to pagans as to Christians, "The mills of the gods grind slowly, but they grind very fine." No man can really "break" the law. He may violate the law, but the law remains and will finally break its violator. Only the holy are truly happy, and only the righteous are free.

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Mysteries in uncounted numbers are about us in nature. The Bible, the soul of man, the person of God, the redemptive work of Christ, the Church and the future life all baffle our understanding, not by contradicting it, but by going so far beyond it as to make us feel that we are strangers in the universe, unfamiliar with the meaning of the things we see and know. Once when

someone complimented Isaac Newton on his progress in knowledge, he replied, "I know not what I may be to others, but to myself I am but a child picking up a few pebbles on the beach, while the great ocean of knowledge still lies out before me unexplored."

But just as one lonely daisy requires the full shining of the sun, which shining seems to be at the same time barely sufficient and a million times too much, so only the fathomless can meet our needs, even while its abundance embarrasses us. We would intuitively reject a Bible that we could master at one reading. Such a book would not commend itself as the voice of God. We never could pray to a God whom we could measure and fully describe. Only the infinite can match our finite and meet its needs. Those who call for a God whom they can fully comprehend, and for a fellowship that can be bounded by vows and ritualistic ceremonies are speaking only from the shallows. In spite of our worry and haste, we cry out for endless time in which to finish our scheme of life, for infinite strength to meet the demands of the passing day, and for measureless love to satisfy the cravings of our hearts. We cannot use all the duration eternity contains, but anything short of eternity is too short. We cannot draw the full strength of infinity, but limited power would yet allow us to fall. We cannot encompass measureless love, but love that has any bounds would leave us outside. We are indeed like the daisy which cannot use all the sunshine, but would pale and perish in light less full.

We are not born to utterly die. We cannot be content with the shadow -- we must have the substance. We instinctively feel that the genuine is better than the imaginative, and that the ideal has substance in the real. To say anything other than this is to rank the cause and the creature above the Creator. The stretched out hand does grasp an infinite arm. The open heart does receive the heavenly Guest. The cavernous cravings of our mysterious souls find satisfaction in our limitless God. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!"

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25

The Peace that God Gives

When the artist would represent peace, he first painted a turbulent waterfall. Then he placed a mother bird upon her nest so near to the cataract as to be dampened by the spray, yet resting in evident security. When Jesus would make us know how independent His peace is of all external circumstances, He waited until the very night upon which He should be arrested, and when the shadow of the cross was definitely giving way to the substance of the cross. There, to His harried and distracted disciples, He gently said, "My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled; neither let it be afraid." David emphasized the enduring qualities of the peace that God gives, and set forth its complete indifference to all that can possibly come to one who is sure his heart is right, when he said, "Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them."

St. Paul described this peace as "the peace of God," and this phrase is descriptive of measure, as well as of source. It is like the instance of King David who sought for any who might remain of the house of Saul that, for the sake of his old friend Jonathan, he might show "the kindness of God unto him." This meant that he desired to show the greatest possible kindness. And

as Paul continues his description, he says this peace "passeth all understanding," and keeps the heart and mind by Christ Jesus.

This peace is an active principle, not a static force. Its type is not a lake, but a flowing river. It has action without monotony.

It is not a human thing, the product of assumption, it is a divine gift. It cannot be had by faint wishing, but comes in answer to decisive choice. Its condition is faith, its prerequisite is pardon, its sphere is purity, its source and end is heaven, and its habitat is the sanctified human heart. No mortal donor can give this peace, and no power or authority outside of the Godhead can take it away. Health, wealth, popularity and pleasure are too far beneath it to be classed as substitutes. Sickness, poverty, adversity and sore pain cannot engulf it. Principalities, powers, things present, things to come, height, depth, and all other creatures are its servants, but never its master. The most forsaken trusting heart in the whole world can have this priceless boon -- "Sweet peace the gift of God's love."

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26

Our All-sufficient God

What kind of a God do we have? The answer to this question goes far toward determining what kind of people we are and what kind of lives we live. For whether men bow down before true or false ideals, it is not often that they are able to rise higher than the ideals they revere. They may fall short of the standards they set up for the object of their worship, but they do not rise above them. When men's gods are stone, their hearts are hard. When men's gods are ambitious and bloodthirsty, the worshipers are devotees of the sword. When men's gods are amorous, the worshipers are unclean.

But to Abraham God revealed Himself as the "Almighty God," the all-sufficient One. And since his God was unlimited, equal to any situation, and the victor over every circumstance, Abraham himself became "the friend of God," the doer of exploits, and the father of the faithful.

God is limited in His relation to us only by the limitations of our vision of Him. When we fall into a rut theologically, mentally, or spiritually, we of necessity draw in our curtains until our vision admits only enough of God to fit into the groove we have hewn out. Often we hear it said, "God cannot work under these circumstances." But this means only that the mind of that person has allowed the circumstances to limit God. An all-sufficient God is not actually limited by circumstances.

We testify to the breadth of our vision of God, not so much by what we say, not so much by what we think when meditating upon God, but especially by our practical living. Do we worry? Are we distressed about the future? Are we overly anxious about ourselves, about our children, about our loved ones, about our church? Then our practical living proves that we are not looking clearly upon our all-sufficient God. Are we bothered about making our own defense, about seeing

that we ourselves get a square deal? This is evidence that we have not put all things into the hands of our all-sufficient God.

In the vision of an all-sufficient God, Abraham was commanded, "Walk before me and be thou perfect." A holy life is not dependent upon natural endowments, but upon the grace of One who is able to save to the uttermost. And since His resources are all ours, there is victory without and within for us now and forever more. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

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27

Do You Bear the Cross Today?

And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple (Luke 14: 27).

It is vain to try to figure out how it is "daily death" to be a Christian. To most of us, few if any burdens, sorrows and bereavements come but such as are the common lot of humanity, and we have to admit that they would likely have come to us, even if we had not been following Christ. And then, according to our own testimony, the joys of Christ outweigh any sorrow that might be directly occasioned by His service; such as being forsaken by friends and loved ones who leave us because of our testimony for Him.

And yet the cross is the symbol of suffering and death, and such as will not bear it, cannot become the disciples of Jesus Christ. What then is the meaning? I think it is this: The Romans invented crucifixion as a mode for executing criminals, and it was, perhaps, the most cruel instrument ever used by an organized society of men. When the sentence was pronounced, the victim was compelled to bear his cross and trudge his way to the place of death. He did not take the cross until he was condemned, and when once he took it and started, he left the old life altogether behind him. All who saw him along the way knew his doom was sealed, and that he was, to all intents and purposes, already dead. Here then is the key to the Master's words. Unless a man will leave the old life completely behind him, and come and embrace the new way with all it means, he cannot be a disciple at all. The new life may be ever so pleasant and satisfying, but whatever it is, from now on it is the disciple's choice. He is forbidden to even look back any more. Like a good plowman, he must look straight ahead, and drive straight ahead. He is henceforth dead to the world, and to its fashions, its pleasures and its applause.

And just as the cross speaks of that which is behind, the crown is the symbol of that which is yet before. But we cannot yet claim the crown as our symbol, for it speaks of the final, not of any immediate victory. Today is the battle: tomorrow is the victory. Today we must bear the cross. Tomorrow we shall wear the crown. Do you bear the cross today?

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28

The God of Impossibilities

Which is easier, to forgive the sins of the transgressor or to heal the paralytic? The answer is, I think, Both are equally difficult and equally easy. Both are impossible with men, but both are easy with God. Men who accounted Jesus as but a man were logically correct in concluding that He blasphemed when He announced that He had forgiven one who had sinned against God. But since He was and is God, He can do the work of God in both the moral and physical realms.

One has remarked that His contemporaries instinctively came to ask Jesus to do things which were accounted impossible. A servant was incurably sick, would not Jesus come and heal him? A daughter was dead, would not Jesus come and bring her back to life again? The multitudes were hungry in the desert, would not Jesus feed them without opening a fish market or founding a bakery? There is no way to magnify the work they asked Him to do: they were just such Works as all agreed were impossible. That is, they were such works as men could not do, but it was consistent to bring the impossible to God. Every such request was also a confession; for it said, "O Master, here is a work such as none but God can do. But Thou art God, please come and do this." Such prayer was not the wild cry of fanatics, but the normal prayers of intelligent people who realized they had met the Limitless in Jesus Christ.

But how many are the impossibilities which press me! I need pardon for my guilt, cleansing from my defilement, comfort in the dark and lonely hours of my bereavement, hope in my starless night, life in death, and a permanent house when my tent falls down. All these things are impossible. I realize they are so when I talk to men about them. Sooner, say they, may an Ethiopian change the color of his skin and a leopard dispose of his spots than that a sinner shall become a saint and all the moral pollution of a human soul be purged away. Death, they tell me, is the end of life, and eternity is but a name. And so I know men cannot help me. The things I need are impossible with men. I must bring my needs to Christ. O Christ, pardon my guilt. Sanctify my inmost nature. Give me abiding comfort for my poor distressed heart. Be Thou my life, and assure me with a hope that anchors me safe to that which is within the veil.

Is anything too hard for Jesus? Did any ever leave Him disappointed? Nay, He breathes the atmosphere of the impossible as naturally as men breathe that of what they say can be done. At His word the paralytic carries the bed that formerly carried him, and the trusting soul stands upon the mountain of sin which formerly stood upon him. Christ is the Lord of impossibilities.

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29

The Daybreak Is Near

It may be interesting to speculate on the things that must yet take place before we reach the end of the present dispensation, but it is easy to defeat the purpose for which the promise of the Lord's return was given by lending oneself to such a course. The crux of the doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ is the imminence of that coming. Imminence does not mean that He is coming at some certain date which we may set, but that He may come at any time. We should not say, "Jesus is coming in the glory of His second advent today"; but rather, "He may come today." If there is any

way for me to know He is coming tomorrow, then by the same tokens I know He is not coming today. But to hold that He certainly will not come today is to miss the whole point. The promise of His coming was to encourage His followers to be always "robed and ready." But we cannot possibly hold ourselves in instant readiness if we do not believe this day may be His day.

Experts may arise to say that the Jews must return to Palestine, Jerusalem must be rebuilt, and the gospel must be preached in all the nations before He appears. But we know there are degrees in matters like these, and the Jews have in some measure returned to the land of their fathers, Jerusalem has been given a new era, and the gospel has, at one time or another, been preached in all nations. Who is to say to what measure these things must be done before the Lord appears?

We should not permit anyone to inject anything between this day and the day of His appearing. In the first place, we are assured they do not know; and in the second place, we know that we are commanded to watch and be ready always. There are abounding evidences that the breaking of the day of the Lord is at hand. Indeed, our position is and should be, that the Lord may now appear at any time, and in doing so will not do violence to the prophecies left to us in the Bible. It is enough that we believe His coming draweth near, and that we keep in the attitude of expectation that would be becoming to servants awaiting the coming of their lord. Will Christ come back to the earth again within the next hundred years? I certainly believe He will, but I do not know. Will He come within the year, the month, the week? I do not know, but I am sure He may. Will He come today? I do not know, but I am sure He may, and I pray that He shall; for His coming is the "blessed hope" of my heart, and this hope sustains the full hope that God and righteousness shall ultimately prevail, and that sin and sorrow are transient, at least for all who put their trust in God.

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30

The Normal Spirit-filled Life

Hearsay concerning holiness is exceedingly persistent. Weak, unthinking sentimentalists strive to minimize sin, and they tell us that all are practically holy when they are born, and that what little there is the matter with us is just weakness and misunderstanding, and that no one really wants to be bad. On the other hand, stalwart theologians speak quite to the contrary, and say that none can possibly be holy in this life. Between these extremes many sincere Christians settle down to the conclusion that perhaps one now and then may become really good, but that the average person can at best live only on the fringe of that blessed state. But the holy Scriptures teach that the Spirit-filled life is the normal Christian life, and that it is the privilege and duty of all true believers, not only to strive for purity, but to actually trust the promise of God and obtain the priceless boon. By His death upon the cross, Christ potentially saved everybody, and saved everybody to the uttermost. But only the Holy Spirit can save us efficiently by His regenerating and sanctifying power. And the distinguishing quality of a Christian is not power to repress sin, but power to expel it.

Negative holiness is a concept of thinkers, but it does not exist in fact. Sin is dethroned only when Christ is enthroned, and the heart continues pure only while Christ remains. I write these lines in a stateroom on the lower deck of a steamer in the South Atlantic. Just now I have the electric light on and the whole room is full of light. But the darkness is gone conditionally, rather than absolutely. It is gone on condition that the light remains. Likewise, only a Spirit-filled heart is a pure heart -- no theory can invalidate this fact.

In the New Testament "baptized with the Holy Spirit" and "filled with the Holy Spirit" are sometimes used as interchangeable terms, but they are not always so used. Baptism describes the initiation, fullness describes the continuing results. There is, normally and properly, one baptism with the Holy Spirit, but the Spirit-filled life is a thing of constancy and continuation in which there is place for "many fillings" and unlimited enlargement.

It is not normal for any of us to think ourselves entitled to something that is offered only to the favored few. But the commandment, "Be filled with the Spirit" has no limitations. The humblest child of God, as well as the most noted apostle or missionary needs this grace, and by diligent search may come to possess it, for the Spirit-filled life is the normal Christian life.

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31

Let Me Hear His Gentle Voice

He uttered his voice, the earth melted (Psalms 46:6).

The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him (Psalms 25:14).

Sometimes David gloried in the majesty and terribleness of the voice of the Lord. In the twenty-ninth Psalm he sings of the volume and power of the voice of the Lord. "The voice of the Lord," he says, "is upon the waters [referring perhaps to a storm at sea] . . . is powerful . . . is full of majesty." Observing the effects of this majestic voice, he says, "The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon; . . . maketh them also to skip like a calf; . . . divideth the flames of fire; . . . shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests." One cannot escape the feeling that the poet is describing and interpreting some dreadful storm which he, perhaps while yet a shepherd lad, had witnessed. The phenomena of nature were the voice of God to the ruddy-cheeked son of Jesse, and by such voice he learned reproof, correction and reverence. This majestic voice of God told of judgment, and gave warnings that even the coarsest could hear and understand.

But in the twenty-fifth Psalm there is intimacy in relation, and the voice is gentle. The Hebrew word *sod* means whisper, as well as secret, and the thought is that God's true people hear His gentle, low-speaking voice. Others may require thunderings and lightnings and judgments. But the true saint's ear is close to the Master's lips, as was the ear of John the beloved that night at the supper, and in this position the Master's whisper is heard. Even those close by may not know that anything at all is said, but the sensitive heart and the love-touched ear know the Master has spoken, and they know what He said.

It is not as though God speaks to some of matters that He would not have all to hear -- the difference is in the heart and in the ear of the listener. Only the delicate ear and the obedient heart are tuned to hear the low whispers, even though the words are broadcast to the world. It is like the sound waves in our natural world. When these waves pass certain limits, either by becoming too slow or too fast, our ears can no longer interpret them. But for aught we know there may be ears somewhere in God's good universe that can hear things that are beyond our reach. Perhaps this is what Paul meant when he said he heard things in the third heaven that it is "unlawful to utter." The law of which he speaks may not be an arbitrary prohibition, but just the law of moral impossibility. Oh, that my ears and my heart may be attuned to the Master's voice until I can hear His softest whisper, for His whispering voice is the voice of love!

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32

Turning Pain to Gain

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us (Romans 8:18).

When a grain of sand or some other irritating particle intrudes itself into the shell of the oyster, and refuses to be cast out, the oyster covers its enemy with a protective excretion. In time this excretion hardens and the pearl is formed. Seekers after costly pearls receive the product of the oyster's pain with thankfulness, and wear the pearl as an ornament and a badge of comfort and ease, and seldom, if ever, do they turn back to remember at what great cost their fancy was served. But the oyster that is without pain is also without pearl.

And how many irritating and disagreeable and painful things come into the narrow confines of our lives! Uninvited come the rough sand grains of bodily sickness, mental anxiety, deep bereavement and sorrow which refuses to be assuaged. Things can never be with us as they were once. Our affliction is incurable. The joys of the past can never come again. The intruding irritant has come to stay. What shall we do? Shall we not take lessons from the humble oyster and throw about that thing of pain an extra covering of prayer and faith in God? and shall we not find, in grace, as in nature, that our pain may be changed to gain?

In the process of transforming the sand into pearl, the oyster helps itself. The pearl is valuable to others -- that, perhaps, is the main thing. But the oyster found relief from its pain while transforming it into gain. Perhaps it shall be thus with us. Perhaps we have wondered why pain is our portion. It may help us to remember that where there is no pain there is no pearl. Or perhaps there is something even more consoling than that. Now we think we would like to go back to the time when we had no pain. But that is but a negative escape; for then there was neither pain nor pearl. The better choice for us is to go on ahead to where there will be no pain, and still the pearl will be ours. Once we had neither pain nor pearl: now we have both pain and pearl: then we shall have pearl and no pain. May God speed that' blessed day!

And what is that about the gates of heaven being composed of pearl? Does not that suggest that "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God"? Does it not intimate that the way to the throne leads through the valley en route? Does it not make clear that the way of ease and self-complacency which the many prefer is not really the pathway to glory, after all? If we are to "enter through the gates into the city," we certainly must learn how to change our pain into pearl, for the gates of the City are pearl, and pearl is transmuted pain.

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33

From Famine to Feast

At Dives' gate that morning they found but a leprous corpse clothed in rags. Observers sighed, but took consolation from the conclusion that Lazarus had not been used too much, and so his end was not so tragic nor so pathetic as would have been the case with one more fortunate. He had used as his regular food the ends of the loaves which others had laid aside when they became too short to permit being further dipped in the sop. He had been attended only by doctor dog when he was sick. Rags were befitting apparel for one who was but a beggar. And now it was not necessary to go to the trouble and expense of giving the unsightly corpse a burial. Earth's harvest had ended in doleful famine.

But even while observers sighed over the doleful end of a doleful life at the gate of the rich man's mansion, strong angels were lifting up the doors of heaven, and a redeemed, blood-washed soul was passing through. At a place nearest to the gate the bliss-enfolded arrival sought repose in the hope that he might spend eternity there in praise and thanksgiving for his eternal salvation. But angel companions beckoned him on. Over pavements of transparent gold glorified feet led the way toward higher mansions of light. The erstwhile beggar protested, but his words were disregarded. The dwellings of the great were seen and passed, only to be hidden by palaces of increasing spaciousness and indescribable beauty. And still the guides led on and on.

At last the company stood just outside a diamond-bedecked hall from which came the sound of sweetest heavenly praise. Inside there sat a company of sun-crowned saints of highest rank, with Abraham, the father of the faithful, at the head of the table. The guard of honor led the way, but the beggar could no longer follow. Lost in wonder, love and praise, he saw the place of honor at Abraham's right hand, and saw that it was empty. He saw also that his angel guides were intent on leading him to that place of high praise -- and so he stopped. His was not the hesitation of disobedience, but the reluctance of modesty. A mistake surely had been made. All this could not be intended for him. His name must have been mistaken for some great one. Any place in heaven would be too good for him, and now he was being shown to the high seat at the feast.

The glorified beggar waited and protested. The angels gathered around and explained and persuaded. But when the beggar could not comprehend, two of the tallest of the celestial ones made a saddle of their hands while others lifted the beggar to the position where he could be borne. And thus Lazarus was "carried" to the place of honor where when he reclined, as men do at feasts where all reason for haste has been removed, his head would rest upon the bosom of Abraham.

The famine was past. The feast had started. One of heaven's earliest surprises had come. Lazarus had reached home, and home was heaven. Let us stand and sing the Doxology.

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34

The Plea of the Permanent

In his study of Christian mass movements in India, Bishop Waskom Pickett discovered that such movements were found only in localities where the gospel had been faithfully preached. He found that schools and hospitals started with the hope that they would be evangelizing agencies have produced surprisingly few converts. He found that even building church houses as means for establishing Christian communities has been a disappointing experiment. During a personal interview in Bombay, the bishop said to me, "There is just no way except the apostolic way. We must preach the gospel to the people until the Holy Spirit is poured out upon them in revival power, and the people become Christians by repenting and believing the gospel. After that we may build buildings for the Christians to worship in, we may build schools for the educating of children of Christians, and we may found hospitals for the healing and care of the bodies of those who have believed on Christ. But institutions cannot substitute for the preaching of the gospel, and for the primitive, apostolic way of promoting the work of evangelism."

And I think it is much the same everywhere. The appeal must be to things that are permanent. They are wrong who say, "Every man has his price," if they mean by that that all men will sell out for money and material advantage. Some will sell on this plane, it is true, but some men are not all men. In this instance it is doubtful if some mean the majority. Men want gold that will not perish. They want houses that have foundations. They want wealth that can defy death. They want intrinsic wealth to which they can hold even when they are compelled to eat crumbs as the beggar's share. They want companionship that will bring them into the circle of the immortals when dust shall return to dust. They have a right to expect these things in religion, but they need to be assured that they can have them there.

There is permanent heritage in Jesus Christ. Christ's plea is the plea of the permanent. O listen to that plea today, my friend, and come and lay claim to your heritage in Christ. Be wise and disregard the glitter of the transient, and count that as true value which will not perish with the using or vanish by reason of the passing of time. "Let others seek a home below where flames devour and floods o'erflow; be mine a happier lot to own, a heavenly mansion near the throne. I'm going home to die no more." Come today and choose that good part from which neither friends nor foes can separate you. Choose this, and you shall be rich forever!

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35

The Lord My Rock

Toplady read Isaiah 26:4, in the Hebrew, where the exhortation is, "Trust ye in the Lord forever: for Jehovah is the Rock of Ages," and upon these words he built his famous hymn. In other instances the Lord is called, "The rock of our salvation," "The rock of refuge," "Rock of my strength," "The shadow of a great rock in a weary land," and "The rock that is higher than I."

Christ crucified is the "smitten rock" from which the living Spirit flows, which all are invited to drink (I Corinthians 10:4), and thus He is the antitype of that rock from which the stream flowed forth in the desert, and from which famishing Israel drank. To those who will not believe, Christ is "a stone of stumbling," and "rock of offence." To the Church He is both the foundation stone and the head of the corner. To the finally impenitent Christ shall become the crushing stone of judgment which falling upon them shall grind them to powder. To the usurping world powers, according to Daniel, He will be a stone cut out of the mountain without hands which shall smite the nations and fill the earth.

A stone or rock always stands for something solid and dependable. When the thought is of judgment, it represents something overpowering and inescapable. When the application is to mercy it suggests something both sufficient and assuring. When the promise is that the good man's place of defense "shall be the munitions of rocks," it guarantees that no enemy is formidable enough to break into the citadel.

Our fathers did well to sing of the firm foundation which is laid for "His saints in His excellent Word," for back of the promises of that Book is the everlasting God whose strength faileth not. God's Word is dependable because God himself is dependable. All who have ever tried to destroy the Bible have succeeded merely in destroying themselves. The Bible has proved to be an anvil. Its critics have been but hammers, and at the base of the anvil is a sordid pile of broken hammers, while the anvil rings on. Or, to go back to the symbol of the rock, Christ remains the solid rock - "all other ground is sinking sand."

The foundation of fulfillment is just as deep and strong as the foundation of promise. The power of Christ is equal to the provision of Christ. Promise, provision, power! There is no weak place anywhere. Truly, "Jehovah is the Rock of Ages." Come, let us hide ourselves in Him until the storm shall pass.

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36

The Inescapable Umpire

Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both (Job 9:33).

Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord (Jonah 1:3).

If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me (Psalms 139:9-10).

Some men pray for a chance to render accounts, as did Job. Others seek escape from the necessity of doing so, but the prayers of the one are unnecessary, and the efforts of the others are useless, for we shall all come before the judgment seat of Christ in due time and proper order.

Some may try to escape the necessity of rendering accounts by the tragic way of suicide; but this only hastens one into the presence of the Daysman, and it adds to the burdens of those who are left behind. A good man is not afraid to die; but he should not hasten to do so, lest he be guilty both of hastening away before his toll of labor is finished, and of coming precipitantly and irreverently into the presence of the Judge. Even though he longs to wear the crown, he must not be restless in bearing the cross. A wicked man does well to be afraid to die; but he should make this fear the basis for preparing an ark for the saving of his soul, even as Noah used fear as a motive for preparing a place of refuge for his family. Dying of itself does not prepare one to die, and death is either a promotion or a calamity solely upon the basis of how one has chosen and acted during the period of life itself.

Some men would ignore their responsibilities, and live like uncaptured horses on the western plains. But just as they begin to think they are beyond the pale of order and penalty for good and evil, the rope of judgment for breaking the laws of God brings them to a sudden stop.

There is no escape for any of us in the wordy discussions of philosophers and theologians. We are ourselves conscious that we are morally responsible. No one can take from us the sense of oughtness which God has placed within our breasts. Moral responsibility involves freedom of choice on the part of the agent, and a personal judge to whom accounts must be rendered, and we are conscious that we ourselves are agents like that and that God is the judge before whom we must stand when our day of probation is ended. We cannot escape, no matter how we try. But we can prepare to meet our Judge. We can keep our accounts in such correct form that an unexpected summons shall bring no qualms to us. We can live every day and all the time in such a way that "sudden death will be sudden glory." "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

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37

There Is no Back Fence

All true Christians are evangelists by virtue of their obedience to the Great Commission of our Lord, found in the 28th chapter of Matthew. No matter how limited his activities, the true Christian possesses the spirit of evangelism, and the spirit of evangelism is the spirit of missions. Christians are the lamps through which the light of the gospel is destined to shine, and it is impossible to dim the light so that it does not shine abroad without also dimming its shining close at hand. The same spirit that makes one neighbor to the man across the street makes him neighbor also to the man across the sea.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is an unlimited message, and is adapted to men of every age and race and clime and station and condition in life. Its doctrines are adapted to man's intellect. Its ethics appeal to the conscience. Its atoning blood of infinite worth meets man's sense of insufficiency by offering him efficacy or merit which is adequate. The Holy Spirit is an efficient

agent, and answers the requirements of man's heart by purifying it from all sin. The gospel's condition is faith, and faith is a condition that all men can meet. The assurances of the gospel are satisfying to man's innate demand for present and permanent safety. The hope of the gospel is the fullest and brightest possible and reaches out beyond all limits of space and time unto unbounded and unmeasured immortality.

Without the gospel men are without Christ, and without Christ men are lost. In and through the gospel all men may be saved, and there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby any can be saved. And since the hopes of all are wrapped up in the gospel, and since the gospel is the heritage and responsibility of the Church, therefore the salvation of all men is laid in the lap of those who have themselves been made partakers of this priceless boon.

If some men are harder to reach, that is their responsibility -- it is still our task to give them the gospel and reach them and bring them to Christ. If it is more expensive of men and money to reach some than others, then we must pay that larger price, for we must give the gospel to men. Christ's field is the whole round world, and on such a world there is no back fence. Let us place the gospel trumpet to our lips and sound forth so that all may hear the universal call, "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely."

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38

The Deeds of David

Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of Samuel the seer (I Chronicles 29:29).

David the doer of deeds and Samuel the recorder -- how fortunate for the generations following that they were associated together! Men who do things are often too busy to tell about their deeds to others, and men who can tell true stories accurately and interestingly often want for heroes. When a man has slain a lion and a bear to protect his flock, stoned and beheaded a giant in defense of his nation, bought a wife with the scalps of a hundred Philistines, dodged the king's javelin three times, made his way among outlaws in the cave of Adullam, saved his own life among the enemies of his people by posing as a maniac, ascended a throne in spite of the opposition of his predecessor, united a scattered people and made them conquerors of all their foes, written the hymnbook of two dispensations, and established an imperishable name for himself and his house, it is time for him to call it a day, and leave it for another to write down a record of his doings. But every time we thank God for the exploits of David, we should add a note of thanksgiving for Samuel who kept his pen in hand and made chronicles of the things which went on around him; for otherwise we should either have known nothing of David or else his story would have come down to us warped and changed and unworthy of belief.

There was Another who visited this world of ours and spent His time going about "doing good." Then He went away without building a house, writing a book, painting a picture or making a mark on stone. His footprints were just in the sand, and His parchment was only the light dust which a passing breeze might scatter, and we do not even know the words He wrote there. He

wrought healing and saving miracles almost without number, but often He asked that the recipient of His mercy "tell no man." His doctrines were His treasury, but He did not stop to codify them or give them other than a speaker's arrangement. He had been gone thirty years before the first written fragment dealing with His deeds appeared. But since that time the literature, hymnology, sculpture, and architecture of the world have gathered about Him, and these are yet incomplete, and yearly add to their effort to tell, so men can understand and appreciate, the wonderful life with which our world was blessed. The whole story cannot be told, as was done, "first and last" with David. For if all that Jesus said and did "should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written (John 21:25). "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30, 31).

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39

Capitalizing Our Calamities

A few days ago I read a sentence from Chappell in which he said, "Naomi had learned the art of capitalizing her calamities," and the saying stuck to me. A calamity, as I understand the meaning of the word, is the strongest in that list of synonyms which included disaster, misfortune, mishap, mischance, distress, affliction, and adversity. Its principal distinction in the list from which it comes is that it implies a somewhat continuous state as result from such causes as fire, flood, disease and bereavement. To capitalize it, therefore, one must not necessarily become reconciled to it. In fact if one becomes reconciled, the calamity disappears, and it is then too late to capitalize it.

A good Christian man told me he was much troubled with insomnia until he learned to use his wakefulness as an occasion for prayer. Since that he has learned to count the nights when he cannot sleep as the best nights of all, for they minister more fully to the good of his soul. John Wesley was still active with his travels, writing and preaching at eighty-five, and he credited his good health and unusual strength to "two fevers" which he had in early middle life which were the means of teaching him the value of health, and gave him motive to observe proper rules. Paul suffered some sort of physical infirmity which was painful and annoying. But when he prayed for removal of his "thorn in the flesh," he was just given more grace to bear, rather than deliverance from the distress against which he prayed. Henceforth, finding that his infirmity was the occasion for spiritual blessing, he came to where he could "glory in the things which concern mine infirmities," seeing that "when I am weak, then am I strong." Certainly one has capitalized his calamity when he has made it the occasion for obtaining more of the grace and blessing of the Lord.

We cannot invite calamity, for anything we could find it possible to invite would not be able to retain its character as calamity. But, like persecution, calamity will come soon enough and often enough, and all our efforts to avoid it cannot be permanently successful. But there is one thing we can do: when this unwelcome intruder does break through our bulwarks and find us out, instead of cringing and fleeing, we can reduce him from the status of master to the standing of servant. That

which God will not take away in answer to our prayers He will compensate with grace. When He does not remove the trouble, "He giveth more grace."

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40

Too Busy to Do His Work

In the twentieth chapter of I Kings is the story of a soldier who was left in charge of a prisoner taken in battle. His superior told the soldier that he must keep this prisoner safely, and that if he escaped, then the soldier must pay a large sum of money or forfeit his own life in penalty. No other special duty seems to have been assigned the soldier -- he was just to keep his prisoner securely. But the prisoner escaped, and when the soldier reported to his superior, his shallow explanation was, "I was busy here and there and he was gone." The soldier was so occupied with secondary matters that he let his important service pass. This is one of the easiest things in the world to do. To the average Christian there is more danger that he shall become occupied with the insignificant than that he shall be swamped with outbroken wickedness.

We have been told that "an idle brain is the devil's workshop," and we do know that leisure of itself is no handmaiden of faith and spirituality. One should be employed, if possible, and he should not be just triflingly employed. And yet one can get so busy with his secular affairs that he will not have time for prayer meeting and the services of the church. A parent can be so occupied with the effort to furnish food and clothing and housing and education for his children that he will forget to have family prayer and look after the spiritual welfare of those who have been committed to his care. A man can become so occupied with his friends that he has no time for communion with the Lord. He may be so taken up with newspapers and magazines that he crowds out the Bible and literature dealing with the interests of the soul. When a man is so busy he cannot look after the very things for which he was created and redeemed, he is just too busy.

It is even possible for one to become so busy with the work of the Lord that he does not have time for the Lord himself. Luther found that the more work the day demanded, the more time he must have for prayer. Thus instead of allowing secondary interests to take the place of first line concerns, this man of marvelous spiritual strength made the increase of secondary duties reasons for increasing attention to the principal things.

Think of a soldier who was just "busy here and there" -- at nothing in particular, and let his prisoner get away! But before you pass judgment on his carelessness and folly, think of the man who is so busy about the things of the body that he lets his soul go on unsaved. Think of the man who is so busy about preparing to meet his social, political or financial demands that he must give no time to preparing for the judgment bar of God. Do not let any of us get so busy that we cannot find time to do our work.

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41

The Limitations of Liberty

Some time ago I made a trip "down the cape" to see the Plymouth Rock, to climb the Pilgrim Memorial Monument at Provincetown, to wander about in the oldest cemeteries of white America, and to read the chiseled inscriptions which commemorate the ideals and record the deeds of that intrepid band who came across the Atlantic on the Mayflower to lay the foundation of free government in the New World. It was a day to remember. It was a day filled with the symbolism of heroism and made one glad he can be a member of a race with whom God and liberty rated so high.

But I also saw instances of the twisting of good into the instruments of evil; for I saw where the proponents of systems which seek to cast doubt upon every tenet the Pilgrims held dear used the words of those hardy, holy pioneers to defend their right to tear down what those of the early day' sought to build up. They made the fundamental rights of the fathers to promote the faith they loved ground upon which to stand their supposed rights to destroy faith.

It is one of the tricks of heretics to say, "Oh, but you must not be stubborn. You are not afraid of the truth, are you?" The answer to this is, I am not afraid of the truth, but I am mortally afraid of error, and I refuse to speculate on questions that have been settled by the Word of God and the faith of our fathers.

There is of course a narrowness that is fanaticism, but there is also a breadth that is compromise, and the modern habit of claiming that all the thinkers are on the side of loose theology and questionable ethics is as reprehensible as it is false. And the supposition that ideas are true because they are new is just as presumptuous as the supposition that all old beliefs are good and dependable.

It is really too bad that any man should not be able to maintain his faith in things high and holy. But if he breaks down, it is but sordid recompense that he should then seek to destroy the faith of others. There are no instances on record where investigation substantiates the claims of those who say they are happier and freer since they have lost the fear of God and confidence in the Bible as the Word of God. Therefore the dispenser of doubt cannot be classed as a liberator of mankind. Not doubt, but truth makes men free.

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42

Obedience Is Better than Sacrifice

Away back in the days when the stories in the school readers had morals attached, there was a story about a son whose father taught him obedience, and by the learning of his lesson, the son's life was saved. The family home was in the country. The son, a lad of eight or ten years, was sent on horseback on an errand to a neighbor whose house was on the opposite side of a river. While the boy was at the neighbor's house a terrific storm arose which made it advisable for the boy to spend the night at the neighbor's house. But the lad insisted that his father would expect him to come home in the morning as soon as it was light. The father suspecting this would be the reasoning of his son, arose early and took up his post on his own side of the river just as the gray

dawn appeared. The father was scarcely more than in his place when the son was observed entering the river on the opposite side. The river was swollen from the floods of the night before, and was even deeper and swifter than at first appeared. The noble horse was tossed in the swift flood, and the small boy was scarcely able to keep his perch upon the animal's back. And to add to the danger, as the horse floundered the lad became frightened. Finally, looking toward the bank which he had hoped to reach, he spied his father, and called out in anguish, "O father, I shall drown." But keeping his presence of mind, in spite of his own misgivings, the father answered sternly, "If you do, I shall punish you severely." Accustomed to obedience, the lad clung to the mane of the horse and was brought safely to the shore. Then the father took his son in his arms and said, "Obedience, my son, has saved your life today, even as the Scriptures promise that his days shall be long upon earth who honors his father and mother."

I thought of this story yesterday when I saw a sick child who was so spoiled and pampered that he would neither rest nor take medicine, no matter how much the parents begged and threatened. Now the little thing's life pretty much demanded upon its ability to obey, and it had never been taught obedience. That weakness which denied the child the chance to learn obedience is really wickedness.

But it is not children alone who need to know obedience. We all need to learn this lesson well. I need it just now myself. Now when deep sorrow has become my lot, I find my best consolation in obedience. For no matter who sends or what comes, as an obedient child of God nothing can get to me except it come through God's active or permissive will, and so by the time it reaches me, it is His will, and it is mine but to obey. If active duty is involved, I must obey. If passive longsuffering is the demand, then too I must obey. And I am realizing anew the truth of Samuel's words that God prefers obedience to sacrifice, and to hearken rather than to receive the richest gift at our hands.

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43

The Joy of Being Remembered

Forty years ago I allowed a young college friend to persuade me to invade the home of a famous preacher and meet the great man in his own living room. The great man was more than cordial, and without a moment's hesitation invited me to make his house my home for any length of time and without charge or obligation. Outside I remarked to my friend that there must be a mistake somewhere. This famous man could not be that much interested in me, a poor beginner as a preacher, and no doubt the great man would be nonplused if I should decide to accept his proffered hospitality and move into his home. But my friend insisted that the invitation was genuine, and that others had found it so.

I later came to know that famous preacher well. I saw him surrounded with a crowd of people. Without discrimination he received them all, small and great, and with ease and joy he recalled former meetings with a large number of them. I watched the people -- specially the humble and lowly who were the honored guests. It was remarkable how well this famous preacher remembered, and I observed that he usually remembered instances in which those before him

played the leading role. Perhaps it was the time when this certain man looked after the tent, or it was the time when this humble woman baked the biscuits for breakfast. But no matter about the circumstance, the great man remembered them, and that was what counted. I saw the wrinkled faces of old women shine with inner glow, and the stooped shoulders of humble laborers straighten visibly. There was everywhere the evidence of a new sense of personal worth -- the great man had remembered them. The great man was Bud Robinson, who has since entered the pearly white city. He was a man of marvelous memory, especially to those whom he did not forget.

There is another, also, who has assured us that our names are engraved on the palms of His hands. Our names are not simply written, but engraved. That means they are there to stay. Time cannot erase them, and He who bears them will not forget. His time of recollection gives the humblest man a sense of worth that makes him glad to be alive. And that smile of remembrance makes the humble one feel that he shall always live, and be happy forever more. It is a joy just to be remembered, especially when it is Jesus Christ himself who remembers me.

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44

Faith Amidst Failures

A recent writer asks, "Is not faith just as indivisible as love?" Now we all know that love for God involves love for our fellowmen, and that whoever says he loves God whom he has not seen is plainly challenged to prove his profession by loving his brother whom he has seen. But may not one have faith in God and not have any faith in his fellowman? Did not Paul frequently assert his want of confidence "in the flesh"? Perhaps we may answer all these questions by saying it is much easier to have faith in God than to have confidence in men, but the challenge of one who would be useful is that he believes in man whom he has many reasons to doubt.

I have examined Paul's remarks about his want of confidence in the flesh, and am convinced that he did not mean by this that he did not believe in and have faith for men. Rather his thought was that the mere fleshly man -- the carnal part of man -is untrustworthy. But above it all, Paul did believe in men, and he sought to appeal to them in spite of their prejudice and their surface objections. Men might be much troubled by false teaching, but Paul believed there was a nucleus of common sense which may be made to prevail. He addressed the faithful governor as "most noble Festus," but he also labored patiently in the hope that he might reach and win the weak, fickle, wicked Felix, and his faith arose to such sublime heights that he could cry to the depraved Agrippa, "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest." Indeed it was Paul's faith in and for the most wretched and fallen of men, coupled with his undimmed love for souls for whom Christ died, that enabled him to go forth with the message of the gospel to "the regions beyond."

Loss of faith in men is evidence of defeat in one's efforts to save souls, for one cannot labor much for those in whom he does not believe, and one cannot gain the faith of those in whom he has no faith. Just look about and see those who say "the days of revivals are past," and you will find that those who hold to this doctrine are not promoting revivals. Examine the case of those who boast that they suspect everybody, and that they are not taken in by any, and you will find that

others do not turn to these in their times of need, stress and sorrow. Doubt, as well as faith, is reflective and contagious, and those who doubt will in their turn be doubted. Happy is the man who keeps his faith intact; who believes in God without reserve, believes in his fellow workers, and believes in the possibilities of the weakest and most wayward, for such a man will himself be believed, and this mutual faith will enable him to serve.

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45

The Judgments of Jude

The little Book of Jude comes just before the Great Judgment book -- the Book of Revelation, and it puts into forceful prose the same truths that Revelation gives in apocalyptic form. Jude warns of coming judgment, John describes these judgments as they actually appear to him in panorama. With Jude the gulf that separates sinners from saints is still passable. With John in Revelation the gulf is fixed, so that "He that is holy let him be holy still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still."

Jude recalls the judgments God sent upon Israel for unbelief, upon the fallen angels for disobedience, and upon the corrupt Sodomites for all their ungodliness that he may show what impenitent sinners may expect in the age-end period of correction and retribution in the final day of adjudication yet ahead. Depraved teachers of false doctrines come in for odious description, and upon them stinging woe is pronounced.

Jude gives Enoch and the apostles of the Lord as examples of judgment prophets who have preceded him. Enoch came to foretell the doom of the ungodly. The apostles condemned the mockers whose appearance was harbinger of the last days and the final collapse. Wicked, impenitent sinners and conniving, bestial, selfish teachers of heretical doctrines are warned with all solemnity and condemned without mitigation.

God's true people are solemnly exhorted to withdraw so fully from every evil deed and unholy thought as to hate even the garments that have been spotted by the leprosy of sin (the equivalent of Paul's "Abstain from all appearance of evil"), hoping for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Administrators of discipline are asked to have compassion on the penitent, and to seek to save souls, even those who are already scorched by the close approaching fires of a hopeless hell. Mercy for those whose feet have well-nigh slipped!

Our fathers used to turn from the reading of Jude to pray, "O Lord, show the lost how even now they hang suspended by the brittle and slender thread of life over a bottomless pit that burns with fire and brimstone. And grant unto us also, that we may be more serious than we have ever been in fleeing from the wrath to come." And may that prayer be answered for our generation too.

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46

Artless Alibis

Last night I preached as well as I could, and then exhorted and pleaded with the people to let God have His way. About twenty responded, and there was much earnest prayer about the altar. In the midst of the prayer meeting, a brother, a stranger to me, approached, commended me for my efforts, and entered freely into conversation. He asked me whether I found it exceedingly difficult to get men to respond to the appeal of the gospel. I told him that ministers of experience had told me lately that this seems to be a very good time to have revivals and get people to God. This reply was evidently not what he had anticipated, nevertheless, he set in to tell me how difficult it is where he had been, and how exceedingly indifferent people seem to be different, he thought, from "the good old days" of the past. Our conversation was becoming embarrassing. We were prolonging it unduly, and we were within easy earshot of the place where earnest Christians were coming to grips in prayer for the deliverance of penitent souls from the powers of darkness. Then it struck me that talk and speculation are poor substitutes for prayer and labor for the salvation of men. I hope I was not unkind, but it seemed to me that I could recall a number of people who are so busy praying and laboring that they seem not to have stopped to think much about the relative goodness or badness of the times, and others who are so busy thinking and talking about the general situation in the Church and in the world that they are not much given to prayer and efforts. But I could not think of any who might be said to be outstanding in both these classes. So I decided, hastily, I suppose, that here is another cleavage as between Christians -- those who pray and labor, and those who make conditions their alibi.

Really the question of whether our day is better or worse does not much enter into the important phases of this subject; for no matter what "they say," it has always been bloody, sweaty work to win men to God in a sinful world. It has always required prayer, fasting, soul agony, and fervent zeal to bring on a revival and to preserve and promote a genuinely spiritual work. Of course there have always been those who stood on the outer edge of the circle, and to these the task may have seemed easy. But to those who have been responsible under God for success there have been labor and travail of soul. And just now there is no greater need than the demand for people who will undergo the pressure and labor necessary to bring about the manifestation of God's power and labor necessary to bring about the manifestation of God's power in revival measure. And there are none who can prove it cannot be done yet. For whenever and wherever God's people have been ready and willing to pay the price, God has made Himself known. God is still in the world. Revivals still await channels through which to be released. It may be easier to make excuse than to make good, but making good pays much better dividends.

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47

Meting with Our Own Measure

A poor dairyman, it is said, was haled into court by the baker, charged with delivering butter two ounces short on the pound. In the court, the defendant's attorney asked his client, "Do you have a balance on which to weigh your butter?" "I have, indeed," answered the dairyman. "Do you use a regular weight on this balance?" inquired the attorney. "I used to do that," replied the witness, "but since I have been buying all my bread from the baker, I find it much handier to just use his one-pound loaves instead of my regular balance weights."

But much older than this story is the message of the Master, "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again." God offers us His blessings freely, but we must take these blessings away in our own measures. If we forgive others freely, He likewise will forgive us. If our hearts condemn us -- that is, if we do things which we know are wrong -- He condemns us too. If our hearts condemn us not, then we have confidence that He too passes us over. "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." "The liberal soul shall be made fat."

Someone has said, "One of the greatest hindrances to the progress of the Church of Jesus Christ is selfishness on the part of the church members. In refusing to give God His share of their possessions, they retard the work of His kingdom." One of higher authority said, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord, if I will not pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

A brother whose religion seems to have a large proportion of iron in it, said publicly, "You had better not promise God you will do anything, unless you mean to do it; for if you promise Him, He will make you do it." But this is not the reputation God has generally among His people. Those who have been liberal with God have found God liberal with them. We need no protection against God. We are never safer than when we throw ourselves upon His mercy in holy recklessness. Even when you are away out on the mountain or so far at sea that no mortal ear can hear your cry and no mortal hand can come to your rescue, you are safe in the hands of God. If you have dealt justly and liberally with Him, He will give you back goodness and mercy in the same vessels in which you brought to Him love and obedience. No one can match God in being good and showing favors, but it pays us all to try.

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48

The Joy of Christ

God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows (Hebrews 1:9).

Although Himself known as the "Man of Sorrows," Jesus, nevertheless, proposed to give His joy to His apostles. He made this proposal at the time when His cup of earthly sorrow was fast filling to the very brim. In connection with the deepest humiliation through which the Son of God was called to pass, the author of the Hebrews made mention of "the joy that was set before him." As the climax of all, the words of the text which we have quoted at the beginning tell us that Jesus was anointed with the oil of gladness above or more than all others.

Happiness is akin to "happening," chance and luck. It depends upon favorable circumstances and may be shallow and fleeting. Hence happiness is not often mentioned in connection with the permanent things of the people of God. Joy describes a deeper stratum, reaching down even to the resources of God. One may have joy amidst tears of sorrow, even as the ocean depths may be peaceful while yet the surface is disturbed by violent storm.

Jesus was anointed as no one else ever was, and that makes it consistent for Him to be known as Christ, the Anointed One. Usually men have been king only, as was Saul, and they have found trouble when they tried to be priest also. Or they have been prophet only or priest only. A few have been both prophet and priest, as was Samuel, or prophet and king, as was David. But Jesus was prophet, priest and king. Such as were prophets were such only to a segment of humanity. Such as were priests could make but limited atonement for sin. Such as were kings have ruled in small, mundane spheres. But Jesus is prophet to all intelligent beings, priest to the whole human race, and King eternal without limit as to sphere.

Oil has been used in the consecration of prophets, priests and kings from the earliest days of recorded history. Gladness marked the accession of all these to their respective offices, for by such means it was indicated that the incumbents were adapted to the office, and their subjects were favored in having them enthroned. But Jesus Christ is a million times more fitted than any prophet, priest or king that ever spoke to the ears of men, pleaded for mercy upon the transgressor or gave out words of authority for the direction and protection of his trusting subjects. The plentitude of the oil of gladness upon His head indicates the joy of holy angels and redeemed men to have Him crowned. "Let all the people praise him!"

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49

The Sermons of Solomon

The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem (Ecclesiastes 1:1).

The father of Robert G. Ingersoll was a preacher -- an eloquent preacher, it is said, but he preached a better gospel in the pulpit than he lived in his home. His son believed what he saw, rather than what he heard, and became a destroyer of the faith, instead of the staunch defender he was so capable of being. Solomon, too, was a great preacher, but a poor liver, and the influence of his example has gone wider than the effects of his sermons.

Manhood and Christianity -- just plain goodness and dependability -- are, after all, the most important elements in the making of a preacher, just as they are the chief qualities in the making of people of every calling. The preacher's character and religious experience are public property to a measure not approached in the case of anyone else in the community. A lawyer who is himself a criminal, a teacher who is unlearned, a sick doctor, a bankrupt banker -- none of these go so far toward corrupting youth and discouraging righteousness as a sinning, unfaithful preacher. "Physician, heal thyself," is a motto nowhere so applicable as to the teacher of free salvation and the preacher of a redeeming Christ.

It is little use for even a layman to testify to the grace of God if he cannot find strength for living right in the sight of men How fully, then, is the folly of the preacher revealed when he says tritely, "Do as I say, not as I do." Even politicians who talk for prohibition and then drink liquor themselves must keep the facts to themselves or suffer rejection. Enforcement officers who wink at breaches of liquor regulations, and citizens who follow the crowds in serving wine are more

responsible for the curse of the liquor traffic than are the bootleggers and rum runners. The public expects that the man who talks high shall also live high, and it has a right to make this demand.

But what shall we do? Shall we quit preaching righteousness? No, that is not the remedy. The remedy is to bring our lives up to the level of our preaching. Let the standard remain where it belongs. Do we preach righteousness? then let us live in all good conscience before God and men. Do we preach love? then let us "love one another," and the whole lost world. Do we preach peace? then let us cease from strife, and follow peace with all men. Do we preach that men should be holy? then, "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (I Peter 1:1516).

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50

The Man Who Forgot to Sign His Name

George Matheson suggests that we break the mirrors so we cannot see ourselves, and recalls the prayers of the fathers that the Lord might "hide the preacher behind the cross that only Christ should be seen." This is very appropriate talk for an age that scrambles more after "credit" than after excellence, and which limits its service by patents and copyrights, lest another should get the honor for the good work.

A master painter, it is said, rejected his own canvas because those who saw it remarked upon the beauty of the communion cup, when he wanted them to see Jesus only. Emphasis is placed at the right place in that prize-winning summary of the miracle at Cana, which reads, "The pale water saw its Lord and blushed."

The chimney and the wheel have been the symbols of comfort and progress from earliest times. Yet the man who built the first chimney forgot to insert his autograph, and the man who invented the wheel did not wait to tell us what land he sailed from or in whose reign he lived.

It was John, of course who really forgot to sign his own name, He gave the names of others who had part with him, but was himself content to be known as "that disciple," or at the most as "that disciple whom Jesus loved." Some have thought he meant to place himself at the head of the list in the affections of Jesus. But this is scarcely likely, seeing he was a modest man. Rather he was saying, "Peter was bold, James was wise, Andrew was provident," but there was one so ungifted, so young and so little that the most wonderful thing about him was that Jesus loved him. The notice he has received because he did not sign his name was quite beyond his thought and intention.

Who shall be greatest in the kingdom? Who shall be given credit for this good work? Shall I be neglected, after all I have done? Is this the thanks I get for my loyalty and my labors? How do those who outstrip me get the pull that brings them promotion? Too many mirrors; brothers, sisters, let us break them right away.

But what of those who have deliberately turned from possible fame to bury their lives in unselfish service? Some such have gone to heathen lands. Men of the central tribes of Africa could only describe a kind old doctor who came their way and told them about Christ. Listeners had to figure out that the kind old doctor was Livingstone. The glory we seek is not found by building a city, then a tower, and then putting our names up on the top of the tower, as the men of Babel sought to do. Our glory is found by willing self-effacement. Our joy is in decreasing that Christ may increase.

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51

The Wise of this World

The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light (Luke 16:8).

The Master's observation of the wisdom of the "men of this age" was illustrated by the actions of the unjust steward who was careful to provide for his future when he would be outside of his present position of employment. The men of this world are commended for their foresightedness in business. They pay premiums to companies which propose to make good their losses in case of fire or accident, and to provide for their loved ones in case of the earner's decease. They vote for retirement pensions, and make plans for income on savings in the days of decreased personal earnings. They "save for the rainy day," and otherwise work to extend their tenure in office beyond the day that now is. Sometimes their methods may be doubtful and even crooked, as the methods of the unjust steward surely were, but their wisdom is vindicated in that they look ahead and plan for the future.

But there is no folly like that of the shortsighted Christian; for no one has a future like the Christian. Others see the horizon dip at life's sunset, but the Christian sees a day beyond that, a day that shall not end in night at all. It is therefore a heartbreaking spectacle to see a Christian living altogether for today, and making few if any investments in the glorious future which stretches out before him.

How long is eternity? Of how great value is a home in heaven? How much ahead is one who has lost the world, but saved his own soul? How rich is the man who owns nothing but God? How bright will be the stars in the soul winner's crown a million years from now? How much will a dollar given to God now be worth when all the gold of earth has perished and melted away? We answer these questions better by attitudes and actions, than by platitudes and praises.

The wise of this world seek to make their investments in holdings that are both safe and profitable. But here again the Christian has the advantage, for he can put his wealth into stocks and bonds issued by the bank of heaven, and which will return both principle and interest at a time and in a place where one can keep them longer and make better use of them.

O Lord, make us wise, like the people of this age, that we may apply their methods in matters relating to the "enduring investments" which Thou dost offer us. And may we make Thy bank our depository and may we thus become rich in the things that shall never perish.

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52

The Subtlety of Sin

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field (Genesis 3:1).

Charles Lindbergh, in his account of early experiences in "barnstorming" as a flyer, remarks that many times he has seen people wave gaily to their friends while the pilot held his breath in uncertainty lest the under-powered plane should be unable to lift itself over the electric wires or the tops of trees in trying to get away from the ground. Then he has seen those same people turn pale when the engine sputtered and missed a few times at an altitude of three thousand feet. But the danger in the latter case was not to be compared with that of the former, since there were many chances that the pilot could get the motor started, and, failing this, a good chance that he could make a safe, even though a forced landing.

The unseen cancer may be a thousand times more deadly than the open running sore. The tooth that appears sound upon casual examination may, nevertheless, be the very one that is generating poison to lower the vitality of the whole body and invite weakness and disease. The serpent that lurks in the grass may be much more poisonous than the one which hisses and acts brave when the traveler appears.

We pronounce our anathemas upon the bandits and sneak thieves, but it is possible that our property is more jeopardized by the graft and crookedness of respectable men in high places. Publicans and sinners -- outbroken sinners -- were, in the days of our Lord, often closer to the kingdom of heaven than the proud, haughty, self-righteous, religious Pharisees.

Coming to ourselves -- for preaching does us no good until it gets to where the preacher says, "Thou art the man": we all know that murder and adultery and dishonesty will bring us into disfavor with both God and men; but we are likely to overlook the fact that concupiscence and hate are damning, even when they are denied expression. We shudder at the thought of perjury in court, but are inclined to overlook envy, wicked slander and foolish and hurtful gossip.

Heaven is quarantined against inner sin, as well as against outward crime. It requires a pure heart, as well as clean hands for one to ascend into the hill of the Lord or to find place to stand in His holy place. While justly condemning and shunning outbroken sin, let us also make sure that our hearts are pure and that the very secrets of our hearts are pleasing in His sight.

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53

Only the Humble Do Exploits

This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting (Mark 9:29).

Success is often a greater strain on fidelity than is failure. Many a person who served God faithfully while he was poor and weak and unknown, became vain and self-sufficient when riches and strength and popularity came his way. It was thus with Saul, Israel's first king. While he was little in his own eyes he was the channel through which God wrought deliverance for His people. But when he became aware of his greatness he was not great any more.

The disciples of our Lord had gone forth under the commission of their Master to preach and to heal, and they had been so universally successful that it seems highly probable they had commenced to think of themselves as instruments eminently fitted to their task. And then the Lord left them in the valley and Himself went to the Mount of Transfiguration. Here in the valley an unusually difficult case was brought to their attention and in the crisis the disciples failed. The Master came and healed the afflicted lad with little more than the usual show of effort. Why could not we cast him out?" inquired the discredited disciples. Gently the Master mentioned "prayer and fasting." But prayer and fasting are both ministers of humility. It was as though the Master had said, "You could not cast out the evil spirit because you have come to rate yourselves too highly -- you have come to think too much of yourselves. Only the weak are really strong for God, and only the meek can ever inherit the earth."

Napoleon, the proud, said, "God fights on the side of the heaviest battalions." But the light, flaky snow of the early Russian winter, coming in inexhaustible supply, proved to be heavier than shields and guns of iron. The soldierless prophet in Dothan, taking God by faith, testified, "They that be for us are more than they that be against us," and he was able to lead the whole band of his opposers as captives to his king.

Earthly advantages can help us only so long as we are able to disregard them. Education is a force until it becomes a dependence -- after that it is a hindrance. Position, like fire, is a splendid servant, but a destroying master. Riches rightly used may become the means for reward in heaven -- but trusted riches are the trap-door to hell. Prayer and fasting are symbols and reminders of our human insufficiency, and it is when they have brought us to the full sense of the fact that "our sufficiency is of God," and that to Him all power and glory belong that we are able to cast out dumb and deaf spirits, and do the exploits that the success of our part of His kingdom's promotion requires.

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54

The Positives of Peter

We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard (Acts 4:20).

Every schoolteacher is familiar with the statement, "Oh, I know it, but I just cannot tell and he knows it is the language of a languid pupil and the oozing of formless and indefinite thought. If you know a thing well, you can tell it. It may be the other will not understand, but you will

understand, and your language will be intelligible to yourself. Definite ideas will produce a definite vocabulary.

But, what is more, if the knowledge you have is of interest to others, it becomes your obligation to make it known. A secret is a treasure only when its subject is of personal or restricted interest. The chemist who learns how to prepare a specific remedy for a certain disease is under moral obligation to give his knowledge to those who will be able and willing to apply it to the healing of the sick. The pedagogue who discovers a new psychological law or develops a new and better teaching method is obligated to share his knowledge with those to whom is committed the task of educating youth. Much more, then, than all these, one who has found the way of salvation and life in Christ Jesus is obligated to give the gospel to all others.

And, one thing more, there is an intuitive necessity for telling what you know, especially when the subject is of universal interest and your discovery is of major importance. All men feel this, and that gives rise to the temptation to say too much. But take the case of the Christian: men are dying in their sins, dying without hope, and the Christian knows where and how hope is to be had. Surely, such a one will be unworthy of the name Christian if he holds his peace.

Why, then, are we ever indifferent in seeking to encompass the salvation of those about us? Why does our evangelistic and missionary zeal ebb low? Why do we ever pass opportunities for testimony and personal work? There can be but one answer: We are remiss only when our own inner light is dim: only when our knowledge of God is less vital: only when our zeal and passion for our dying Saviour has somewhat waned. Let not the lines of demarcation between the new and the old, and between death and life become obtuse. Make bold to speak the things you know of God and salvation. Just as more cases are won in court by witnesses than by attorneys, so more souls are won by testimony than by logical argument.

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55

The Glory of Being Helpful

A man of reputation was in difficulty. I chanced into a company of his acquaintances and overheard their comments concerning him. Some condemned him most unmercifully, and the others did not rebuke them. Some appeared to be altogether indifferent as to how the poor unfortunate sinner came out. But finally one man spoke in his favor, and with pathos and fervor pleaded for consideration for the man in the meshes.

After the conversation had turned to other subjects, I cast about a little for my own enlightenment. I took up conversation with the wanderer's defender, and cautiously inquired as to why the men of the company seemed so wanting in tenderness toward the man in question. Had he done something wicked or unfair to each of them personally? Why do they all seem to be so void of feeling in his behalf? The defender pointed out to me one and then another of the critics and told how in every case the man now so much in need of friends had befriended these who were now his judges and critics. This continued until I began to feel that I was in the midst of a band of Brutuses

who were stabbing the Caesar who had been friend to them all, and I fell to musing upon the inhumanity of men.

Then I bethought me of the man before me, and inquired as tactfully as I could in what way the man now in trouble had befriended him. In answer to my gentle urge my new friend gave a somewhat detailed account of his acquaintance with the man now in trouble, and I listened in vain for any instances in which the man in trouble had really befriended his present defender. The defender was not boastful, but in a straightforward manner told of the instances in which he had been the friend of the man whose cause he now championed. I could see nothing particular the other had done except to become the recipient of the favors of the man who now stood up for him against his many accusers.

Then I thought of myself. For whom do I feel ready to make the warmest plea? And I discovered that it is not always the man who has done me favors, but in many instances it is the one in whom I have at one time or another invested a kind deed or a friendly word. I owe much to those who have helped me, but those whom I have helped are my glory. And so I made up my mind to this: when I find someone in whom I have little interest, I am going to do that person a kind deed, I am going to pray for him with earnest prayer, I am going to make some sort of investment in him. After that, I will be concerned for his well-being. I cannot dislike those who have been the recipients of my favors, for they are the ones who have enabled me to climb up to the highest possible position -- the position of giver. "It is more blessed to give than to receive.

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56

Intellectual Giants and Spiritual Pigmies

Man is a threefold being, not counting his body which is just the house in which he lives. For he has intellect, a conscience and heart -- an intellectual nature, a moral nature and a spiritual nature. By the intellectual nature man deals with his relation to things, by his moral nature he deals with his relation to his fellow beings, and by his spiritual nature he deals with his relationship to God.

But there is an ever present trend toward lopsidedness. Men have tendency to major on the functions and development of one phase of their personalities to the neglect of the other two. For instance, the universe of things looms so large that always there is danger that it will invade realms to which it does not belong. Or, rather, in looking at the realm of things, men become absorbed, and conclude that the intellect is the whole man, and the material universe the whole universe. Men have built up an extensive school system and have proposed a vast curricula for the development of the intellect. No labor is accounted too exacting if its purpose is to ferret out the constitution, form and relation of things. The whole science of mathematics is devoted to the task of developing man's reasoning powers in order that he may further pursue the course of material things. In proper balance, this interest in things material is good. But partial truths are untruths, and when we come to the place where we think the intellect is the whole man, and the universe of matter is all there is of the universe, the faulty assumption alters a partial truth into a damning falsehood.

Educators have been known to haughtily disclaim responsibility for the moral nature. "Academic freedom" has become the maxim of those who would ignore the moral education of their wards, and youth is left to defy the institutions of Christianity and civilization, and no alarm is expressed over atheistic, and anarchistic tendencies, in doctrine and practice. "Let them think and act as they will," say these lopsided leaders of men. Science, they say, is the big thing, and morality is not important. If youth can learn how to manage things it matters not how they relate themselves to their fellows.

But worse still, the spiritual nature is often both neglected and denied. God is either left out entirely or is demoted to the position of an unthinking, unmoral influence, and men are encouraged to glory in being devotees of earth's short day, with no interest in a personal God and a never ending eternity.

Let us come quickly to the crux of the matter: dealing only with his immaterial part, man is a composite being. He has power to reason, and with this power he should reach out to discover the things of nature and find out how to manage them and how to relate himself to them. He has a conscience, which is his faculty for approaching questions of right and wrong in human relations. And he has a faith faculty by means of which he may apprehend God. Things, people and God: reason, conscience, faith! Should a man be considered educated and developed who has given attention to but one-third of his personality, and that the lowest third? Is a man a full man who is an intellectual giant, even though he may yet be a moral and spiritual pigmy?

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57

Family Religion

The church, the Sunday school, the weekday school, the workshop, the office, the store -- all the places where legitimate occupations take the young and the old -- offer their opportunities for the enjoyment and dissemination of true religion. But the home must ever remain the basic institution for all human society. Here is where the earliest and most lasting impressions are made upon the child. Here is where the normal person in the busiest days of his life turns for the renewal of his courage, and the enjoyment of the fruits of his labors. And here the traveler to the extremities of the earth hopes to spend his last days; and here the thoughtful man, even in the days of his health, hopes to come at last to die amidst familiar scenes and in the company of friends and loved ones.

True religion is based upon genuine salvation by the grace of God. Salvation is the tree; religion is the fruit. Salvation is what God does for us; religion is what we do for God. One cannot reasonably expect to live right unless he is right in his heart. But one may get right in an instant by exercising saving faith in Christ: then he has the interminable task of working out his salvation in consistent living and reverent worship.

In the workaday life of the average man, the passive virtues.: patience, meekness, gentleness, temperance, etc., occupy a large place; for while there are many things to enjoy, there is yet plenty to endure, and endurance is not a virtue except it be accomplished without complaint. There is no place where religion is put to a sounder test than right in the heart of your own family.

After all, a- man is no bigger and no better than he proves himself to be in the company of his own intimate loved ones. It has been said that no man is a hero to his own valet. This is just another way of saying that intimacy is a severe probation. But this saying, like the most of terse words, is based upon a partial investigation. We notice the exceptions, and soon learn to account the exceptions as the rule. The rule is, I think, that multitudes of humble people do live well in their homes. The exceptions, however, are too many. But let us come today to pay homage to the good men and good women, even to those of our own acquaintance, who have loved mercy and justice and walked humbly with their God right in the intimacy of the home life. You and I have known those who ran well in the race with the footmen, as well as galloped gaily with the horsemen. We have seen them live right, we have seen them die well. They have proved to us beyond cavil that true religion will stand the test of intimacy. They have proved to us that the better you know genuine Christians the more you believe in them, and they have saved us from that cynicism which holds that all goodness has its price, and that people are good only because the bids of evil are not high.

Let us not overlook the advantage of our own position. Bishop Simpson, one of the most eloquent of preachers, once said, "If my eternal salvation depended upon my winning a hundred souls for Christ during the next ten years, I would come right down out of the pulpit and go after them personally." And I think it might be added, that in picking that one hundred on the basis of probability, we should place our own loved ones at the top of the list.

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Back Cover Text

I Prayed for Our Boy Last Night
By J. B. Chapman

He was a passivist in temper, an artist in soul and an altruist in philosophy. But thirty-eight months ago, Mars reached out his mailed hand and took him for his game of "blood and sweat and tears." Twenty-seven months ago he was sent to the Western Pacific. During a six-month stay on some isolated speck of land, he never sat at a table to eat or put on a necktie. He went in on the second wave to an important island, later, and lived on C rations in a fox hole for the first three weeks. And now the monotony and seven-day-in-the-week duties are wearing him down, and there is still no relief in sight.

Last night I thought of him. I thought of him instead of sleeping -- thought of him until I could not sleep. I wished I might do something for his comfort, but could think of nothing that might not easily be more of a burden than a boon. I wished I might do something to hasten his release. But such a thought, I knew, was useless. I wished I might do something for him when eventually he comes home. But I am by no means sure he will ever come home, and I do not have the slightest idea what I can do to help him if he does come. Mine was the deep conviction of helplessness, and so I prayed.

I prayed, "God of mercy and of grace, bless our boy tonight. If it be Thy will, preserve his health, spare his life, and permit him to return to his wife and the rest of us who love him. But in

any case, O God, keep him clean in mind, in habits, in conversation, in thought and in heart. Thou dost keep the fish fresh in the salty water of the ocean, Thou canst keep a soldier clean in the midst of corrupt associates. Preserve this boy in the high ideals that he has been taught, and which he has embraced and professed as his own. May the light of the guiding pillar be so clear shining to him that neither the smut of camp nor the smoke of battle can serve to bedim it until it shall lead him to the heavenly city. Minister to him tonight comfort and assurance. Assuage his loneliness. Calm his fears. Hold him in mental, physical and spiritual balance. Make Thyself especially near and precious to, him. In Jesus' name. Amen."

And then remembering that when Jesus had prayed for special blessing upon the twelve, He asked that the petition be also applied on behalf of "All who shall believe on me through their word," I asked that this prayer might also be heard in behalf of the sons of other parents who, like ourselves, are given the task to pray and wait. Yes, I prayed for our boy last night -- and for your boy too!

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THE END