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SINGING IN THE SHADOWS

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1
Singing in the Shadows

And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives (Matthew 26: 30).

Already Judas had gone to the chief priests to sell his Lord at the usual price for a common slave. Already the symbols of His mangling and piercing had been distributed. Already the contentions as to who should be greatest had shown that even His own familiar friends had failed to discern His spirit. A night of agony was known to be just ahead, and this was to be followed by a day of humiliation, ignominy, suffering and death. But in the midst of it all He paused to sing a hymn. And the word is not ooda, the general term for song, but humos, a song of praise to God. We may not know just which of the Psalms was used, but judgment favors the forty-seventh or the one hundred and fiftieth, both of which are set to the highest key of triumph. Singing in the shadows! Praising God in the dark shadows! How could He do it? you ask. He could do it because He knew there was a day beyond the darkness--an Easter morning beyond the tomb. There was no tremor in the hands that broke the bread and passed the cup that night, and the song they sang was in the major key. The harsh wind from Calvary did not cause Him to shiver; the sight of the cross did not produce any wavering in His eyes. In the shadows Jesus was unafraid. But what of us and the shadows through which we must pass? The sentence of death has been passed upon us also. The execution date is slightly uncertain, but we know it shall fall within a given time--we know the maximum delay. But shall we sing a dirge to the honor of death? No, let us make it a psalm of life. For we too shall live again in a near tomorrow. An Easter morn shall end our night. A day of triumph shall dismiss our shadows. Let us sing: "Sing praises unto God, sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing praises . . . for the shields of earth belong unto God: he is greatly exalted." I have heard that the wounded bird sings more sweetly than before it was hurt. It sings, perhaps, in

memory of its former better days. And shall not we sing in the shadow, knowing, as we do, that the shadow must pass, and that we shall yet live in a land where clouds never come? Yes, I am that wounded bird, and I shall sing. But I sing both in memory of the good days I have had with loved ones now vanished from sight and in anticipation of clasping glad hands again on the cloudless shore. Let us sing even in the shadows, for Christ is King, and we shall reign with Him forever.

* * * * *

2

I'm Sure "There's Land Ahead"

When the hearts of his men grew faint, Columbus, on his journey west, drew from the water the branch of a tree on which there were green leaves, buds and ripening fruit. The evidence was conclusive, there was land ahead, for the land they had left was too far distant for such a product to have traveled so far. The spirit of uncertainty now gave place to assurance, and all lifted up their heads and strained their eyes in keen expectation that they would soon see that for which they had undertaken the voyage.

Life is a great sea over which we are called to sail, and sometimes it seems far from the shore we left to the one toward which we sail. Hearts may at times grow faint from the fear that there is no shore except the one we left behind.

But does this broad sea on which we sail have a shore ahead? It has, indeed, and that shore is the shore of my faith and of my hope. The shore from which I sailed is now far behind, and I shall never see it more. But I do not mind; for breezes from heaven bring fragrance from the trees of God. There is land ahead. I cannot see it yet, but I can taste its fruit, and I know a land that can produce such fruit must be fair beyond compare.

What are these tokens which I feel in my poor heart today? What is this which brings such melting to my spirit? What is this pillow upon which I rest my weary head? What is this blessed hope which feeds my hungry soul and quenches the fever of my restless spirit? Why, these are tokens of land ahead, and their freshness testifies that the distance is not great. I too lift up my head and strain my eyes for the first glimpse of the land "that is fairer than day."

A small boy stood holding the string to his kite, while the strong wind took the kite far aloft into the mist-filled sky. A passing man inquired, "What are you doing here, boy?" To this the lad replied, "I am flying my kite." "But I do not see any kite," said the man. To this the boy answered, "I can't see the kite, either, but I know it is up there --I can feel the pull."

Our eyes have not seen the City of God: but we are sure it is up there because of the pull it makes upon our hearts. And the closer we come to the city, the stronger the pull. No one need tell me there is a heaven--I feel its pull. And if I go back again to the language of the sea, I must assert that the shore is near. Today I stand upon the prow of the Old Ship of Zion and train my eyes toward the horizon in the effort to catch the first full glimpse of the land toward which I sail. Soon I shall hear and share the glad cry, "Welcome, heaven, welcome home, the day of God has dawned!" Yes, I'm sure there's land ahead.

* * * * *

3

Our Citizenship Is In Heaven

Stripped of all qualifying ideas, the kingdom of God just means God's rule. Extension of the idea invites complications. But the Scriptures make clear that God dwells in at least two places: heaven, the "high and holy place," and the contrite, humble heart of a true believer. Let us not concern ourselves too much with questions concerning nations or any of the organized units of human society. The important factor is the condition of my heart and my relationship to God as ruler of heaven, my eternal home.

As to my heart's state and relation, there is no need that I should stand in doubt. To the act of justification, regeneration and adoption, the Holy Spirit bears unmistakable witness. And to the further work of heart cleansing or entire sanctification, He likewise gives evidence that brings full assurance. I make this general assertion on the basis of the fact that He has given my poor heart this inner witness of sonship and purity; for I am fully confident that what He has done for me He will do for all who will come to Him in faith believing.

But I find myself unable to become enthusiastic over preachments concerning peace and health and prosperity upon earth. I have not lost interest in this world and its people, but more and more it and they are but a part of my concern. "My loved ones are gathering yonder." Blessings upon the earth are not enough, for God's family is part on earth and part in heaven, and my identity with that family divides me between the two worlds. I cannot escape a certain anxiety regarding that world that lies yet out before. "What are they doing in heaven today?" But my heart finds repose as I come to realize that God is King over all, and that I am a citizen of heaven. I dwell upon the earth for the moment, but I am just like a traveler away from home, and when this journey is finished I shall go on to my friends who have outstripped me in the race. And in doing so, I shall just move into another part of God's kingdom. I am at home in the universe for the eternal God is my rest.

I sit here in my upstairs room, just at the noon hour. I hear the voices of my daughter and grandson in the dining room below. I cannot see them, but I know they are there, and I am interested in them and what they are doing. Down the street my little granddaughter should be coming on her way to her noon lunch. I can neither see nor hear her, but she is very real to me, and I am fully confident I shall see her soon and hear her voice. But in another room of God's great house are others of my friends and loved ones. They were with me in body just a little while ago. Now they have slipped away into another room of the palace. I cannot hear their voices or see their forms, but they are very real to me. They cannot come back to me, but I shall go to them, and I shall get on faster in heaven through their assistance. The kingdom of which I am a citizen reaches out to tremendous extremities, but I can cross its various boundary lines without asking for a special visa or stopping to exchange currency; for I am a citizen, and no more a stranger or foreigner.

* * * * *

The Desperate Plight of the Mote Hunter

Jesus dubbed the mote hunter a hypocrite--a mere actor on the stage. Here is a man who passes over beams and searches for tiny specks of dust that the worms have worked loose from the beams. You would know he is a little man by the size of the opponents which he chooses. No full grown man would want to spend his time on such infinitesimal tasks. If he were little and weak only, he would solicit our sympathy and deserve our pity.

But the motive of the mote hunter is bad. He seeks to whitewash himself by blackening others. He cries, "Stop, thief!" to divert attention from himself. He is aware of his own beam, but rather than confess its presence and rid himself of it, he sets about giving his attention to reforming his betters. He is both a crook and a coward; and, furthermore, he is cruel. What is an eye to him? Forget the eye, the mote is the main thing. No matter how much suffering is occasioned, that mote must be located.

The dictionary defines faultfinding as "Act or practice of finding fault, especially petty censure." Who can estimate the suffering caused by petty censure? Who can estimate the damage done to the cause of God by faultfinding professors of religion? Church members make a habit of dissecting the preacher and their testifying neighbors at the dinner table, and then wonder that their children lose interest in the church and harbor doubts about the reality of religion. The mote hunter is in desperate plight concerning his own inner character and outer reputation, and he does desperate things in his small, cowardly way in the endeavor to improve his own standing. He thinks to make his own black white by making others' gray.

Still the Master would not have us indifferent about even the little things which do injury to either ourselves or our neighbors. He would not have us disregard even the motes. Rather He would have us qualify for the task of reproofing little things, by getting rid of the big faults in ourselves. There is nothing especially helpful about that broad toleration which goes about saying, "Oh, well, I have so many big faults myself that I cannot afford to notice the little faults in others." No, get rid of your big faults. Cast the beam out of your eye. Make a clean sweep of everything you know to be wrong within your own thoughts and conduct, and then drive out all that you suspect of being friendly with the enemy. Bring to God a transparently clean heart, and to your neighbors a life that is pure and right. Then you may be able to help others get the dust out of their eyes, and, seeing your own eyesight is good, you will be able to perform this delicate task without injuring the eyes of your neighbors. A good man is merciful-- even when he is removing dust from his neighbor's eye; for his object is not the mote, but the recovery of the eye. If he cannot help the eye, he will just leave the mote. This purpose and this attitude are what distinguish the good man from the hypocrite: the hypocrite values the mote and disregards the eye.

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The Integrating Power of Holiness

Stanley Jones tells of a Chinese who answered the question, "To what religion do you adhere?" by saying, "Confusion" (meaning Confucianism). And Dr. Jones remarks that there are many whose religion could well be described as confusion. Many who strive to serve the Lord Jesus Christ find, like Paul, that they have divided hearts and are unable to choose and do what in their deepest souls they desire to choose and do. When they would do good evil is present with them, and what they would not do, that they do.

There is help in the domination of a noble purpose, but not help enough. Consecration adjusts the will, but there is need of power to purify the affections. Example is insufficient--we need power to follow the example. Sin disintegrates, and we need something that will integrate. Sin and carnality divide and defeat. We need something that will unite and give victory. "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

Although a pagan untouched by the light of dependable revelation, Socrates hungered for integration. At the conclusion of "Phaedrus" it is recorded that once he went into the temple and offered this prayer: "Beloved Pan, and all ye gods who haunt this place, give me beauty in the inward soul, and may the outward and inward man be at one. May I reckon the wise to be wealthy, and may I have such a quantity of gold as none but the temperate can carry. Anything more? That prayer, I think, is enough for me."

Justified Christians have prayed, "Now rest my long divided heart." Well, the grace of entire sanctification is the answer to the prayer. And is this blessing the purpose of the heart is established and the affections are purified and alienated from sin and the world and exalted to supreme love to God. The outward and inward man are reconciled, and rest of soul is found. The grace of God in full salvation is the best psychiatry (Greek psyche mind and iatrea--healing) in the world.

In scientific medicine, diagnosis is but the beginning. After the disease has been detected, the remedy must be prescribed. If there is no remedy, the whole purpose of diagnosis has failed. What is the difference what is wrong with one's body, if there is no cure for the malady? And it is like that in the therapeutics of the soul. It is not enough to ferret out sin and enlarge upon man's unhappy state. The remedy must be prescribed. And thank God, there is a remedy. Cold orthodoxy will not meet the need. Activity of the human powers is not enough. But there is a fullness in the Holy Spirit that meets the full demand in us. There is holiness for the soul, just as there is health for the body. And although the conditions for bodily health may not be possible to all, holiness for the soul is offered on conditions which we all can meet.

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6 Counting and Discounting the Cost

The rich young ruler counted the cost and decided the charges were too high. Saul of Tarsus counted the cost and saw that Christ was worth more than all he had to pay, so he went on and discounted the cost, saying, "I count all things but loss . . . that I may win Christ."

Counting the cost is a preliminary process. Discounting the cost is the habit of the sanctified Christian. Harping on "what I had to give up when I took the way with God" is the prattle of the novice. The veteran says more of what he gained in the bargain. Stressing the sacrifice involved in denying the world and following the Spirit is expressing discontent. The assured sings more of the joys of sins forgiven and the bliss the bloodwashed know. "How much did you pay for it?" asks the cost counter. "How well does it serve the purpose?" inquires the cost discounter.

It is true that Jesus never rushes anyone off his feet to enlist him before he has agreed to the conditions. But it is also true that no one ever gives up anything that is truly valuable to take the way with Christ. Sin, vice, selfishness, worldliness, pride, unholy ambition, desire for revenge, fleshly pleasure, love of ease: what is there in the whole category of forbidden things that will be of any worth at all a hundred years from now? If there is anything the sinner has in the way of talent, personality, position or goods that is of permanent worth, Christ will let him keep that as an instrument to be used in the new service. It is only the chaff that is burned up and the dross that is cast away.

Christ is a greater prize than all, and heaven is cheap at any cost. And because these things are true, the genuine Christian accepts demotion gracefully, takes joyfully the spoiling of his earthly goods, rejoices in persecution, counts it an honor to suffer for Christ's sake, and counts all losses gains when they come to him in the will of God. Let us discount the cost and count the value of the prize.

The fact is we have all received more than we gave. That is a misleading appraisal that still thinks of our former state as fortunate. In reality we were "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Coming to Christ, we bought gold tried in the fire, and became rich. We obtained white raiment that we might be clothed. And our eyes were anointed with eye salve that we might for the first time really see. It is always Christian to say, "Brethren, pray for me." But it is not ours to solicit sympathy, no matter how lowly our estate; for with God for us, everybody and everything is for us. We surely do get more than we give.

* * * * *

7

The Challenge of the Present Generation

Shut in on all sides by desert and sea, the Hebrew people could not go out, so they had to go down and up. They made their little land a garden and received God's oracle for themselves and all mankind.

Geographical frontiers challenged our forefathers in America, and they fulfilled their pioneer instincts by going West to grow up with the country. In those days they did not dig deep or build high--even in the industrial and economic sense.

Social frontiers challenged the generation just now passing. They waged a great war to end war. They preached socialism for the state. They wrote on the statute books laws prohibiting the

liquor traffic. They thought they saw the sun rising upon a "stainless flag," a "warless world," and a day of social and economic justice. Youth conventions passed resolutions and signed pledges not to cooperate in armed conflict. But the demands for expansion overtaxed the moral nucleus and the spiritual plow ran shallow. Quality was swallowed up in quantity. All men were improved, so there was no need for drawing sharp lines of differentiation. The result was spiritual varioloid and religious dilution. There were not only no great sinners, but likewise there were no great saints. The challenge was to universal mediocre, and that challenge was more sadly than joyfully answered, for the net was loss, rather than gain.

But the West is gone. Social, political, economic and mass reform have spent their force and all but collapsed. What is there left to challenge us? Where now are the frontiers? Where is the battle line for current soldiers? Well, there are still the rocks beneath our feet and the stars above our heads. We can still go deep and high. Integration must now be sought and found in personal fellowship with Christ. Conquest must be in the realm of personal soul winning. We cannot save the nations, but we can point men to the Lamb of God. A day of giant sinners is also a day demanding and producing mighty saints.

The cheapest way is to make the times our alibi, and account the days of opportunity as past. But the right way is to meet the challenge squarely. Perhaps the gold on the surface has been pretty well picked up. If so, then we must dig deep. Perhaps expansion has reached its limits. If so, then we must build high. If we cannot reasonably hope for an ideal society, we can yet find grace to be perfect Christians in an imperfect world. If we cannot reach so wide a scope in missionary and evangelistic efforts, on account of the limitations enforced by international conflict, we can still major on the Christianizing of Christianity. We must take our day as it is and find a way to turn to good account all the aberrations and drawbacks with which it is infested. No generation was ever more soundly challenged to be good and do good than is our own.

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8

The Enslavement of the Ideal

St. Paul was wont to speak of himself as "the prisoner of the Lord." The love of Christ "constrained" him to take a course which lost to him the friendship of the mighty and made of him a "companion in chains." But in the midst of his physical bondage he rejoiced that "the word of God is not bound." If he had taken a course that saved him from physical imprisonment that same course would have led to a bondage of conscience more galling than any earthly prison keeper could apply. So he rejoiced that his liberty was essential and his enslavement incidental--his conscience was free though his body was bound.

Patrick Henry was not alone in making liberty and death alternatives every honest man has really to do that. The ideal enslaves its beholder. Once the gleam is seen it must be followed or its passing will leave but the blackness of night. They play on words who differentiate duty and privilege. Duty is privilege at first, and privilege is transmuted into duty the moment one hesitates to grasp it. One moment the ideal is a hope that leads and the next moment it is a fear that drives.

The apostle in the same breath rejoices for the privilege of making Christ known and sighs over the woe that threatens if he preaches not the gospel.

But when one becomes the full and willing slave of a sufficient ideal he becomes immune to all other enslavement. Henceforth he is a free man, even though he may suffer the loss of all earthly freedom and pay his life as a forfeit. Slavery to heart and conscience is the highest emancipation. When life is Christ even death is gain. "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard," said Peter and John. "Here I stand, so help me God," cried Luther. "I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself . . . this commandment have I received of my Father," said a Greater than them all.

Although liberty and license are frequently confused, they are really antagonists and opposites. No man is free "to do as he pleases." One is free only if he does right. Any man is free at the point of willing, but there are obstacles to the carrying out the will and wishes of all. But the man who is enslaved to a worthy ideal cannot be brought into bondage to any man. If he is in prison, he may not be free to leave the prison, but he can choose to stay in the prison. If he is sick, he may not be able to recover his health, but he is free to be sick or to die. Wesley longed for coadjutors who hated nothing but sin and feared no one but God, and with a host of such he believed he could take the land for God. And indeed when we fear God supremely, we are free from all other fears.

* * * * *

9

Christ's Standard of Greatness

Men have usually believed that greatness is indicated by one's ability to get others to serve him. But Jesus taught that true greatness is indicated by one's willingness and ability to serve others. Men have been wont to calculate their fortunes in terms of what they have been able to gain and hold--and leave behind. But Jesus taught that the rich are those who are willing to give away what they have what one gives, so the Master taught, he saves and sends on before. Men have usually accounted the affluent as successful. But Jesus told of a leprous beggar who all the time was preparing to be the guest of honor at a feast in heaven where Abraham sat. Men like to use kings and sages as patterns for emulation. But Jesus brought a child so small that He could hold him in His arms, set him in the midst, and said, "Be like this, if you would be truly great."

Teachers have usually expected their pupils to stand in respect while in their presence. But Jesus girded Himself with a towel, and washed His pupils' feet. Kings of earth have sought for thrones of ivory to enhance their glory, robes of purple to add to their splendor, scepters of gold to indicate their power, and crowns of gold bedecked with gems to testify of their wisdom and heavenly appointment. But Jesus, King of kings, accepted a cross of wood for a throne, a wavering reed for a scepter, a garland of thorns for a crown, and hung in shame and nakedness before the throng. Kings have sought safety in forts and comfort in palaces. But Jesus spent nights in the desert, and ate with publicans and sinners and in the homes of the poor. Kings of earth have wanted bodyguards that their lives might be made sure. But Jesus guaranteed His life by dying once that He might die no more forever.

But who is right, Jesus or the others? Let the centuries answer. Who of the contemporaries and opposers of Jesus are remembered except it be for their infamy and misfortune? Who now counts the gold that the misers of Palestine held when Jesus preached there? What has become of the palace where Herod lived, and of the crown that Caesar wore? Where now are the Roman legions upon which Pilate depended? Who stands in respect when the name of any of the teachers who contradicted Jesus are mentioned? But, on the other hand, whose precepts are heard and whose example is esteemed like those of Jesus? Whose throne is so secure, whose scepter so strong, whose crown so untarnished as His?

Christ's way to greatness is the right way--the only way. No one is great unless he is good. No one is great unless he is useful. No one is great unless he is unselfish. No one is great unless he is Christlike. Let us follow Christ's way. Let us find that road through the valley that leads to the throne.

* * * * *

10

All or None at All

Jesus' coat was without seam, being woven in one piece; so that dividing it would ruin it. The soldiers to whom the garment fell concluded it would be better for one of them to have a useful garment than that each of them should have a worthless scrap. Christ cannot be divided. We must take Him only or not take Him at all. It cannot be Christ and Mohammed, Christ and Buddha, or Christ and the world. It must be Christ or the others--Christ and no others.

And it must be Christ in all His fullness or no Christ at all. It cannot be just Christ as an example; Christ as a teacher, but not Christ as Savior and Lord. Jesus is either what He claimed to be or He was an impostor. He could not be a good man and claim to be the Son of God, if He were not the Son of God. He could not be a wise teacher and yet be unable to show men the way to everlasting life. But if He shows the way to everlasting life, then that way is by faith in Him as the Son of God. If believing on Jesus Christ as the Son of God will not save men, then Jesus cannot save men, for He never proposed to save them any other way than this. We must either take Jesus Christ as Lawgiver, Teacher, Example, Savior and King or we must reject Him.

And it must be Christ with all the heart or no Christ at all. It cannot be Christ on Sunday, and self the other days of the week. It cannot be Christ in religion, and the world in politics and business. It cannot be Christ in appearance and profession, but with reservations concerning His sufficiency. We must hang our souls on Christ as our only hope and stay or we must leave Him out in favor of the substitutes with which He is in competition. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

It must be Christ in the heart; Christ in the life; Christ in the home; Christ in the forum; Christ in the marts of trade; Christ everywhere and all the time. It must be Christ in the morning, in the noontide, in the evening, and in the dark hours of the night. It must be Christ when His name is praised, and Christ when He is maligned by men. He must be our choice whether He is on the

scaffold or on the throne. It must be Christ in sickness and in health; Christ in life and in death; Christ Jesus forevermore!

There can be no divided allegiance. I answer the challenge and take Him as my all in all. I give Him my all, and of His fullness I now receive. The lot has fallen to me. I have drawn, not the undivided, seamless coat, but the glorious, undivided Christ that wore the coat. O Christ of the seamless coat, be Thou my undivided possession! Be now and always my all in all!

* * * * *

11

"Come Just As You Are"

The travel stained and weary traveler is cheered by the homely words on the hotel sign: "Come just as you are"; for this means that the guest will not be ostracized on account of his appearance. It will not be necessary for the guest to adjust, the hotel will do that. The traveler, it is promised, will become the center of interest. It is as though the hotel were in business just for the guest's comfort, and they are looking for him, and will be disappointed if he does not come.

Enlarging upon the fact that Jesus was born in a stable belonging to an inn, Boreham suggests that this, in symbol, was the widest possible invitation for all to come. The inn is open to the rich and the poor. There is no need to ring a bell or use the knocker. No special permission is required. No guards or doormen will annoy. Everything said as plainly as possible, "Come just as you are."

Sometimes when people are seeking God they wonder why they are not told just exactly how they should come. Shall they stand or sit or kneel to pray? Shall they go into their own private room, to a small company of friends or to a public altar of prayer? Shall they pray aloud or only in a low whisper. Shall they ask the help of others or shall they try to find the way themselves? Why can it not be said in just so many words, Do this and do that and you will find God and pardon and peace? But that is just it. If the time and place and posture and method were defined, then there would be times and places when one could not come, and there might even be some people who could not come at all, because they would be unable to come in the manner prescribed. But it is like a mother who calls her child, saying, "Come." She does not stop to say, "Come running," or "Come creeping." She leaves these incidental matters to the child. Just let him come in his own way. Only let him be sure to come.

And the call of Christ is universal like that. "Whosoever will let him come." "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Come just as you are. Come in your own way. Only come. Come with loud weeping, or come in complete silence. Come on your knees, sitting on your chair, standing, walking, or lying prone upon the ground. Come in the closet of secret prayer, or in the presence of the great congregation. Come on the advice of others, or come with no human counsel at all. Only be sure to come. "Oh, everybody come, come to the Savior, come."

* * * * *

12

The Compliment of Hardship

Indulgence is distasteful to the heroic. Only the effeminate accept unearned immunities as boons. The poorest comforter in the world is the man who belittles our griefs. Mute silence, as even Job's "miserable comforters" found, is true eloquence in the house of deep grief and sorrow. Even the man who exults over his pleasant paths is disappointed if we fail to add, what he more or less purposely overlooked, that he has borne and suffered and endured much in the process. The man who has no heritage of sorrow is poor indeed. Try it in any company. See how willing the victims of major operations are to tell of their experiences, and notice that they make it imperative for you to think, and easy for you to say, "Wonderful, indeed, the average person going through with what you have suffered would not be here to tell the story."

But this tendency to measure our worth in terms of hardship is not bad, but good. Paul, the devoted, said, "We glory in tribulations," and, "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Peter, the impetuous cried, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you . . . but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings." James, the practical, counseled, calmly, "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." John, the beloved, reasoned, "Because he laid down his life for us; we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." And the Master of us all, in words of assurance, said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

"Self-preservation," they say, "is the first law of life." But after the right to live, according to our national fundamental law, comes the right to own property, and then the right to pursue happiness. But human intuition is a faulty guide, and unenlightened men are wont to crowd and push and stake out claims in the domain of ease and complacency, in which estate no one in this world ever yet found contentment and happiness. The rich plains are those where there are burdens to bear, sorrows to share, and tribulations and hardships to endure.

Joy is a possession that can be held only when there are others to share it. But sorrow and grief and hardship and tribulation and care need no listening ears but those of the Master. Shall we say then that only they who have the incomplete gift are happy? Nay, why should we thus conclude? To His dearly beloved God gives the compliment of hardship, grief and sorrow, and thus indicates to them His desire and plan to keep them for Himself alone.

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13

Honesty Is A Principle

The motto "Honesty is the best policy" has, I think, been traced to Benjamin Franklin, and there is no question that it contains a truth. But it is a secondary truth, for in the full sense honesty is a principle, not a policy. That is to say, if one is honest just for policy's sake, he is not in the

final analysis honest at all. But this in no wise affects the fact that it is good policy to be possessed of right principles. It is not possible for anyone to do very much working by himself. But if he has others to work with him, these others must believe in him. It happens, therefore, that when a business executive teaches his associates to steal for him, they do not go far until they begin stealing from him. Hence the principle of honesty, besides being a principle, is in practice the best policy.

Socrates used to confuse people by means of his questions. First he would ask a question, then upon hearing a plain answer, he would ask other questions that his listener could not very well avoid answering in a way that was inconsistent with his first position. Sometimes he did his associates good by deflating them of their vanity, but sometimes he did them harm by leaving them under the impression that truth is variable and relative, and not positive and dependable.

But sometimes questions serve to help us make an abstract truth concrete and applicable. It is like that when Theodore Gerald Soares asks, "What is stealing?" And then, as though not quite satisfied, he goes on with his questionings and reasonings on the subject. "Is it stealing to sell bonds to another that you would not buy yourself? Is it stealing to persuade people to buy real estate on which most of them are practically certain to lose money? Is it stealing to do less than a fair day's work for a fair day's pay?" Then he goes on to say, "I remember watching some stone masons at work on a building in the era when they received fourteen dollars a day. They were proceeding with leisurely dignity. We all understood that they had agreed among themselves to lay only half the amount of stone that a good workman could lay in the time. But I knew and the masons knew that all the stone for the building came from a limited number of quarries in a certain district, and that the owners had agreed among themselves to keep the price up and divide the profits. Of course the gentlemen were financiers and the workmen were slackers, but the question recurs, "What is meant by stealing?"

But the apparent uncertainty in such a case is just for emphasis. There is no question that all the things mentioned are stealing. And there is no question that every attempt to exchange the inferior for the superior in traffic between human beings is stealing. The fact is, we are not really troubled about definitions. We all know pretty well how to be honest, if we really want to be so.

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14

Plowing Around the Stumps

Three years before I was born my father claimed his heritage on sixty acres of wooded land in southern Illinois. He cut down the trees, burned the branches and made such use of the trunks as their size and texture suggested. But the stumps of oaks and elms persisted, and among my earliest lessons in domestic science were some relating to methods for "plowing around the stumps." Some of the stumps were large and tall. These we did not so much dread. But some were "blind" in that they did not rise above the surface of the ground. These laid hold of the plowshare and brought everything to an abrupt stop, playing havoc with old trace chains, weak singletrees and plowboy's patience. But the stumps were there; we had to farm the land to produce bread corn and

seed wheat, so there was nothing to do but to repair the damages, and go on plowing around the stumps.

Take our own personal lives: there is promised to us a blast of Pentecostal dynamite that will remove the old stump of sinful carnality. But the producer of holy character still has to contend with weak eyes, bad digestion, frail and faulty judgment and oddities and limitations of temperament and disposition--stumps, stakes, thorns in the flesh that will remain until the Lord shall give us new and glorified bodies. But we must not become discouraged and quit. We must plow around these obstinate buffers and strive ever onward toward a harvest of ultimate Christlikeness and mature sainthood.

Then there is the field of the world in which we are called to labor. Here are blatant infidels, subtle skeptics, wobbly disciples, crooked professors of religion and consummate hypocrites stumps around which we must plow or else leave the field to become fallow ground. "Why does not God kill the devil?" cries the persecuted saint. "Nothing can ever be done in this community until some of these people die or move away," observes the fainthearted Christian who has looked away from his Lord and to the conditions under which the work must be promoted.

Stumps do make farming difficult, we admit that; and wherever it is possible to use the ax and mattock effectively the work may be made more pleasant and fruitful. But some stumps cannot be immediately removed, and the people will perish if they must wait for a harvest until the field can be entirely cleared of buffers. We wish the field were better and the work more pleasant, but we must take the field as it is, and not as we wish it were. Such stumps as will not yield to our efforts to remove them must be plowed around, for we must have bread corn and seed wheat. We must keep personal victory, regardless of our human limitation and consequent disappointments. We must win souls and promote revivals, in spite of all hindrances and difficulties. All this is not easy--we wish the field were clear of stumps--but it can be done.

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15

Trouble Too, Is Transient

We are accustomed to hearing that our earthly joys are fleeting, and that our good times cannot abide. But trouble is transient, too. The flood of Noah's time, which still stands at the head of the list of earthly calamities did not come to stay, but "came to pass." And all pain and trouble and inconvenience and sorrow are like that. They all come and then pass on. They are not permanent at all.

The troubles of our childhood came to pass, and now we look back upon them with wonder that we ever considered their weight heavy. Even the troubles of youth have, for many of us, passed and we think of them as of small consequence. And some day it shall be thus regarding the tribulations of the present hour. Some day we shall marvel that the sorrows of today ever taxed our endurance at all. And this change does not come, as some erroneously suppose, by reason of greater woes which swallow up the former sorrows. Rather it comes with the clarification of our vision. It

comes from the new perspective that distance brings. It comes from our absorption in matters of better concern. The sorrows of earth cannot abide the joys of heaven.

But the flood did not leave the righteous family just where it found them. As the waters arose, the ark arose also, and at the close the ark was no longer on the plain, but found its resting place on the top of a high mountain. This result did not come of the purpose of the flood, but of the attitude of the ark. With a different attitude, the ark would have been submerged, and all its denizens would have perished. And to us is the promise that the floods shall not overflow us. This is not a promise that the floods will be controlled, but is a promise for controlling us. The floods will rise, but we shall rise faster and higher than the floods, and when the floods are at their crest, we shall still be able to breathe.

But while the tenure of the flood was temporary, its demise was permanent; for God has set His bow in the cloud as a sign of His promise not to ever again bring a flood of water upon the whole earth. And when the tide of earth's troubles shall recede, we shall find our eternal resting place high up in the mountains of God, in glorious fulfillment of the symbol of the Ark and Noah's family. Trouble is transient, but peace shall be permanent for all those who make the Lord Jehovah their everlasting trust.

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16

From Sin, In Tribulation

Last night I had a pleasant room and a good bed, but my rest was broken. There are no ravenous beasts in this country and the house was barred against desperate men. I was not sick in body or troubled with unwelcome thoughts and anxious cares. The trouble was a mouse had become entrapped in the room and thought he had found a convenient place near the head of my bed to gnaw his way out. Just as I approached slumber, one time after another, the noise of his teeth on the hard wood brought me back and pushed me out to turn on the light, move the portable furniture and search for my miniature disturber--little animals break the sleep, just as little foxes spoil the vines.

But the dawn came early, and with it my disturber disappeared. Perhaps he had such a strenuous time that he will come no more. Anyway the day is bright and I shall not borrow anxiety as to what tonight shall show. Either the mouse will not come tonight or, if he does, I shall be somewhat accustomed to his annoyance and perhaps I can sleep in spite of him. I have determined that so small a foe shall not steal my peace and defeat my plans.

A mere thorn in the flesh may occasion more annoyance than a decay in the bones, for the deep disease may be more deadly than painful, and it is pain from which we shrink. And prayer for the removal of the thorn may have its answer in the increase of grace to bear, rather than in the banishment of the pain. But what matters is that I may know He heareth me--then I know I have the petition I desired of Him. Whether it be the assuaging of the hurt or the increase of the solace, I shall be satisfied. He delivers me from sin, but He may elect to deliver men tribulation. The

variation proves His personal care for me. I cannot worship law, any more than I can worship idols of stone. My God is a living, loving, thinking, almighty God, and His way is best.

It is not what happens to me that matters so much as it is my response to what happens. We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. It is midnight now, and I must count this a day. I shall sleep in peace, although tomorrow morning may find me dead. But alive or dead, I am the Lord's, and He can keep me here or take me there as He will. If I live, I know I shall have annoyance and inconveniences--these are promised to me and they serve to wean me from a world I cannot keep anyway. But the thing that counts is that His grace makes and keeps my heart pure, and neither tribulation nor temptation nor any other creature can break my fellowship with God or defile my spirit while I trust and His Spirit abides. So in spite of every inconvenience, and in the face of every grief and sorrow, I still look up and say, "It is well, it is well with my soul." And since it is well with my soul, it is well with me, no matter to what extent my circumstances may seem to contradict the claim.

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17

To Be Truly Great, One Must Be Good

The ancient Romans worshipped virtue and honor as gods, and the temples were so situated that one had to pass through the temple of virtue to reach the temple of honor--one had to be good before he could be great.

We do not worship abstractions--we revere only "the true and living God." And yet we know that the basis of true greatness is goodness. No matter how much of honor is heaped upon one, we feel and know that it is yet but tinsel if the gold of inner character is naught but brass.

Men of genius who made no worthy choices nor built lives of moral and spiritual worth serve principally to show succeeding generations the folly of their course. Their greatness was a house built on the sand. Their genius was a sharp razor in the hands of an untutored child. Their reputation was a heavy laden wagon on a miry road. They came into the temple of honor without passing through the temple of virtue. Their crowns faded because they did not strive lawfully.

But one of the principal elements of greatness is durability. Nothing transient is truly great. The highest commendation we can give a friend is this, "He bears acquaintance." For this is to say that he is as good down deep as he appears to be on the surface. And the most complimentary biography contains the sentence, "He, being dead yet speaketh." For this is to say his words were true, his course was correct and his life was pure.

How brief is the summary of the worth while life! "Abraham believed God and it was accounted unto him for righteousness." Of Barnabas it is said only, "He was a good man, full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." John Wesley, made his own summary, "Best of all, God is with us." The saintly Fletcher would add nothing to this, "I nothing have and nothing am, my glory's in the bleeding Lamb, both now and ever more." Paul's epitome was, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." And the Greatest of All, in His last unhurried moments,

said, simply, "It is finished. Into thy hands I commend my spirit." Goodness is the chief quality in the truly great, and goodness is more of principle than of demonstration. There is no call for a lengthy rehearsal of deeds and words when one has been in inmost character such as all these were.

It may not be given to any of us to pass through into the temple of honor in this world. We may live in obscurity and die unknown. But the gates of the temple of virtue are always open. Let us enter with the company of the good. Then God will acknowledge us, and the angels will know our house number, even though men may not find it easy to see that our beggar garments are veil to princely qualities.

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18

Holy Ambition

The Latin word from which came our word ambition means a going around. It was used especially of politicians, and therefore came to mean going around for votes. And since vote seekers were commonly time servers and place seekers, the word came to mean seeking self-preferment or promotion without merit.

But, like most words, ambition has a better phase. Paul found that better phase when he committed himself to the aspiration of being like Christ in soul and in service, and to the hope of arising in His likeness in the first resurrection. Such an ambition may become an obsession without bringing a curse. May it fully possess you and me!

Holy ambition must have unselfishness for its basis. It must be lawful and right in its methods. And it must have a praiseworthy object. "I shall be satisfied," said the psalmist, "when I awake in thy likeness." Could ever man or angel set a higher goal or offer one more worthy? John answered this cry with the assurance, "We know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Here desire for preferment is purified by being extended to all God's people--only the hypocrite would be promoted at the expense of another's demotion.

Holy ambition is gentle in its temper. Humility is not the making of oneself small when he is great, but it is thinking little of oneself. And humility disposes one to receive with gentleness and meekness whatever may come to him from others or from God. Therefore, while the possessor of holy ambition is persevering, knowing his goal is worthy and attainable, he is not fractious, self-pitying or prone to despondency.

Holy ambition is triumphant in its attitude. Since God is eternal and I am immortal, I can wait. If others are chosen before me in the current elections, there is still plenty of time for me. If others push in ahead and get their hire, I can wait until my inheritance is given. There are too many tomorrows for me to accept as final any slight or defeat or failure that may come today. Some time, somewhere, I shall reach my goal!

It would, in fact be an utter wrong for me to set a goal for myself that could be readily reached. That would classify me immediately as a creature of this short day. It would place me in the category with moths which sacrifice their wings for one brief fling into the candle's flame. But I am built for eternity. I cannot get more than a start during life's short day. I plan definitely to live forever. I plan to enjoy the fellowship of God and the holy always. I cannot be satisfied with anything short of this. I cannot seek praise, but I do seek to be praiseworthy. I cannot seek preferment, but I do long to possess whatever it takes to bring redeemed men into the inner circle of the Master's presence. I aspire to the bearing of the fullest possible image of my Redeemer both now and evermore.

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19

The Good Road Is Shortest

One arrow said, "Macon 68 miles." The other announced, "Macon 58 miles." I hesitated, then turned toward the shorter road. Then I hesitated again and inquired. "The longer road is paved," said my informer. Still undecided, I asked, "You think it better to take that way, even if it is longer?" Without hesitation, my informer answered simply, "I think so."

The shorter road always presents an appeal, but sometimes it is a subtle and misleading appeal. When one road is paved and the other is not, ten miles extra distance may still leave the longer road in the lead. When James A. Garfield was a college president, a father brought his boy to the school and said, "My son would like to get through as soon as possible. Would it not be possible for him to leave out some of the courses and finish in a shorter time?" To this Garfield replied, "Yes, it is possible to take a shorter course, and it all depends upon what results you wish to reach. If you want to grow a pumpkin one season is sufficient, but if you want an oak you must have more time."

There are short cuts to education; short cuts to position; short cuts to riches; short cuts in religion; short cuts everywhere. But the short cut does not always lead to the same destination as the longer way. A "Bible school graduate" is not a college trained man. He may lead the college man for the first five years. He may keep up with him the second five. But after that the advantage of more thorough grounding will appear, and the Bible school graduate will fall behind early in the race and lose the advantage he seemed to have at the start. A man may "pull wires" and secure a place, but the man who earns his promotion by hard work and sufficient apprenticeship will come out best "in the long run." One man in a thousand may win on a long chance in business gambling, but the foundations of fortunes which abide are laid in industry, economy and reasonable care. A man may refuse to "take two bites at one cherry," and rush up and sign a card and give the preacher his hand and join the church. but in the tests and trials of life and death those who drink the wormwood and gall of repentance and go "the mourner's bench route" prove that the longer road is the better road.

It was in an age of shallow religion, when they were "healing the affliction of the daughter of my people slightly," that Jeremiah cried, "Stand ye in the way, and see, and ask for the old paths: Where is the good way? and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." And that

same exhortation is in place today. The cheap, shallow kind of religion that is all too prevalent may represent the short way, but the longer, harder way is better, for it leads to a better destination.

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20

Perverted Affections

An elderly woman of apparent culture and wealth, a companion in travel with us on the Moldavia, could not sleep for worrying about her pet dog which was ill when she left it in London. So from Port Said she sent a cable of inquiry about her pet. Do I criticize her? Rather I pity her. Love which should have been poured out upon a husband and children, or upon the less fortunate of earth, and upon Christ and the souls for whom He died, has missed its true object and has eventuated in perverted form upon a dog. No doubt there is much more of tragedy than of sport involved in the story. It is always so, if we only knew.

God has given us bodies which we must develop. He has given us minds which we must educate. He has given us hearts which we must direct and enlarge. In every case an object is necessary. To fight "as one that beateth the air" will not answer for the physical. To dream and drift will not fulfill the requirements of the mind. And to follow the gleam of selfishness and fancy will not attain the purpose of the heart.

The savage buries his father alive in order to escape the demands which infirmity makes upon producing power. The elite among the civilized shun matrimony and children in order to escape the responsibility involved in having dependents. But are the selfish fortunate? Do they reap a happy harvest from their vicious sowings? They are not. They do not. We must die to live. We must suffer to save. We must give to receive. We must be the friends of men if we would have friends among men. We must accept the possibility of being hurt, if we would enjoy the blessedness that comes from being another's choice among all earth's millions or of hearing a little child call us the dearest of all names --father or mother.

What a great Christian that person would have made who could pour out such unusual affection on a dog! How much she could have done to save lost men and to protect afflicted women and helpless children! Yea, verily, how devotedly would she have followed the faultless Christ, if only her great capacity to love could have been directed to Him!

Jesus himself drew many illustrations from the fields, from the flocks and from the animals of the earth. None of His references ever brought dishonor to the object itself. Even in a land where dogs were held in light esteem, He made the dog under the table typical of the humble, trusting soul that receives the divine blessing. Even the unclean swine was mentioned in no more than a passing manner, and with none of the usual reflection upon it. But Jesus was no nature worshiper nor promoter of animal deification. The lost sheep was but a symbol of a lost man. The fox was but a type of semi-homelessness to make His own utter homelessness stand out. The ox in the ditch, the sheep in a pit, and the sparrow that fell before the darts of the hunter all pointed to

men made in the image of God and requiring His saving grace and spiritual consolation. Supreme love to God purifies all love, and enables one to love all men and all things, but none too much.

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21

The Tyranny of the Unimportant

Searching for an appropriate title for a sermon on the inferior choice Martha made as related to the choice of her sister Mary, a preacher fell on this: "Too Many Dishes to Wash." Martha could not enjoy the fellowship of her Divine Visitor on account of her housekeeping duties. In most climates it is necessary to have a house, but owning and keeping a house may rob one of his home. Some houses are too fine for children's feet, so little ones are either denied the right of existence altogether or else are orphans and waifs in the houses of less accurate neighbors, or on the streets and in the alleys in questionable company. Some dishes are reasonably necessary to a well served meal, but too many dishes turn the feast into drudgery and make the guest a bore and an imposition.

Nobody in all the world is unimportant, but all things are relatively so. When one becomes too enmeshed in business to allow for friendship with his children and conversation with his neighbors, he simply has "Too Many Dishes to Wash." When one is so occupied with the things of the body that he has no time for his soul, he is under the iron heel of a tyranny more cruel than that of any political dictator. When one is so busy doing good that he forgets to be good in his inner soul, he is grasping a shadow and missing the substance.

There is no full escape from the unimportant. The major portion of our twenty-four hour day is consumed by sleeping, eating and the general care of the body, either by direct ministrations or by indirect labor for money with which to buy the 'necessities of life.' But time is a secondary element, and second things must not preempt first places. Interest--deep soul interest--may make a minute outweigh a year. "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand." The holy man is in the world, yet not of the world. The unimportant must keep its place. God must be the source and the object. Then we shall be free.

Jesus corrected the reformers of His day for their tendency to "strain at a gnat and swallow a camel." Often an undue emphasis on the unimportant serves to minimize the place of the important itself. This sometimes happens in matters of religion and morals. When asked why he passed over a fine beefsteak while partaking of the prepared meal in the house of the man he had just murdered, the criminal answered, "It was Friday, and my religion forbids the eating of meat on that day of the week." In his zeal to care for stray dogs, a townsman allowed a child to perish at his door on a stormy night. And many a man has been so taken with the plan for his children's food and clothing and education that he has done nothing for the souls of those committed to his care. Things must be given their proper rank, if they are to be a blessing and not a curse.

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22

The Blight of Worldliness

Henry Drummond said, "No matter what may be the moral uprightness of a man's life, the honorableness of his career, or the orthodoxy of his creed, if he exercises the function of loving the world, that defines his world. He belongs to the organic kingdom. He cannot in that case belong to the higher kingdom. 'If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' After all, it is by the general bent of a man's life--by his heart impulses and secret desires, his spontaneous actions and abiding motives--that his generation is declared."

An outward itching rash may often cause more concern than an inward eating cancer. A rag flower on a woman's hat may draw more fire than a man's heart that is completely sold out to covetousness. An unintentional and careless slang word may cause a great flurry even among those whose hearts are given up to malice and envy.

But worldliness is even yet more subtle. For one may be vain of his plainness, proud of his humility, and puffed up on account of his misfortunes. His holiness may silently turn to haughtiness, his righteousness may form a new center around selfishness, and his zeal may lose its love content and become inflamed with the fire of hell. One may love money to his own damnation and never possess it. He may sell Christ for pottage that is never served. And he may deny his Savior for the applause that even then the world neglects to give.

The only antidote for death is life. The only cure for sin is salvation. The only Conqueror of the world is Jesus. The only effective defense against the pressure and threatened inroads of the world is a heart cleansed and filled with the Holy Ghost. The stronger Man enthroned within will keep the strong man of the world from getting in.

We cannot dispel darkness except by letting in the light. We cannot be free from the world except by being filled with the Spirit. Hence to come now with a tirade against the negatives would yet not point the way to deliverance. It is not enough for one to just lose his interest in the world. He might do that and be nothing more than a grouch. It is the perfect love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost that cures from the love of the world. "Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed?"

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23

Living for a Purpose

From The Nazarene Weekly, bulletin of First Church, Nashville, Tennessee, we quote the following: "An old cannibal was approached by a noted citizen and told of the great World War that was then being waged in Europe. He was most curious to know how the Europeans ate such an enormous amount of human flesh. When told that the Europeans did not eat the flesh of their foes, he looked in wonder and shocked horror, and asked what sort of barbarians we were to kill without any real object."

The thought is gruesome. But it suggests the need of purpose in the less harrowing phases of life. Why do we live at all? Living, why do we do what we do and go where we go and say what we say? That is the purpose in eating food, wearing clothes, tending houses, reading books and mingling with friends? Surely all this cannot be the end for which we came here. Is man destined to be born like an animal, live like a machine and die like a beast? Is man a traveler without a destiny? Is he a workman without a model? Is he a train without a schedule and a ship without a port? Is his course a circle--a vicious circle? Whence? Where? Whither?

Neither the stars above our heads nor the rocks beneath our feet can tell us what we need to know. The strong oak and the frail daisy are alike mute. Science cannot dig deep enough, art cannot rise high enough. The powers of our own personalities are apt in raising fundamental questions, but they are unable to formulate dependable answers. In all the realm of nature there is no voice to speak and no hand that can lift.

But thank God for the revelation we have in the blessed Bible! Here we come as weary travelers to a refreshing well. We stop here to slake our thirst and bathe our weary limbs. And in the Christ of the Bible we find a voice that speaks and a hand that lifts. And in the Book and in the Christ we discover the purpose of it all: "To me to live is Christ; to die is gain." "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." From Him, for Him and to Him are all the issues of life. If this is a circle, it is an infinite circle which will require an eternity of time to describe. This life is too short for the whole of the program. We shall need forever to work out the pattern.

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24

Abraham the Pioneer

Standing atop the ziggurat amidst the ruins of old Ur of the Chaldees, I looked up across the sunbaked plains toward Haran and Aleppo-- the halfway houses of Abraham's journey to Canaan, and I appraised anew the man of bold courage and faith in God who left his home in the finest city of the times, and went out to live in a tent, with no certain place to pitch that tent. He had to look far to see anything. In the direction in which he went, there was nothing to see for a good eight hundred miles, and then from the halfway house there was an equal distance before there was anything more to see. But Abraham saw, not eight hundred miles, not sixteen hundred miles, but clear on into heaven. He saw that city that hath foundations whose Builder and Maker is God, and he became a seeker after that city, and hence was unmindful of the city he left behind and of the deserts through which he passed. Following the trail of his long vision, he was henceforth a pioneer and a traveler always still on his way.

But of necessity we are all pioneers. The future, both near and far, is unfamiliar ground on which no one at all has trodden. And no matter who has lived and where he has lived, there is certain to be something new and surprising in the future for which the past has failed to prepare us. We shall need a Guide and a Protector along the way. And we shall need vision always to see ahead. It will not do to look backward, and we shall become either enamored of the way or discouraged with it unless we keep always in mind that we are just passing through. Constant

looking at things too close at hand destroys the eyesight. We must keep in view "the land that is afar off." Our discernment of things close at hand is improved by our keeping a faraway look in our eyes.

But come to think of it, we are, after all, the true ancients ourselves; for we lived in our fathers. We stand upon the shoulders of those who have lived before us; and standing thus, we should be taller than they, and should be able to see farther. And yet being nearer the goal than they, we should walk with steadier gait and fuller hope.

Although we walk in unsurveyed fields--the future is not the past--we are yet unafraid; for He who has been the Guide and Defense of our fathers, will guide and defend us too. And even when we must walk where there seems to be no path, we shall keep our eyes fixed upon the goal toward which we travel, and that shall be our guiding star. And, finally, with faithful Abraham, we shall find the land we seek!

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25

Holding the Rope in the Storm

It was the second time I had met the colored Bishop Butler. In a friendly and passing way, I inquired about his work and how much he was getting accomplished by his efforts. He stopped to say, "Well, I think I am like the sailor whose ship struck a terrific storm on its very first voyage out. The raw sailor was terribly frightened, but did not want to show it too much. So he approached the captain and asked what he could do to help the ship outride the storm. The captain pointed to a rope which lay on the deck and asked the sailor to take hold of that and hold on to it very tightly until the worst of the storm was over. The sailor obeyed sincerely and literally. And when the storm was somewhat abated, he approached the captain, and said, 'Well, Captain, we brought her through in good shape, didn't we?' That is what I am doing. I am holding the rope that has been shown me. Perhaps what I am doing does not count much more than what that sailor did on the ship. But, like that sailor, I am holding tight, and I believe we shall bring the old ship through in good shape."

We are not really commanded to be profitable, much as we would like to be so. But we are commanded to be faithful. It is not always given to us to know how much we are accomplishing, but we can hold fast to the rope, and the Master of the earth and sea and sky will bring the good ship through, and the part we played will not be forgotten. It is a weak faith that must see results to keep its courage up. Enough for us that the Master bids us hold the rope. What connection this may have with the raging of the sea or the endurance of the ship is not a concern of ours. And when the storm is passed and the voyage is ended, the Master will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant," if we but do our part well. The ship and the sea are His. Mine is but to hold the rope. Could He not make it without me? That I do not ask. It is my honor that He can make it with me, and that He has appointed me to be a worker together with Him.

Today it is rainy and stormy outside. I have not had any occasion to do anything that men would notice or that I myself will be likely to remember in days to come. This is just one of those

monotonous days that seem to offer little challenge. But, still, I am holding the rope, and when the storm passes and there is need of hands for service useful and rare, I shall be a candidate, for I have not left my post. And should a voice call, as it did once to Samuel in the temple, I shall answer without hesitation, "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth."

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26

There Are No Degrees in Death

One who is alive may have little or more strength; he may have properties and titles in addition to life. But one who is dead cannot be any worse or any better--there are no degrees in death. Death may be caused by a trifling or by a very sufficient means, but that does not enter into it. Death is just as tragic when the corpse retains much of the appearance which belonged to the body in the clays of life as when the corpse is emaciated or mutilated. There are no degrees in death.

The physical is analogous to the spiritual. A Christian may become more and more Christlike from his association with the blessed Master. But a soul apart from Christ is lost. Even while probation continues, the separation from God is complete, and when probation ends the finally impenitent-- the best among them--are banished from the presence of God forever. The gulf which separates saints and sinners during life becomes fixed and unchangeable at death. There is no probation or "second chance" after death. There is no "exit" from the sinner's everlasting abode.

The man who loses his soul loses also his life, so far as reward in the future is concerned. One can have no reward in heaven unless he is there to receive it, and getting to heaven is not a matter of reward for good works, but is based upon saving faith in Jesus Christ. One who is saved in heaven, may, in addition to getting to heaven, have reward in heaven. But if he misses heaven he misses all. He may have missed it by but a little; for even the Master said to one, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." But being close is not enough. Being "almost persuaded" is yet to fail. And there is a sense in which a glimpse of heaven will surely make hell the more intolerable. With the best sinner in the world it is yet, "repent or perish," "turn or burn." The best must yet be "born again." Only a miracle of divine grace can save the one who has the least from which to be saved. But the grace which will save the chief of sinners. "Repent ye and believe the gospel."

All the differentiations of God, as I now come to think of them, are definite and radical. "No man can serve two masters.... Ye cannot serve God and mammon." "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth." A man cannot be right and wrong, a saint and a sinner, all at the same time. There is a line between the righteous and the wicked, between those who believe on Christ and those who believe not, and every one of us is on one side or the other of that line. There is not the uncertainty here that some would suggest. It is seldom necessary for others to assist us in locating ourselves in the geography of the soul. Which side of the line are you on today?

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The Cross Is the Climax

I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified (1 Corinthians 2: 2).

We preached Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 1:23).

We could preach Christ of the Beatitudes. We could preach Christ of the Golden Rule. We could preach Christ the reprover of the Pharisees. We could preach Christ the healer of the sick. We could preach Christ as the cleanser of the temple. We could preach Christ the great teacher. But none of these would meet our great and essential needs. We must preach Christ crucified. Christ the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

Scholars may discuss the manner in which the atonement Jesus made upon the cross applies to the needs of men. But it is enough for sinners that they may "look and live." Sin itself is a mystery, then why should we despair if atonement for sin should be deep and difficult to understand? Enough for us that it works, and that by looking in faith to the crucified Savior we find relief from our burden of guilt and fear. If we think we understand, that is well and good. But it will work whether we understand or not. It is not understanding that brings us nigh--rather it is the obedience of faith.

It was ever to the cross that Jesus looked forward, saying, 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth [on the cross], will draw all men unto me.' .And it is ever to the cross that we must look. Not as He did to a shadow that presaged a coming sorrow, but to an accomplished fact--Jesus has been to the cross and it did its worst to Him. But by it He was lifted up, and by it He draws all men unto Him. Only through the cross can all men come; for whatever may be the limitations and hindrances of some, all have sinned and all must have the merit of His blood. And by that cross all barriers have been removed. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6: 14).

But when we preach the cross, we preach the penalty, as well as the remedy of sin, and henceforth sin becomes the terrible thing that it really is. No one with a light conception of sin ever feels the need of so great a remedy as the cross provides. Those who account sin just weakness, and think of crime as a shift of fortune, can never think of the cross a necessary. But sin is a disease so deep rooted and so incurable that only the most drastic remedy is sufficient. And if sin is the terrible thing we have found it to be, then our attitude toward it must be that of full and heartfelt repentance. There must be no compromise with the things that nailed Jesus to the cross.

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When Ignorance Is Bliss

In malice be ye children (1 Corinthians 14:20).

Asked about the sandbars, the projecting rocks, the dangerous snags and the other obstructions to traffic, the old river pilot denied knowledge of any of them. But when asked how, then, he managed to keep his position, he replied, "I know a clear, deep channel that reaches all the way from here to the Gulf." This is the essential knowledge for the navigator on any water-- natural or spiritual.

What matter if I am ignorant of many of the heresies which bewilder the minds of men, since I know "the faith of the fathers," and have found it answers all the demands of my intellect? What matter if I have not attended a spiritualistic seance where tables walk and spooks talk, since I have been born again of the Spirit of God and know my sins forgiven? What matter if I have escaped some of the "evidences of carnality" which many describe, since I have been sanctified wholly by the baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire? What matter if I am compelled to listen in silence while some tell of their terrible experiences as backsliders, since I have found His grace sufficient for all the tests during my short day as a Christian? What matter if I am ignorant concerning many places of worldliness, since I find joy in the house of God? What matter if I am ignorant of those mysterious storms of passion which some say seek to drive them to suicide, since I am moved upon by the Spirit of God to do deeds of kindness and to speak words of love?

My best guaranty against bad living is in being so occupied with the good that there is no room for the evil. The devil comes in when the house is empty. Backsliding invariably begins with the heart. Christian growth is "growth in grace," not growth in the knowledge of things one cannot do. The best Christian is the one who has traveled so constantly toward the heart of the things of God that he has had no occasion to become adept in describing the boundaries which separate holiness and sin.

Those who tell you must drink liquor so you will know its evil effects, and indulge in tobacco to find out whether it is a detriment, and gamble in order to be in position to warn others of its cruel fascination are dull in the matter of defense against evil. The strong man is the man who knows not the taste of liquor or tobacco, and whose hands never handled any except honest dollars. His purity is best assured whose whole life has been lived within the sanctions of the moral law. And he is most certain of heaven who has spent his days traveling toward the Celestial City. In love and all Christian grace be men, but in malice and all things evil be inexperienced and ignorant children. That is the way to a full, safe, life of holiness.

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29

"School for the Blind"

As soon as the sign, 'School for the Blind' met my eyes, I slowed down to a very slow pace; for who could tell? a pupil from that school might be in the act of crossing the street, and his affliction might make him the victim of my otherwise lawful speed.

But St. Paul was commissioned to open the eyes of the people, and that commission implied that the people were blind--Paul was to be a master in a school for the blind. But it was not physical blindness of which the commission spoke, for the curing of that blindness was to

result in forgiveness and in sanctification (Acts 26:18). Thus it was spiritual blindness from which the people were to be cured.

If it should seem uncharitable to designate unregenerated men as blind, then let it be remembered that the alternative, as even the blessed Savior found, is the charge of unmitigated wickedness (John 15:22). But even blindness may be wilful as well as unfortunate. It may result either from habitual darkness or from excessive looking at the light. There are the blind who have not yet seen the light, and there are the blind who will not see.

But the school for the physically blind usually contents itself with teaching the pupil how to overcome his handicap and live without his sight. But the school of the gospel is for the cure of blindness, school the blind eyes are to be opened. It is much of a hospital, and yet it is a school, for it involves and requires the cooperation of the pupil.

Wouldst thou receive thy sight? Then turn thine eyes toward the light and look. Wouldst thou see every man clearly? Then claim the second touch of the Healer Divine. The blind man of Bethsaida is a type of all spiritually blind. But by the touch of the Master's hand he received initial sight, and by the second touch was restored completely. And every redeemed and sanctified soul can shout exultantly, "Whereas I was blind, now I see!" Has the Master touched your eyes? To one who enrolls in Christ's school for the blind, nothing is of greater importance than the will to see. It is a proverb that "None are so blind as those who are unwilling to see." And the proverb has its positive complement, "None improve so far in ability to see as those who will to see." No one has been able to make much progress in the knowledge of the will of God who wants to know God' will just for the sake of knowledge. "He that willeth to do my will shall know of the doctrine." The best help in learning what God's will is a will that is set to obey. In all my life, I do not remember having seen anyone who had done all the will of God he knew to do who was puzzled over what to do next. It is only when we stop for a little while that the light moves on and leaves us in the dark.

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30

What Is Your Prevailing Motive?

Analyzing the effects of immigration on the standards of the people of the lands to which the restless go, it has been found that wherever the immigrants came for purposes of religious and political freedom, their coming resulted in raising the standards of the people to whom they came. But when they came for economic motives and merely to find jobs, they did not raise the existing standards of the communities to which they moved. Of course it may be argued that only the better type of people are moved by the higher motives mentioned; but it cannot be disputed that the motives also serve to produce a better type of people.

But can one select his motives or must he simply be driven by the motive which prevails and does that motive become the strong one without reference to the wish and choice of the one affected? Are the good just the recipients of undeserved favors and the wicked the victims of misfortunes? Is destiny fated or is it the consequence of free choice? The winds blow, we all know that; but do we have any control of the sails and any hold upon the rudder?

We do not need the philosophers or the psychologists to answer these questions for us. We have the answer within ourselves. No matter how complicated the learned may make it sound, we know we are moral beings and responsible for what we choose. Our own consciences either commend or condemn us, and no one can be commended or condemned for choosing just as he is compelled to choose. Our motives belong to us, and not we to them. We are not always free to do "as we please," but we are always free to choose as we will. Paul was in prison without choosing to be so. But in the prison he could still will unhindered. He could will to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth, and God credited him as being a world-wide missionary, although his actual movements were somewhat restricted by the obstacles men placed in his way. I do not have money and goods with which to feed all the hungry and clothe all the naked, but I have the heart and will to do good to the bodies and souls of men everywhere.

But how can one rid himself of unworthy desires and unholy motives? Certainly he cannot do it by some negative process of rooting out. He must apply for "the expulsive power of a new affection." He must enthrone a "stronger man" within the citadel of his soul in order that his heart may be delivered from the thralldom of the "strong one." Christian character is not constructed by human art. It is a product of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the heart.

Please join me in this prayer, Come, Lord Jesus, in Thy purging, cleansing, sanctifying fullness and take up Thine abode within my heart. Then in Thy light I shall see light, and in the fountain of Thy perfect love no unworthy motive can survive, and I shall be able to say, as did Thy servant Paul, "To me to live is Christ: to die is gain."

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31 The Victory of God

Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following (Psalm 48: 12, 13) .

Augustine Smith, speaking boldly and considerately, says, "No true believer can have any doubt that all attempts to destroy Christ's kingdom will utterly fail. We have the assurance that Christ will go on conquering and to conquer till all dominions shall serve and obey Him. But aside from the fact that we have the promise from God of the ultimate triumph of the gospel, it may be said that the gospel has in itself the elements of success."

In further consideration of the proposition, Dr. Smith concludes that the teachings of the Word of God, even its incidental teachings and the very illustrations, are adapted to the intellect of man. The ethics of the Word of God are in complete accord with man's conscience. The ideals and promises of the Word of God are adapted to the desires, cravings and affections of man. The power promised by the Word of God is adapted to man's will. In fact all the elements of the Christian religion are adapted to man and his deepest and most far-reaching needs.

It is not as though we were joining the Crusades of the Middle Ages and defying strength with weakness, and challenging the world of evil with insufficiency. On the contrary, the gospel is just what it must be to meet the demands of man as he is. It may be said of the gospel, as Jesus said of the Sabbath, that man was not made for the gospel, but the gospel was made for man. And being made for him, it completely meets his needs, and it is all that will meet his needs. It is a sufficient gospel, and it is the only gospel. Paul could say of it, "If another, even an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel, let him be accursed.

Men cannot be saved by physical force, nor yet even by the strength of a directed will. Men can be saved only by means of moral and spiritual force brought to bear on condition of their own free choice to have it so. The risk is tremendous, and in the working out of such a plan, there is much waste and much threat of failure. But in the end the sum of the happiness of the universe of rational beings will justify it all. God is good. The gospel is true. In the full end all will come out in triumph for the good and the right.

There is no denying that today is a dark day, and that the immediate tomorrow, as the tides of men and nations run, threatens to be darker still. But it will be light after it is dark, and then it will not get dark any more. Evil's day is short. God's day is eternal. The devil will be cast out. Evil will be banished. Sorrow and sighing shall flee away. The earth and the heavens shall praise Him. To Jehovah be the victory!

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32

My Heritage of Sorrow

From henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus (Galatians 6:17).

In substance, Paul was saying, "Please do not come to me with little petty complaints. Shallow griefs and trifling sorrows are too light to count: I have a burden of sorrow so heavy that it makes me immune to the griefs that pass with the day. In fact I feel myself incapable of sympathizing much with those who complain over mere inconveniences and fleshly suffering. I have lost so much that after this, nothing can be very bad by comparison. Having contended with the horsemen, footmen cannot weary me. Having passed the deep swellings of Jordan, I no longer flinch before the prospect of any pain. Common pain is but as pleasure when it is placed in the balances over against a broken heart.

A man's attainment in grace is better indicated by the size of the griefs he can bear, than by the weight of joy he must have to be satisfied. A good man makes much of small joys, and little of deep griefs. Joy has a tendency to make us shallow, while grief is like ballast in the hold of the ship which serves to keep it balanced in the storm.

Grace does not do all its work in direct application. "The means of grace" have their place also. And a full list of the means of grace would include grief, as well as happiness. When we "count our blessings," we must include the disagreeable, as well as the pleasant.

It is difficult for the saint to get weaned from the world while yet the world is too kind to him. In the days of the martyrs it was found that long periods of immunity from persecution served to make the Christians love life too well, so that when martyrdom again became the price of faith, a good many recanted to save their lives. But when one's heritage of sorrow grows large, his dependence upon the world grows small, until finally he can boldly say, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Why not say, "I reckon that the joys of the present are not worthy to be compared with the joys of heaven"? Why, the metaphor requires the use of the largest and heaviest portion to which we may lay claim, and for the many, this is suffering, rather than elation. But since sorrow is weight, Paul set over against it "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" as its compensation in heaven.

If the thought is simply to get earthly sympathy then "Laugh and the world laughs with you; weep and you weep alone," for indeed the world does not want those whose hearts are heavy. But as a son of God in exile, with your heart set on going home, cherish deeply your heritage of grief and sorrow, and take comfort in the fact that its leaden weight is to be balanced off with enough buoyant glory to compensate so many times that no comparison is worthy.

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33

The Joy of Full Assurance

The wagons did it," says Boreham in commenting upon the experience of Jacob recorded in the 45th chapter of Genesis. The presence of the wagons substantiated the claim that Joseph was yet alive, and established the promise that Jacob should see him again before he died.

"Come and see," answered Philip when his friend inquired, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1: 46) . No argument is so good as one's own experience; and coming and seeing, Nathaniel cried, "Thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel!"

"O taste and see," the psalmist sang to all who wondered if God is good. The testimony of others is not enough. I would know God myself. I would taste His pardoning mercy and His sanctifying grace. I would myself bask in the sunlight of His blessed favor.

"This is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent," petitioned the Son in His prayer for the revelation of the Father to His own disciples. To know God is to live--assurance is life, full assurance is life "more abundant."

"I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you," confided the Master (John 16:22)--assurance is joy, full assurance is full joy (John 16:24). "In thy presence there is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psalm 16:11).

"The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever" (Isaiah 32:17). Assurance is peace full assurance is perfect peace. Uncertainty

is turmoil. Would you have unbroken rest? You may have it in the clear witness of the Holy Spirit to pardon and purity and present acceptance.

The promises of God are true; therefore the blessings of God are sure. But the promises are not the blessings, no more than the good reports from Joseph were the wagons which he sent. "Believe that ye may know." Receive that your joy may be full. There is abundant life, full joy and perfect peace in the "blessed assurance" which the Holy Spirit gives.

Some in the days of Jesus would seek after signs. But these the Master reprov'd. Signs and symbols may be useful in the childhood of grace, but reality is the answer to the deep cravings of the soul. I care not for some physical thrill that shall accompany a certain religious exercise or for some "evidence" in the way of outward demonstration. My soul would come face to face with its Savior. I would brush aside interpreters and hear the Master's voice with the ears of my own soul. I would pass by bodily washing and even intellectual concepts and know God in the glory of true mysticism. I would disregard all opposition and hardship, and hold up my head in unashamed joy for just one reason only, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

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34

Christlikeness in Little Things

Jesus would judge a man's right to promotion on the basis of his conduct relating to small responsibilities (Luke 16:10). And it has been remarked that trifles discover character more than actions of importance; for in regard to the former, a person is on his guard, and thinks "it is not material to use disguise." Straws serve better than saw logs for determining the direction of the wind.

Michelangelo said, "Trifles make perfection, but perfection itself is no trifle." Chesterfield said, "Examine yourself, why you like such and such people and dislike such and such others; and you will find that those different sentiments proceed from very slight causes."

Let us not just now pass judgment on motives--that realm God reserves for Himself. Let us indeed think of ourselves, in this instance, rather than of others. And for ourselves let us turn to that phase of the Christian life of which St. James speaks--works by means of which we show to others the faith we have in God. "We know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." For the grosser sins we make not the slightest defense. Falsehood, slander, profanity, drunkenness, lasciviousness, dishonesty--these are unmentionable in the description of a Christian, as are also "sins of the spirit," like hatred, malice, envy and jealousy.

But how well do we stand when measured by the requirement to be "courteous to all men"? This involves treating the elderly as fathers and mothers, the others as brothers and sisters, and little children as treasures that God has given. How do we stand measured by the requirement that "Our people are to dress with the Christian simplicity and modesty that becometh holiness"? How do we square with the demand that we seek to do good to the bodies and souls of men--"as

opportunity and ability are given"? How do we square with the common and just expectation that we shall be considerate in our homes, friendly in the neighborhood, hospitable toward strangers, peaceable toward all men?

For most of us, there are few great occasions. There are some lives that are justified by some single deed, but for most of us life is just the aggregate of little deeds and little words. I have myself traveled extensively during forty years, in many parts of the world. But I have not seen very many tragic accidents. Usually I was there just before or just after the tragic thing occurred. I have not had many opportunities to earn the title of hero for some brave deed. I have not yet preached a sermon or written a book that was so outstanding that I could be introduced to strangers as the author of that great work. No, my chance has been in the multitude of ordinary days which God has given me. But I am not disappointed, and I have no alibi. The only way I could prove that I would do a worthy deed on a great occasion is by doing worthy deeds on small occasions.

Little drops of water, little grains of sand,
Make the mighty ocean, and the pleasant land.
Little deeds of kindness, little words of love;
Make the earth an Eden, like the heaven above.

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35

Mountains, Plains and Valleys

Mountains for vision, plains for service and valleys for blessings! Pisgah, Beulah and Baca! The mountains beckon the occasional visitor and offer delights to the tourist, but the vast majority of men live on the plains at an elevation of less than a thousand feet above the level of the sea. The valleys are the well watered places from which abundance springs. From the top of Pisgah Moses surveyed the inheritance. On the plains the Master met the throngs in need of healing. In Baca the man of prayer found a well (Psalm 84: 6).

The vision obtained in the mountains is so enrapturing that many Christians, following the lead of Peter and the others, would like to build three tabernacles up there and make it their permanent home. This cannot be, for on the plains below the sick are waiting to be healed. Nevertheless, the vision of the mount is valuable, and ever and anon we should go back up there to revive its impressions and bask again in its pure white light. We must go to the mountains often, lest we shall be consumed by the labor required on the plains.

But on the plains our task is waiting, even as it was waiting there for the Master. When He came down from communion with Moses and Elijah he found a distressed father and an epileptic son whom none but He could help and heal. And the lost are waiting for us to find them, the sick are to be healed, the oppressed are hoping we can set them free, the sorrowing long for comfort, and the dying are hastening away without being pointed to the Lamb of God. Beulah is a workaday land. It is high in places, sometimes it is a far-reaching plateau, but it is not a pleasure resort. It lies next to the mountains, but it is itself a plain. One of its characteristics is its constancy. It does

have ecstasy, but its usual elevation is consistent with labor and sweat and puzzling human problems.

We have mentioned the valley as a place of springs and abundance. But Baca is also "the valley of weeping." It is the place of disappointment, sore affliction, deep bereavement, and at its exit it becomes the "valley of the shadow of death." It has the reputation of swallowing up those who visit it. In fact men do not usually go there voluntarily. It was said of Jesus that He was "driven of the Spirit into the wilderness," and it is by some such compulsion that men go to Baca. Baca counterbalances Pisgah and serves to give the Christian rootage and ballast that he may stand up against storm and strain. That is but a shallow life which has not known what it is to weep.

But up from Baca, as down from Pisgah, the Christian comes to the plains of Beulah to suffer and to serve. Pisgah, Beulah, Baca! Christ is Lord and Master of them all!

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36

Healing for the Bruised

Speaking literally, "A bruise is an injured condition of the flesh beneath unbroken skin, resulting in damage to the capillary blood vessels, and consequent extravasation of the blood in the tissues. It is usually the result of a blow or collision, or pinch. Where the tissues are crushed, it is a serious matter and calls for the skill of a surgeon."

The bruise would have been a cut, only the instrument was blunt. There was force behind the blow, but the pole and not the edge of the axe was used. The pain is not diminished by the fact that the skin is unbroken, but sympathy from others is reduced because the surface appearance is not so bad. He who nurses a bruise must suffer alone, and no one suffers fully except when he suffers alone.

Physical suffering is the lightest suffering of all. A stroke on the head is not to be compared with a bruise on the heart. The body is but the suburbs of the man. The heart is the citadel. The deep unseen in man is the arena of full joy and unmitigated grief. Hurts on the surface are quickly diagnosed. But the bruises of the spirit are nameless and indescribable. Healing balms can be readily applied to the skin, but who can find the way to the recesses of the spirit?

Even moral and spiritual ills may find, in some cases, soothing in restitutions and good resolutions.

But there are bruises of the spirit which have no conscious connection with moral and spiritual conditions, and they are harder to reach on that account. The torture is increased by the inescapable conclusion that there is nothing we can do about them. Our faith would be improved if we could by some means make amends. But there seems to be no special conditions we can meet, and no useful directions we can follow. To us the Master must come unattended. He must heal us without means-- just by the touch of His Spirit upon our spirit. Such healing must be by the Healer, not by any medicine whatsoever. Touch me, O Christ, as I pray today!

To the bruised in spirit there is no name for Christ that is quite as sweet as "Man of Sorrows." The very fact that He was bruised--that He suffered alone, and that He promises to "set at liberty them that are bruised" makes our lot more endurable. For while we suffer alone, yet we are not alone, He suffers with us and for us, and until He shall be pleased to relieve us, He will give us grace to bear. Rationalizing brings but poor consolation. Let us just leave ourselves at the feet of the Healer Divine. O Christ, reach out Thy hand and touch my bruised and breaking heart!

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37

Do Not Let Your Debt Get Old

One of the young men, now grown old, who used to attend Dr. F. B. Meyer's Bible class in London, on Saturday afternoon, recalls that that stalwart saint used to repeat the exhortation, "Keep short accounts with God." By this he meant, do not allow anything to stand long between your soul and your Savior. If you do or say something that you feel is not pleasing to Him, go quickly and confess it and trust for mercy and pardoning grace.

Susannah Wesley was not content to warn her children against immorality and presumptuous sins, but used to challenge them, each in turn, "Beware of anything that diminishes your relish for spiritual things." St. Paul counseled his converts to "Abstain from every appearance of evil." Both these instances savor rather of prevention than of cure. They attempt to build a fence at the top of the cliff to keep people from falling over, rather than building a hospital at the foot of the precipice for the restoration of those who have already fallen.

If you read the story carefully, you will find that just as soon as Peter began to sink that night when he went walking on the water to meet his Lord, he began to cry out, "Lord, save or I perish!" Too often men wait until they have all but sunk before they begin to pray. They may begin when the water is up to their necks, but they do not pray seriously until the water engulfs their heads.

The Master of all taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." This speaks of immediacy in our relations with God. We are not to seek a supply that will enable us to go away and forget. Rather, we are to live so close to the storehouse that a private hoard is unnecessary.

Asked the cause of his declension, a backslider answered, "Oh, it was just a lot of little things." But a lot of little things do not come all at once. This man had attempted to run long accounts with God, and the accumulation of many small deficits brought about spiritual bankruptcy. He tolerated things which, while not disgraceful, diminished his relish of spiritual things. He disregarded the apparitions of evil until evil itself was emboldened to come and live at his house.

Here is the way--at the first suggestion that we have offended God, let us fly to Him in full contrition. Even with our friends and loved ones, let us learn to say quickly and sincerely, "I am sorry." Let us cultivate a tender conscience. Let us mind the inner checks. David described a state of obedience in which the Lord "guides me with his eye." This is in contrast with guiding us, as

though we were mules or horses, with bit and bridle. In that instant obedience, He has only to look at us and then at the task, and we are up and at it.

We should not forget the mercies of the past, but we must not depend upon them. We must insist on daily audience with God. Our pardon must bear a recent date. Our cleansing must be written in progressive form --"cleanseth." Our assurance must be instant. Our joy must be new every morning. No debt with either God or man must be allowed to get old.

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38

I Believe in a Future Life

I believe in a future life because I believe the Bible, and the central thesis of the Bible is that "Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

I believe in a future life because I believe in the present life, and the present life without a future life would be like a journey without a destination.

I believe in a future life because I believe in the integrity of God, and a God of integrity could not mock His creatures by revealing a shadow which has no corresponding substance.

I believe in a future life because I believe the universe in which we live is a moral universe, and a moral universe must balance its accounts with both the wicked and the righteous that right may be right and wrong may be wrong; but there is not time for this in the present life, so there is bound to be a future life.

I believe in a future life because such a faith meets the demands of my otherwise unsatisfied heart. If the painter needs eternity in which to paint his masterpiece, the musician needs eternity in which to produce the full symphony of his soul, and the philosopher needs eternity in which to think through the noble thoughts which were yet but in embryo when he died, how much more do I need eternity in which to love God and the choice of His creation?

It troubles me not in the least that the future life is not now demonstrable to the senses of men in the flesh; for neither is the essence and content of the present life in the Spirit so demonstrable, and yet I know such a life is true beyond all cavil. The content of life, even on its lowest level, is known by its effects, rather than by analysis of its essence. Why then should the life ahead on the higher plane be any more detectable to the senses, and, on this account, be less real than the present?

I believe in a future life because I feel its quickening force in my own being, and I recognize this quickening force as an earnest of a blessed immortality. I shall live forever; I feel the unmistakable evidence of it in my soul.

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I Saw Them Murder a Man Today

Wrath is cruel and anger is outrageous but who is able to stand before envy? (Proverbs 27:4).

I saw them murder a man today. They killed him and picked him to pieces right in my presence. It was gruesome and horrible, but I was powerless. My soul was filled with horror, and my mind loathed the spirit which animated the mob, but I could not do anything. I had never known the victim, and could not judge of his guilt or innocence. I did not know the members of the mob, and they did not make any place for my interference. So they murdered the man and gave his flesh to be eaten by the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and I was witness to the crime; although an unwilling witness.

The man, it seems, was not a member of an alien race, but had once been a brother beloved. He grew cold, or stepped aside, and a whispering campaign started. It came to the place where the interests of someone else were affected, even the interests of some who claimed that perfect love toward God and men direct their motives in all they say and do. The point was reached where justice demanded that this poor man die. Some even came to the place where they believed that in order to save the cause this soul had to be damned.

And so the whispering increased to a murmur, and the murmuring was soon fanned into a frenzy, until some thought they were doing the will of God when they slandered this brother, and they quickly branded all who refused to listen and agree as compromisers with evil and the friends and partners of the man whose good name they were bent to besmirch. And by such means they hushed the protests which threatened to arise against their cruelty.

So like a company of heathen cannibals, this gathering of professing Christians cut off the poor man's ears, gouged out his eyes, plucked his nails, and finally crushed his skull and cut out his heart. Oh, it was terrible! But such is the cruelty of envy, such are the ravages of slander, and such are the burnings of tongues touched by unholy fire, for what I saw today was not the wounding and mutilation of that transient thing we call the body, but the marring and dismemberment of a man's good name by the rapier tongues of professing disciples of One who said, "Love your enemies, and do good to them that hate you." May some curtain of pity and charity close out further sight of the dreadful scene!

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The Glory of Things to Come

He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son (Revelation 21: 7).

As juveniles we used to debate the proposition, "Resolved that the joys of anticipation are greater than the joys of realization." But now we know the proposition was not correctly stated.

The question relates to the joys of recollection and the joys of anticipation; for the instant called the present is too brief to count. All that lasts long enough to make any difference is either already past or else is yet to come. Which, then, are better, the joys we have had or the joys that are yet before us?

The joys of the past are ever marred with a tinge of pain, just by the very fact that they are passed, and like all things past, are gone forever. And the sweeter the joys, the keener the pain. None can know the sorrows of loss who have not known the joys of gain. The coarse and the base cannot suffer much. Only the refined are capable of deep sorrow. The shallow soon forget. Only a fond heart can be really broken. Where the sun was once the brightest, the shadows fall the heaviest.

But we cannot well think of joy except on the background of its contrast--sorrow. Like almost everything besides, life's experience may be divided into two parts--joy and pain. And we are obliged to think of joy in terms of pain. But just as we are sad over our past joys, just because they are passed, likewise we are glad over our sorrows in that they too are past. So in time we are sad over our joys and glad over our sorrows, and the two, in considerable measure, exchange places.

But the joys of heaven have none of the contradictions and limitations of the joys of earth. The overcomer is to inherit all things. This certainly means that he will inherit all desirable things. And this means his joys will have no tinge of pain. For one thing, his joys will never pass--they are permanent and ever present--like days that are not followed by night. They have no sun in heaven, so there is no shadow. The light of heaven is constant and unrestricted. There the "blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow with it," for the partaker knows the blessing has come to stay. Such blessings cannot come to us here, but we can go to them there. Yes, the joys of anticipation are better than the joys of recollection, as heaven is better than earth.

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41

Our Dependence Will Not Let Us Forget

Give us this day our daily bread (Matthew 6:11).

Asked why God limited the supply of manna to one day's need at a time, a devout old rabbi replied, "Once there was a king who made an allowance for his son's support, and arranged for the amount to be paid in annual installments. In time it happened that the son arranged to see his father only on the day each year when his gratuity was needed. So the father divided the amount into 365 parts and ordered that the portion due should be delivered each day. After that the son came to his father every day."

Solomon knew the temptation of the rich was to forget God, and so asked that riches be not given, lest he die. And it should be observed that our Lord, in the model prayer, taught us to ask for the daily portion--not for a store that will last. And the prayer was not for luxuries, but for necessities; not for cake, just for bread. We are fortunate in that we are dependent for the

indispensables. We must have grace, as well as glory. We draw on God for life, as well as for health.

Our fathers prayed wisely when they said, "Past blessings have gone with past necessities." In the strictest sense, accumulations are neither wise nor possible. Our relationship to God is like that of the motor to the dynamo, and we must stay connected, if we would keep supplied. The stored manna bred worms and became useless. Every morning the fresh supply must be gathered, and thus every morning contact with God must be established.

There are no interludes in prayer. We are commanded to "pray without ceasing." There is no single act of faith that answers for all time. "The just shall live by faith." There is no depositum of grace between the soul and the primary source. "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

If we could get spiritual supplies for an extended period, perhaps we, like the king's son, would forget to come to our heavenly Father for that companionship which is of greater consequence than any detached "blessing" which could possibly come to us. But our continual dependence will not let us forget. "I need Thee every hour." "Shouldst Thou withdraw Thyself from me, ah, whither shall I go?"

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42

Saving Ourselves or Saving Others

Garrick, the actor, built himself a fine residence and invited the bishop of London to inspect it. The actor himself acted as guide and led the bishop from one room to another pointing out the splendor of the construction and the completeness of the conveniences. When they were back again in the drawing room, the bishop, almost as though speaking to himself, solemnly said, "Houses like this make it hard for their owners to die."

A rich man lay dying. Musing on his past, he said, "What money I have spent is gone; the money I have saved I must now leave behind; only that which I have given has gone before me to bring reward in the life to come."

Observers saw Christ dying upon the cross without a friend to share His sorrow, and they remarked, "He saved others, himself he can not save." And without knowing it they expressed a proverb that has no exceptions. Always he that saves others must lose himself. And whoever saves himself cannot save others. It is not even ourselves and others. It is ourselves or others. For I speak of motives rather than of ultimate results. The purpose must be ever and always to save others --nothing else will do. However the grain of wheat that falls into the ground and dies finds itself again in its multiplied and glorified progeny. Likewise the Christian who loses his life for Christ and the kingdom shall find it again in the land where living is I living indeed. It was even so with Christ. He went down into the deepest valley, but He was on His way to the highest throne. And it has been so with the pilgrims and the martyrs who have followed in His steps. Their ignominy has become their glory. Their shame has become their fame. Their cross has become

their crown. Their death has issued in life forevermore. He alone saves himself who loses himself in saving others.

In his last exile Napoleon mused that men like himself and Alexander and Caesar who built their empires on force, left nothing permanent; "but Christ," said he, "built His empire upon love, and His empire stands." But it was not force alone that characterized the transient kingdoms of the conquerors; unholy ambition, vicious pride, unsatiable avarice, unbridled injustice, untempered selfishness, these and many more ingredients of self-saving had their part, and so the very end sought was defeated by the means by which it was pursued. If one would be remembered by others, he must forget himself. If he would have honor, he must accept ignominy. If he would have praise, he must bear reproach patiently. If he would be men's master, he must be the universal servant. For, after I all, we save ourselves by saving others, only, the motive must be single that of saving others.

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43

The Immunities of Heaven

Bhagubai Tode is the barefoot pastor of a barefoot congregation in Manubai. His subject was "Heaven," and he was trying to make his people appreciate the prospect of a home in such a blissful land. Knowing, as he did, the many unpleasant things in the lot of his humble people, he majored on the things--the undesirable things-- that are not in heaven. At the climax, he said, "And there are no thorns up there." Instinctively the people looked down at their unprotected feet which had known so many cruel wounds in the uncultivated portions of their tropical community, and they turned back to the preacher with a better interest than ever before. They had heard heaven described in terms they could understand and appreciate.

Perhaps all of us can appreciate heaven in terms of its immunities to the disagreeable things our lot has brought. The tired housekeeper murmurs hopefully, "There'll be no scrubbing there." The weary woodsman looks up from his toil and sighs, "There'll be no grubbing there." The defeated candidate and the socially unaccepted agree in the assurance, "There'll be no snubbing there." That humble Indian preacher spoke for us all when he said there will be no thorns, and we all have our special thorns against which we believe and know heaven will be immune. Tears, sickness, sorrow, slander! What thorn is it that makes your lot less pleasant? Well, it will not be in heaven.

If there were a place on earth where no one is ever sick and where no one ever dies, even though that place be a bleak rock on some sea-washed shore, it would be crowded. But there is no place like that here. Go out to the cemetery and measure the graves and read the dates and you will find that there is no age exempt from death. Go into the homes of earth, beginning with the hovels and covering the palaces, and you will find no walls are thick enough to keep out disappointment, pain, death and bereavement.

No wonder they can leave the gates of heaven open always and no one will ever go out. For within that city there are none of the things which brought pain and unpleasantness to our earthly lot. "There are no thorns up there."

God grant that you and I may be among those who, having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb, may pass through the gates of pearl and enter the city; for then we shall rest beneath the tree of life and know bliss unmixed with blight, weal untouched by woe forevermore. I can endure the thorns of earth the better because I know their savagery is short, and that heaven is my home.

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44

My Ship Is Soon to Sail

The old Christian was a prisoner in chains. The death sentence had already been passed, and the hour of execution drew near. On the sordid plain there was but a dingy prison in which to wait, and a bloody chopping block on which to lay the neck. To the mundane eye everything was either tragic or pathetic. A busy, unselfish life was about to end in ignominy and blood.

But the old Christian harked back to his free days when he roamed both land and sea in search of souls. Once again he stood upon the deck of a ship in a foreign port and watched the longshoremen place the last cargo in the hold. He saw the passengers come on board, heard the call, "All ashore who are going ashore," saw the gangplank lifted, heard the order "cut her loose." He heard the creak of windlasses as the anchors were lifted from the sea bottom to their places of rest on the side of the ship. He saw the sailors unfurl the sails, and observed the skipper watching for a proper breeze to take his ship to the open sea and to the harbor beyond the sea. The old traveler's heart was thrilled, for that distant harbor was his homeland. He watched every operation with sympathetic interest and lifted a prayer for success in the undertaking.

And now the old Christian was back again in his prison cell, and bethought himself of the action of the court and of the issue so near at hand. He was sending his final word to his young friend at Ephesus. The metaphor seemed fitting, so he added this cheering word, "The time is near, I am about to lift anchor and sail to the haven in the homeland on the other side of the sea" (2 Timothy 4: 6) . Loved ones and friends, he was sure, were awaiting his arrival--the prospect was alluring, and he was all but impatient to be away. As in the old sailing days, he watched every preparation with interest and solemn joy. Not that the journey itself mattered so much--it was the land beyond that enticed him.

But I too have sailed the seas. I too have felt the thrill of the hour for departing. I have felt the pull of the homeland beyond, and blessed the prospect of greeting loved ones and friends once more. And today I observe the intimations of an early departure for the final haven of my soul. The sails are filling, the shorelines are being severed. The Skipper awaits the rising breeze. My ship is soon to sail. The ship is stout. May the passage be smooth! My loved ones await my landing. I am happy in the prospect. Let us lift the anchor and sail to the other side!

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45

In the Morning He Was Happy

It's bedtime now," said the gentle mother. But Bobby was busy with his toys, and made as though he did not hear. "You must go to rest now, Bobby," urged the gentle voice, but still Bobby did not heed. Then a kind, but firm hand grasped the child's arm and led him away. At the door Bobby was still looking back, mingled resentment and misunderstanding stamped upon his face. Why should he be called away just when the day was fullest? Why should he be compelled to leave off at the very climax of the play?

But in the morning Bobby came out rosy and smiling. The dread of night and aversion to sleep which he evidenced the night before were all gone. The light of the new day, and the joy of renewed life were sufficient explanations. It was morning now, and Bobby was happy.

And to each of us, either while we are yet little like Bobby or after we have grown tall, the call will come, "It's time to rest now." And no matter when the call comes, the hour will not seem right. Friends and toys may still have their fascination, and plans for life may still employ our thoughts. But the voice will call, and the hand will lead us away. There will be weeping then--weeping because we must account the day finished and draw about ourselves the curtains of night.

But, ah, there will be a morning for us too-- after the night--and we too shall come out smiling--and immortal. Then we shall know that the one who called us to leave our toils and our play was looking beyond the night to the morning, and to the everlasting day. "Sorrow and weeping may endure for the night, but joy cometh in the morning."

The light of the dawning Easter morning makes a track of light down through the night. Soon the shadows must disappear before the ascending Sun of Righteousness. It will be morning then, we shall understand, and we shall be happy.

"The evening and the morning were the first day," the Genesis account informs us. The evening was first, and the night was followed by the day. And in the latter day it shall be so. There will be the evening of death; but this shall be followed by the morning of resurrection and life, and after that there shall be no night. It shall be morning forever--and we shall be happy in the morning!

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46

I Wish I Could Go Home Today

The carrier pigeon is said to be "homing" because of its instinct to return to its home window, even from the most distant points. But no creature on earth has the homing instinct so outstandingly as does man. It was a notable world wanderer who wrote, "Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home."

But home for man is not so much a place, as it is the people he has known in that place. Thatched cottages, wild woods, oaken buckets, and familiar places are just symbols which stand for the people who lived under those roofs, wandered in the woods and drank from the oaken buckets. And if those we knew have moved away the cottage has no roof, the woods are tame, and the oaken bucket has fallen to staves. We still sing of places and things, but our thoughts are of persons, and home is where they are, for there our hearts are too.

Benjamin Franklin outlived the majority of those with whom he was associated during his active years, and he complained that he was lonesome for his old friends. Getting old would not really matter, if only the others would stay and get old with us. But to be old is too often to be alone, for there can be no friends like old friends, no matter how agreeable the new friends may be.

It is midnight now, and I am alone. The homing impulse is strong in my breast. But this impulse does not turn back to the little farm in southern Illinois where I was born, nor to any of the places in which I lived during the years when all the world was new and fascinating. It does not turn back to that portable parsonage in which I lived for thirty-seven years with the mate of my soul. Nay, this impulse does not draw me back at all--it drives me on. Earthly places do not count any more, for I the ones I knew are not there now. Those who have counted in my life are gathering in the "city where they need no sun," so that is my home now too. The festive lights are burning. The table is spread. The welcome chorus is starting up! I wish I could go home today!

But the day calls for labor and for patience. I cannot go until I am called. And while I wait, I must also work. But the call of home at the end serves to make the day sweeter and shorter. The homing impulse quickens my heartbeats and my footsteps, and makes my life-tide fuller. I wish I could go home today, but since God wills that I labor and wait I shall do these two, and go home tomorrow--"God's tomorrow," "And I know that God's tomorrow will be brighter than today."

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47

The Look that Lifts

Simon Peter found that looking at Jesus reduced his specific gravity to such an extent that the water of the Sea of Galilee could answer for a pavement beneath his feet. That look at the Master did not congeal the water--it just made the man lighter.

Jacob left home depressed by reason of his brother's threat against his life. But at Bethel he saw a vision in which angels were seen ascending and descending upon a ladder whose bottom touched the earth and whose top reached the sky. Upon awakening, and being assured that he had found the house of God, Jacob "lifted up his feet" (marginal reading) on his journey. Joy in the soul made his feet light.

David was fond of describing the act of trusting God as 'Lifting up' the eyes. Habakkuk announced that God had made his feet like hind's feet (that is swift and safe), and another of the

prophets said, "They looked unto him and were lightened. " Perhaps he spoke principally of the lightening that comes from the shining light, but there is also an intimation of something of a lifting up.

The author of the Book of Hebrews connected the laying aside of weights with "looking unto Jesus," and I think we have all found that our burdens are lighter when we keep our eyes on Him. But perhaps, here, again, we should affirm that it is added strength to the bearer that is given, rather than diminishment of the load itself. Always we are to look to Jesus, and not to our loads.

Bishop Matthew Simpson used to tell of his first experience, as a young circuit rider, in crossing a swollen river on a swimming horse. In the midst of the swirling waters, and with the horse wavering in uncertainty beneath him, the young preacher became dizzy, and seemed about to fall. But a senior preacher, accustomed to such experiences, called out, "Lift up your eyes; look at that tree on the opposite side, and never look away from it." The tree was indifferent to the swirling waters and the wavering steed, and the view of it steadied the rider, so that the bank was reached in safety. Bishop Simpson applied this story as a parable of life, and said that is the way we are to do while passing through rivers of trial, rivers of pain, rivers of sorrow, and even through the river of death. If we look at the cold and turbulent waters, the sight is forbidding. But if we keep our eyes on Jesus and the land ahead, we shall be steadied for the crossing, and we shall come out on the "banks of sweet deliverance" in due time. There is a look that lifts. Lord, evermore help us to look to Thee!

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48

I Choose Repentance

Remorse and repentance are alike in some particulars, but in other particulars they are opposites. They both have reference to things in the past that we very much wish were different from what they really are--things for which we now feel some sense of responsibility. They apply to the knowing sins which we have committed, to the mistakes we have made, to the weaknesses we have manifested, and to every word, thought and deed which we would eliminate or change regardless of its classification.

Whoever is satisfied with any day when it is done must be those who are exceedingly merciful in judging themselves; for in the light of the present, all our past needs to be improved. I am writing these lines at the close of the day. Already I need a light, but I am hastening to record these thoughts before stopping to press the switch. This day was well planned at its beginning, but it has not gone altogether according to the plan. There have been many interferences and much hindrance. In some instances men of leisure have intruded and have been casually liberal with my time, so that the day has not been lived to the full. I have been employed all day, but part of the time I have been but triflingly employed. The day has been too full of talk to leave much room for thought. Conferences, I fear, have crowded out prayer. I thought I was the victim, but now I do not rest easy. I feel that it may have been my duty to do something about this matter.

But the day is done. I cannot recall it. I cannot do it over. It remains only for me to make choice between two possible attitudes: either I must turn my back toward the imperfect day in remorse, or I must turn my back upon it in repentance. If I turn my face toward it, and go in the direction that I face, as men customarily should do, I shall soon enter the shadows and shall enter my new day depressed and weak and extremely likely to add another mediocre day to my list. So I have decided to turn my back upon what is past, and face the direction I wish to go. My goal is ahead. I am sorry, but mine is the sorrow of repentance which leads to readjustment and life, and not the sorrow of remorse which gendereth weakness and leads to death. I claim this instant the efficacy of the cleansing blood for all the past, and I turn to the day ahead with faith and hope. Remorse leads to darkness and death; repentance leads to light and life: so I choose repentance.

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49

The Altitudes of Holiness

And the children of Joseph said, The hill is not enough for us.... And Joshua spake ... saying ... the mountain shall be thine (Joshua 17:16-18).

The river of life which John saw (Revelation 22:1, 2) flowed out from the throne of God and of the Lamb, but it did not terminate anywhere it is endless and boundless; it begins, but never ends.

Freedom from sin marks the minimum boundary line of the grace of holiness, but there is no maximum at which the devout must stop. Cleansing from sin is the floor level of the land of Canaan, but no one yet has scaled the highest peaks of love, joy, peace, gentleness and goodness--these beckon the holiest on. "The mountain is thine" by right of inheritance, but to actually possess it, you must set your foot upon it. The good and the better you have already found, but the best is yet on before. By the epochal baptism with the Holy Spirit you entered the land, but you are now urged to go on and explore the land and exploit its riches.

Job climbed the mountain of patience. Abraham ascended the heights of faith. Isaac ventured into the highlands of gentleness. Samuel climbed the Himalaya of prayer. Daniel lived on the Pike's Peak of communion. Peter found a Rainier of holy courage. Paul's Everest of ecstasy touched the bottom of the third heaven. John made his abode in the mighty range of love made perfect.

Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and then was translated by faith, not by sight, for he had not even then reached a Pisgah from which heaven could be plainly seen. With what assurance then should we walk on? If three hundred years of steady climbing does not bring one to the peak, our own short lives will serve but to bring us to the foothills.

And what shall we say of Peter and His "holy mount" where he saw the Lord in the glory of the Transfiguration? And of James? of Stephen also, and of the martyrs? of the saints and sages whose names have not come down to us, but who lived in the high mountains of God? These all made munitions of rock their defense, and lifted their eyes toward the peaks on high. And shall we

suffer any fear of exhausting the heights? Shall we say the hills are enough for us? Nay, let us arise and ask for the mountains. And let us not be content with just the legal title. Let us up and set our feet on the high places and follow the river of life to its Source. Come, let us go up to the mountains of God!

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50

The Longitude of Holiness

That . . . we might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our Life (Luke 1: 74, 75).

It is always a compliment to an article when it can be said that it lasted well. But when it is merely said that the time of its duration seems long, and when actual calculation proves that the time was not so extended as estimated, the claim is a reproach. If the service was satisfactory the time would not seem long.

In a small town in which I held a preaching mission, the chief pay roll came from the state prison which was located there, and a considerable portion of the population was composed of members of the families of guards and other employees of the prison. The people of the town talked casually of life in and about the prison, even to easy comments upon certain prisoners who were often known through their relatives who came to visit them. I observed that it would be said of one prisoner that he was in for "ten years," and of another that his term was "ten long years." I inquired about this distinction, and was told that the first mentioned prisoner was gaining credit for good behavior and that his years were substantially less than twelve months, while the other was a troublesome prisoner, and must serve full twelve months to get credit for a year. Later I could not keep this distinction out of mind when I heard one say he had served the Lord for "many long years." I felt sure he was not getting any credit for good behavior.

But it is comforting to know that the grace of God and the life of the Christian are adapted to all the ages through which we are called upon to pass. The small child may come to Christ for pardon and cleansing from sin. All down through school days, busy business years, to old age and to death--all the time and at all ages and under every sort of condition--the grace of God will keep and the demands of the Christian life will be found well adapted. The person of holy heart and righteous practice has the advantage of his fellows in matters of health, education, economics, and social service. His peace of mind engenders courage, divine love makes for good manners with men, and his long-ranged vision develops his patience and makes for power to endure.

The grace of God in the heart restrains the haste of youth, purifies the ambitions of manhood, and delivers from bitterness in old age. It transmutes the fire of youth into units of evangelism, directs the wisdom of maturity into channels of loving and useful service, and assigns to the gray hair of the old man the title of "crown of glory." It makes life on earth better by preparing its possessors for eternity. It extracts the sting from death, and robs the grave of its victory. It has only one end, and that is the beginning end, for the other end is not an end at all--"the end is everlasting life."

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51

Happiness, Misery, Peace!

Happiness is a transient thing. It flourishes in the springtime, in the sunshine and in pleasant environment; but it cannot endure the cold of winter, the dark of night or the haunting atmosphere of the half-deserted fireside. Its type is the butterfly. Its symbol is the balloon filled with unstable, aeriform fluid. It cannot be found when directly sought. To grasp it firmly is to explode it. It is airy and light and unsubstantial, and its foundation is of nothing more trustworthy than mere chance fortune or good luck.

Misery is a heavy, leaden thing. It is persistent and oppressive. Its garments are tatters. Its water is wormwood. Its very food is mixed with gall. As a savior it is an impostor. As a doctrine it is a charlatan. As a teacher it is a pretender. It bears no healing balm. It offers no solution for the problems it raises. Its vocabulary does not contain the word hope. Its eyes are toward the earth. Its ears hear but the voice of woe. Its tongue sings only the dirge.

Happiness in its higher form is often the accompaniment of peace, but it is like the foam--peace is the ocean beneath. Misery is like the mud at the bottom of the ocean, and even its presence does not mar the fathoms of peace that rise above it. Happiness is an accident. Misery is an inescapable consequence. But peace is a product of divine mercy conditioned upon the adjusted will and purified affections of the recipient.

One who possesses peace is free from moral conflicts, from agitating passions, and from tormenting fears. He is possessed of a sense of security which challenges the best and the worst that can come, so that he treats both triumph and disaster as impostors and makes God alone his refuge. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace" (Psalm 37: 37) . "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psalm 119:165). "Peace I give unto you.... Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14: 27).

Happiness and misery and the foam and the mud. Peace, the peace that passes the understanding and keeps the heart is the ocean itself. I shall not despise the foam nor be held down by the mud. My portion is peace "Sweet peace, the gift of God's love."

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52

"Thus Saith the Lord"

Glibness in saying, "The Lord told me," brands one as a shallow fanatic and a spiritual invalid suffering from an overdeveloped ego. David's statement that the "secret of the Lord is with them that fear him" at least suggests that modesty is becoming anyone to whom the Lord has made known His will.

And yet God does speak to those who are willing to hear, and He does make known His will to His obedient children. There is no qualification for hearing the voice of God that is quite so basic as continued willingness to do all that He commands. Those who want to know God's will in order that they may do it are apt scholars in the divine school, no matter what their showing on the credit books of men.

All men have God's book of nature, His book of human nature, His book of providence, and His inner monitor, the conscience, upon which His Spirit moves betimes. But to the genuine Christian there are two special guides: the written Word, the Bible, and the vital Word, the Holy Spirit. The first is comparable to the pillar of fire which led the Israelites through the wilderness, and the second is comparable to the brother-in-law of Moses who went along to give detailed directions for the day's stage of travel and to select the most convenient camping places at night. The Bible deals with principles, rather than with rules of thumb. It commands honesty and temperance, but it does not say we are not to gamble on a horse race or take chances on the automobile which the village merchants are raffling off or name lager beer as a prohibition. All these are implied in its principles, but it takes a live conscience, keen to the checks of the Holy Spirit, to always know what to choose among the details.

Let us take the pillar for our guide. It invariably directs our way toward the promised land. Whatever is condemned by the Bible is also condemned by the Spirit, for "The Spirit and the Word agree." Let us be "Bible Christians." Let us study the Bible to discern its underlying principles, and then let us read it daily for the purpose of refreshing our discernment of God's will for ourselves. We are not all called to preach to others, but we are all called to know and do the will of God ourselves. But let us beware of high claims concerning our knowledge of the Bible, lest our temper and conduct seem to lag behind our intellects. Rather let us be patient and obedient learners of God's way in the pages of His written revelation.

But let us also invite the personal Director, the Holy Spirit, to come and show us the details of the way. I know that I should do deeds of kindness: I know this from the Bible; but the indwelling Spirit may impress me that my neighbor needs my words or deed today, and in obedience to His inner impression, I shall find my benevolence and my Christian comfort much more useful for being timely. I know from the Bible that I should seek to bring about the salvation of those about me. But the indwelling Spirit will indicate the time and place when I may speak and my words will be received. Yes, just as Israel needed the fiery pillar to give general direction and the trained Hobab to give detailed guidance, so do I need the Bible for principles, and the Spirit for immediate guidance. To be a truly Bible Christian, I must also be a Spirit-filled and Spirit-led Christian.

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God could create the universe by the mere word of His power, but when He would forgive sin, an infinite barrier stood in the way. How could a holy God forgive a sinner without at the same

time tolerating sin? The answer is found in the Father's gift of His only begotten Son, and in, the Son's ignominious death between two thieves on the Roman cross of wood.

But when God found a way for Himself, He I also found a way for us; for now we have, not only the example of the Father's will to forgive, and of the Son's work to carry out the plan, but also a portion in that love wherewith He loved us in that we are partakers of the divine nature. That glorious love which could at the same instant hate sin and pity the sinner is God's gift to the born again today. The gospel of Jesus Christ is power, as well as provision. It is realization, as well as idealization.

And yet the reception of the love of God is conditional, not by decree. Its functioning is by co-operation, not by automatic control. It works, but it must be worked. Our forgiveness is conditioned upon our forgiving--not in instantaneous act only, but also in habit and continuous progress.

The power to forgive is a divine bestowal, but the function of forgiving is the responsible act of the creature. There are moral impossibilities, of course, but these we pass for the present. We want forgiveness both from our fellows and from God, and for trespasses, whether purposeful or inadvertent. Therefore we want to forgive any and all who trespass against us. We want to do it. God will enable us, but still we must will it so. Forgiving others is still a thing of virtue, because to be real it must be voluntary. It is human as well as divine.

"To do evil for good is human corruption; to do good for good is civil retribution; but to do good for evil is Christian perfection. Though this be not the grace of nature, it is the nature of grace." --ARCHBISHOP SECKER. May my heart be the theater of the full functioning of that grace!

In so noble a call as the call to forgive others, it seems a pity to even suggest the existence of personal, almost selfish concern. But the fact is malice and hate do more harm to the one holding them than they do to those against whom they are held. Hate injures the health, beclouds the mind, prejudices the judgment, sours the temperament and blasts religious experience. If a man has an enemy he certainly should do his utmost to get rid of him. But how shall he go about it? If he kills him, even if he escapes the penalty of the law, his own conscience will trouble him and he will find no rest. If he goes on hating him without any expression of his hate, the pentup evil within will make him unhappy and even shorten his life. If he mistreats his enemy so that others notice it, society will reject the hater as an undesirable member. The best way to get rid of an enemy is the Christian way--forgive him, forgive him freely. When this is done you will be free, and it may even be that the enemy will yet become a friend. If by forgiving you surrender some right to compensation, remember you have surrendered a right of lower order for the high Christian right to forgive a wrong. And there is no greater proof of the reality of divine grace than in this: one who was a hater has found grace to forgive, and to love his enemies.

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O Lord, I give to Thee, first of all my heart that it may be Thy very own, and that in it Thou mayest live with none other to interfere, and reign with none besides to share Thy throne. Every sinful motive, every selfish impulse, every doubtful imagination, every trend toward careless thinking wilt Thou purge away, and bring every force and function of my heart and mind into full captivity of obedience to Thyself.

I give Thee my eyes and my ears that through them Thou mayest see the needs of my fellowmen, and hear the cry of the lost and dying everywhere. Give me grace, I pray, to close my eyes to the seeing of evil and to close my ears to the hearing of blood. Give me sight only for what Thou wouldst have me see, and hearing only for that which Thou wouldst have me hear. Take my eyes and my ears and use them fully and freely and only for Thine own glory.

I give Thee my feet with which to run on missions of mercy and grace. Make them swift to this end. I shall count any use other than what Thou dost make a sacrilege. I give Thee my hands for deeds of kindness. I give my lips to speak forth Thy love. I give my tongue that it may sing only of Thy praise. I give Thee my mind that it may think Thy thoughts, and that it may meditate upon Thy goodness and reverently follow in the ways of Thy wisdom. I give Thee my love that it may be an ointment poured forth at Thy feet.

I give Thee my influence that it may be exercised only for Thy glory. May I be enabled to hide behind the cross that any praise or word of honor may have Thee only for its object. I give Thee my every earthly possession. I pass the title over to Thee here and now, and I ask that henceforth Thou shalt make disposition of anything I may ever have or hold, and that Thou shalt make disposition instantly as pleaseth Thee, and without any further necessity for asking my consent. This consent today is for everything and for all time.

I give to Thee anything else of value real or imaginary--which I may have now or which may come into my hands hereafter, and which this list does not specifically cover--that too, my Lord, I give to Thee. And I kneel here today, utterly devoted, with nothing whatsoever held in reserve. All, all is Thine, forevermore.

And in Thy presence today I beg no gift. I ask only that Thou, O Lord, shalt be my portion, as Thou wast the portion of Levi of old. I ask for no inheritance among my brethren. Be Thou my portion, my only estate. Be Thou my Deliverer and Preserver. Be Thou my Counselor and Friend. Be Thou my Fortune and my Home. In life, in death, and throughout eternity, Thou art all I need, all I want and all I ask. Throughout the ages of the ages, I ask for no better heaven than just to bear Thy name on my forehead and be permitted to see Thy face. And even these things I leave wholly to Thy sovereign will. I ask nothing more and nothing other than Thy will in either time or eternity. I claim no worth or merit. I make no demands whatsoever. It is enough for me that Thou dost hear. And to the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, I lift up my heart and voice in everlasting praise through the supremely worthy name of Him who has washed me in His blood. Amen and amen!

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A Peculiar People

The general prevalence of the colloquial use of the word peculiar has led to a more or less faulty interpretation of those scriptures which speak of God's people as peculiar; for some have taken this to mean that they are queer or eccentric, whereas, the real meaning of the word peculiar, and the scriptural sense of it is, "belonging to an individual; privately owned; not common." Where our Authorized Version says, "a peculiar people" (1 Peter 2: 9), the Revised Version says, "A people for God's own possession." The fault is not in the translation, but is the result of a change of usage in our language. The English speaking people of 1611 understood peculiar just as the revisers define it in their translation. If there are queer and eccentric people among the people of God, that is incidental. But all God's people, no matter how well poised they are, are God's own possession.

David asked a young man, "To whom belondest thou?" (1 Samuel 30:13) and the question has application to us today. We are more accustomed to hearing the question, "What belongs to you?" But the question of who owns you is of more importance than any titles you may hold. You may think and even say that you are your own, and "have never been in bondage to any man." But you do belong-- either to the world or to God. You are not your own. Either you are yet sold under sin or else you are redeemed by the blood of Jesus. There is no neutrality in this war; you are for Christ or you are against Him. You serve the devil or you serve God. "To whom belondest thou?"

1 Corinthians 3:9 says, "Ye are God's husbandry." The margin in many Bibles gives the optional reading, "Ye are God's tilled land." Dr. Godbey boldly read it, "Ye are God's farm." But in all cases the thought is that you belong to God, if you are a Christian, and that God has the right to use you as He will, and to take from you such returns as your life can produce for His glory. That is the simplest putting of the meaning of consecration, and when it is true you are God's peculiar possession.

is the full import of the plain teachings of the Word of God. But there is the other side; it is to our interest to become "wholly the Lord's." For in such a relation our safety is assured. No "stray" dog was ever so pathetic as a human soul that does not "belong." And no prince or son of a millionaire was ever so well assured as is the humblest person who is completely in the Father's keeping. Being His peculiar possession does not promise immunity from earthly burdens, cares and disappointments. But it does more than that; it guarantees that every disappointment shall become God's appointment, and that every circumstance of life will be pressed into service for the bringing out of the divine image in us. The guaranty even extends to men; so that "if a man's ways please the Lord, he will make even his enemies to be at peace with him." This does not always mean that the enemy will become a friend on purpose; but it means that God will change the evil of the enemy into good for His child. So while we presume to say that God wants us for His very own, we should match this with the assurance that there is no place so good for us as in the Father's peculiar possession. "I'd rather be the least of them who are the Lord's alone than wear a royal diadem and sit upon a throne."

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Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil (2 Kings 4: 2).

The creditor had come to claim the defenseless widow's two sons, and there were no assets to offer in substitution--except a pot of oil! But that pot of oil was foundation to a fortune that saved the boys from slavery and the family from bankruptcy, and the case is typical, rather than isolated. A little oil and a handful of meal provided food for the prophet and the widow for a whole year. A little captive maid brought the message of healing to a military hero. A shepherd's lad brought deliverance to a nation stalemated by the challenge of Goliath. A cloud no larger than a man's hand presaged the breaking of a drought of forty-two months' duration. Four lepers saved a city from starvation by bringing news of plenty near at hand. Five barley loaves and two small fishes provided for ten thousand hungry people in the desert. Three hundred followers of Gideon put to flight an army that outnumbered them a hundred to one. A handful of seed corn upon the mountain became the source of an abundant harvest. The King of kings came as a little Babe to Bethlehem, and rode upon the colt of an ass the day of His triumphant entrance into Jerusalem. The mild blood of martyrs becomes the seed of the Church, and to a "little flock" the kingdom is promised.

Who then can say that the trifling and insignificant do not count? But it is always the trifling blessed of God, and thus blessed the trifling is trifling no longer. While Jacob remained a worm he could accomplish no good. But transformed into a sharp thrashing instrument having teeth, he could be used to thrash the mountains and make them small, and make the hills as chaff (Isaiah 41:14, 15). Phillips Brooks suggested that God makes miracles out of His people, rather than use His people to work miracles. And after His people are transformed until they are themselves miracles, their work is normal to them, and only such as might be expected of such as they are.

"Little is much when God is in it." Even a cipher multiplies by ten if it is on the right side of the digit, and the humblest man has the strength of ten if only his heart is pure. When the battle is truly the Lord's battle, a small one is equal to a thousand and a little one can put an army to flight.

But the little is enough only when it is all there | is. The widow's two mites constituted a queenly gift because there was nothing left when these were given. If the mighty are available, the mighty are chosen. But God uses the instrument that is yielded, and a rod in the hand of Moses becomes a scepter when it is the badge of devotion. God will deliver by the hand of the many, if the many are harnessed for the battle. But when the many are not available, God will deliver by the hand of the few. There must be no holding back. My all is enough, but there is never a surplus.

Michelangelo said, "Perfection is composed of trifles, but perfection is no trifle." Full consecration to God is composed of the devotion of little things, but full consecration itself is no little thing. "What is that in thy hand?" If it is but a rod, as was the case with Moses, then that rod will become the wand from which seas will flee. But if it is talent or fortune or influence or power, then all that is included in the program of God for your life and others. "Take my silver and my gold; not a mite will I withhold."

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57

When Friends Are Enemies

Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarah (Genesis 16:2).

An enemy is especially hard to resist when that enemy is a friend. The saddest complaint in the Messianic Psalms is when the name of Judas is mentioned, and the Master says, "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me" (Psalm 41: 9). But in this case it may be the friend changed his purpose and became an enemy by the change. But we are thinking more of the instances in which the friend is an enemy while yet a friend.

Peter was rebuked and called an adversary when he asked the Master to pity Himself and refuse the cross. Peter was a friend in purpose, but his friendship led him to urge His Master to cross purposes with God. Paul's friends opposed his going to Jerusalem because they knew trouble awaited him there. But in their friendship they were asking Paul to deflect from the road of duty. Friends are enemies when their anxiety for our creature comforts impels them to ask us to take an easier way than the one God has selected for us.

The flattery of friends is more dangerous to true piety than the slander of enemies; for flattery tends to puff up with pride, while slander drives to a corrected appraisal and to the encouragement of humility. There is a service which friends can render that is better than that which avowed enemies can do, but this service requires sincerity on the part of the friend and proper humility on the part of the befriended.

Fear of offending a friend has kept many an earnest soul from going through with God. Desire to please a friend has kept a many a God-called apostle from ever reaching the field in which he should have served. One may be a friend and be a hindrance. One may be a friend and be a help. But there is one Friend who is above all friends, and this Friend is a friend forever. He is faithful in reproof and yet quick in consolation. He knows that the best way is not always the easy way, but He urges us to go the best way, and proposes that He will Himself go with us to the end.

One cannot always choose his friends, as he would his books; and he cannot always discard them, as he would an unacceptable garment. Take the friends that are of our own household--the husband, the wife, the parent or the child; these continue with us and we cannot and should not cast them off. But when the time comes that we cannot please even these friends and go with God, there is only one way, and that is to go with God. Abraham did not do this in the pinch. He hearkened to the voice of his wife, and from that mistaken regard for friendship came the curse of Ishmael and the scourge of Mohammed. Paul disregarded the advice of his anxious friends and went on to win a martyr's crown.

Jesus sent to John the Baptist, as one of the signs that He himself was the Christ, word that "the poor have the gospel preached unto them." And it is usually just the poor who do have the

gospel preached unto them. For when the rich would hear it, preachers are often too anxious to curry favor, and so preach less than the gospel, lest they offend those whom they would have as patrons. That is to be but an unfaithful friend. A faithful friend will wound severely, disregarding our complaints, when our conduct and tendencies require. Happy is the man who has friends who will tell him the truth, even when the truth hurts. And happy is the man who can rise above the flattery of friends and the advice of intimates, when that flattery and advice is averse to the ways of righteousness.

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58

Fighting the Vultures

After seven years of war in Canaan Joshua and his people found respite from conflict. But conquerors of the spiritual Canaan have, at last accounts, found no parallel with Israel in this respect. The seat of the conflict is largely removed from the inside to the outside of the citadel, but the war goes on, and the promise is to the one who endures until the end.

Abraham, likewise, found an end to his vigil when God came in fiery symbol and passed between the pieces of his sacrifice (Genesis 15), making it unnecessary that he should longer fight away the birds of prey which sought to take away the pieces of his sacrifice. But the covenanter in the life of holiness must not sleep. The vultures of hell are not dead. Suggestions of evil continue to attack the mind, and "thoughts of evil," which cannot be avoided, will speedily transmute themselves into "evil thoughts" if they are allowed any place to rest their feet.

Happy indeed is the Christian who is safe from intrusions upon his prayer time. These intrusions come not alone or even principally from the incessant conversation of friends, or the occasional ringing of the doorbell or telephone. Rather they come from the sheeplike tendency of one's own thoughts to wander away. No material closet is tight enough to fence in one's wandering thoughts, and often the sincere saint finds to his chagrin that he is thinking and planning when he should be praying. Business, home, church, friends, letters you should write, deeds of mercy you should do--dovellike birds, and yet they take away your sacrifices of prayer.

But the best of men have suffered thus. Mueller, the modern apostle of prayer, found his "club" (for driving away the birds) in his Bible. The two hours or more that he spent in prayer daily were divided among audible prayer, reading of the Bible (and for this purpose he read straight through the Bible, reading it thus one hundred and fifty times during his lifetime), and inaudible prayer. Martin Luther and John Wesley both made use of written prayers to assist in holding their minds to attention. They did not simply read the written prayers, but meditated upon their meaning, and sought to make the well thought out expressions vehicles to express their own thoughts and feelings. There are many such prayers in the Bible, and it may be that the most of us, unaccustomed as we are to rituals, will find the Bible the best of all helps in fighting away the intrusions and bringing back our wandering thoughts.

From personal experience, I think I can say that the maintenance of the spirit of prayer is more important than time spent in the attitude of prayer. I frequently find my prayer time hindered

by the appearance of unusual drowsiness. In such times, instead of giving way, I have found it helpful to walk the room and pray aloud. This form of exercise helps to drive away drowsiness and also helps to concentrate thought and desire on the objects of my devotions. I have not usually found it possible to continue for long periods on my knees without either distraction or dullness. But I have often found the fight to pray worth the effort many times over.

But our thought is not to give detailed suggestions. It is enough to urge that everyone find some way to "Keep the birds away" that they may not get your prayer sacrifice until the Lord appears in burning lamp and smoking furnace to give assurance that He has heard and will answer.

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59

How Much Are You Worth?

For bodily exercise profiteth little; but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come (2 Timothy 4: 8).

A question must seek at least a part of its answer in the mind of the questioner. If the tax assessor asks for an estimate of your worth, you may think entirely in terms of money. But suppose the questioner is the Apostle Paul or the Master himself? Then you must think in terms of moral, social and spiritual values.

Sometimes a question is its own answer, as when Paul asks, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Often we have reason to be thankful if no answer is demanded--the question itself serves to make us aware that any answer would convict us of either sin or inconsistency. It was thus with the Pharisees when Jesus asked, "The baptism of John: was it from heaven or of men?" For if they answered "from heaven," then He would say, "Why then did ye not believe him?" But if they should say "of men" the people would be offended, because all were convinced that John was a prophet. Hence there was nothing for the Pharisees to do but to dodge, and say, "We cannot tell."

And yet there are questions concerning worth that we should all want to consider. How much are you worth to the cause of God in the world? How much are you worth to the program of the Church in your community and in the world? How much are you worth to the heathen in the matter of providing for their alleviation by sending them the gospel? How much are you worth in a vital way to your home and your family? How much are you worth to your nation? How much are you worth to the community in which you live? How much are you worth to your neighbors? How much are you worth to yourself? Stripped of all ornaments, superficial titles and showy decorations, how much are you worth? How much of your gold will really stand the fire? How much of your bulk can pass the fan of the threshing floor and be heavy enough to abide? How much of you is real value when all that is just seeming has been discounted?

When you die men may ask, "How much did he leave behind?" But the bigger question will be, "How much did he send on before?" Men may ask, "Who attended his funeral?" But a much

more important question will be, "Who, saved through the power of his testimony, were there to welcome him into realms of delight?"

Your worth is better indicated by what you give than by what you hold. Your place in the kingdom is known by the number you serve, rather than by the multitude of your servants. Your fortune is in what you are more than in what you do or say, and a man's work is better proved by the character it builds in himself than by any outward form it may finally assume.

Let us not be deceived by appearances. That alone is true worth which is itself independent of time and place. That is true riches which defies thieves and rust and moths and lasts forever. Such values are not in material things, but only in the mind and the spirit. You cannot tell the value of a man by the number of pounds he weighs when he stands on the scales. You cannot tell it by the size of his tax receipts or the amount of his bank account. You cannot tell it even by the scope of his mental grasp or the talents which appear in connection with his calling. For his worth is like the gold that is hidden in the hills. It is defined only in terms by which the heart and soul and that imperishable character which right choices, right deeds and right habits finally produce. This, therefore, is a very searching question, "How much are you worth?"

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60

The Sin of the Short-cut

When as yet the Savior had not been maltreated and set at naught, the tempter came and offered him the kingdoms of the world--offered the Savior the very thing He came to get--offered to yield it without a struggle. Jesus had started after the goal the long, hard way, and here is a chance to reach that goal without the price of ignominy and death. But did the Master take the unpurchased heritage? He did not. He spurned the offer and resolutely turned His face toward the cross. He would have the world by dying for it, and not by having it surrendered to Him as by the munificence of the arch usurper. We do not say that which was offered was just as good as that for which Jesus died. It could not be that, but it was offered as a substitute for the better inheritance for which Jesus gave His life.

Worthy goals must be reached by worthy means. Otherwise they cease to be worthy. It has been remarked that never yet has the foundation for a permanent fortune been laid with money won in a bet. Money and goods are but stored up labor, and they are legitimate only when they represent industry and proper management. The liquor dealer curses the bodies and souls of his patron for a price, but his business is not legitimate. Only the merchant who renders a useful service by the distribution of his goods is worthy of a license to operate in a civilized land. The crook and the cheat take the wages of wisdom and honesty by chicanery. Their goal is worthy, but their means is not. Theirs is the sin of the short-cut.

In the realm of the intellect, pretense is a cheap substitute for study and application, and is the enemy of true scholarship. Presumption is the short-cut to honor, and shallow reputation is but the tinsel of which sound character is the metal. The higher the realm of our consideration the greater the sin of attempting to reach its heights by some other and shorter way. Regarding the

kingdom of heaven, Jesus said, "I am the door." "He that . . . climbeth up some other way is a thief and a robber."

Would any man attempt to mislead God? Instantly, from the logic of the case, we answer no, oh, no. And yet what are men doing who claim to have accepted Christ without repenting of their sins and fully and forever forsaking them? What are they doing who think to come to God and be accepted when yet they are not bringing as their plea the blood of His only begotten Son? What are they doing who seek to please God while yet holding onto sin and the world? What are they doing who would claim "all his benefits," while yet making but limited consecration of their ransomed powers? What are they doing who pose as being spiritually minded, and yet live with all the earmarks of secular mindedness? What are they doing who offer reformation for repentance, account profession sufficient without certain possession, who join the church without being born again, who are baptized with water without being regenerated, who extol human enthusiasm, but do not obtain the baptism with the Holy Spirit? Why, they are committing the sin of the short-cut, and are trying to reach the goal without troubling to take the way, all the way!

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61

The Service of the Shadow

Dr. Jowett calls attention to the fact that while flowers require sunshine, ferns grow in the shade. And in their place, ferns are quite as beautiful as flowers.

Sunshine and flowers need no champions. They stand in the order of universal favorites. Usually those who say they can see God in nature, mean only that they can see Him in the sunshine and the flowers; for the shade and the ferns have no appeal for them.

But sun and shadow are complements, and often the brighter the sun the sharper the shadow. It is useless to ask people to live always in the sunshine. No one could do that unless he were able to travel from east to west at the same incredible speed that enables the earth to turn on its axis within the twenty-four hours. No, we must live part of the time in the shadow, whether we will or not.

Every man is in reality a little universe, and within the sphere of his experience there are both sun and shadow. There are the beautiful and pleasant to be enjoyed, and there are the sordid and painful to be endured. The first of these forms a proper atmosphere for the growth of flowers, the other is the correct habitat for ferns.

But what are the flowers of grace? Undoubtedly their list includes joy and gladness and victory and praise. And how sweet the odor and how beautiful the hue of these denizens of God's garden! They are symbols of abounding life and favorable environment.

And what are the ferns of holiness? Surely these must include longsuffering, gentleness, patience and meekness among the others. The bare mention of these inspires visions of prison cells where saints have languished, unpleasant domestic situations which Christians have endured,

bodily afflictions which living martyrs have borne, and ostracism from loved ones, persecution from peers, and jeers from inferiors which righteous men have taken in love for the Lord's sake. And like the ferns, these graces are quiet and unobtrusive. Nevertheless they have utilized the shadow for the production of beauty, and without them the flowers themselves would not be complete.

There is not much here for exhortation. It is unnecessary for anyone to seek the shadow--if it is a real shadow, it must come unbidden. Self-pity is no means of grace. Seeking pity from others is an occupation that pays but a poor fee. No, the shadow will come you have but to wait. Do not invite persecution. Live naturally, and live right. Persecution must take care of itself; for it to bring blessing it must be for righteousness' sake, and not in recompense for folly. But when the shadow comes, remember you are not expected to grow flowers then--be content with ferns. Do not expect to shout when your loved ones die trust God for grace to bear uncomplainingly. At such a time, patience is in better taste than ecstasy. When any sort of reverses come, "take it patiently," for this is well pleasing to God. And when the full bouquet of grace is made up, it will be found that the red and crimson of the flowers exhibit to better advantage on the green background of the gentle ferns.

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62

Crises at the Cross Ways

In a place where two ways met (Mark 11: 4); A place where two seas met (Acts 27: 41) .

Life's roads are not all parallel--some of them cross the others at right angles. And at the places where roads cross, men meet their crises. They are wont to select such places for the founding of business, and no place in the block is quite so good as "the corner." At the cross ways men meet their friends and sometimes their enemies. Often we have been impressed with the thought that if we had been a little earlier or a little later at the cross ways the other would not have been there I and that day, and the rest of life, would have been different.

Nicodemus met Jesus at the cross ways and learned of the new birth. Paul met Jesus at the cross ways on the Damascus road and beheld a vision that transformed him. Philip met the eunuch at the cross ways (Acts 8: 26-38), and led him to the dying Savior. Paul's ship stuck fast on the bar where two seas met and changed the time and manner of his arrival in Rome.

The ways cross for us all, and their crossings mark crises for us all, although we are not always aware that it is so. The ways crossed for me the day when the Holy Spirit made me conscious that I was a sinner, and led me to repentance and to salvation. The ways crossed when the Spirit made me aware of my need of heart purity, and led me gently on until I was baptized with the Holy Spirit. The ways crossed for me when God made it clear to me that my life should be spent in the preaching of the gospel. The ways crossed when I met the woman who was my wife for thirty-seven wonderful years and then went on home before me. And I am sure that you have many such instances of the crossing of ways in your experience. Some of these crossings may seem

to have depended upon the merest chance or accident. But our faith is that "There is a destiny that shapes our ends, rough hew them though we may."

No doubt there are some instances in all our lives upon which we now look back and vainly wish we had been late or early, so that certain meetings could not have taken place. But I think the farther we get from these occasions, and the more we are able to see life in its fuller pattern, the less these unwished accidents count. Many cross road meetings that at first seemed to be liabilities, in the light of later experiences, have taken their places on the assets side of the ledger. For myself I can say that the longer I live the firmer becomes my faith in the overruling providences of God in all that relates to my life.

There remains at least one more place where two ways shall meet, and that is the place where life and death shall join for a brief moment. Or it may be that some now living will escape death and see the Son of God come in the glory of His Second Advent, when mortality shall be instantly swallowed up of life.

I have seen others bring their ship to the bar where the two seas meet, and I have seen their earthly bark strike there and go to pieces. But I have seen evidence that the ransomed spirits of these who finished their voyage in what seems to be disaster arose above the waves in the teeth of the tempest and made their way to the shore, as did Paul and his companions that day on the beach of Malta. And my prayer is that when my ship shall strike, I too may find a spar upon which to ride to reach the shore in safety. And may there be beyond this just one more crossing of ways when my redeemed spirit shall cross the threshold of the City of God to join the ransomed who have gone on before!

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63

Praying with Closed Eyes

Yesterday a young preacher, reporting to the assembly, told how he had been tried through the weeks of the past year. Undertaking the work of an evangelist, he had found times when there were no openings for meetings; times when there were meetings, but no spirit of revival; times when there was revival, but no proper support for the family. "But in the midst of it all," said he young hero of faith and self-denial, "I have tried to pray, as Elijah did, with my face between my knees (1 Kings 18: 42), in this position I have found one cannot see the circumstances which surround and seek to hinder."

We all, no doubt found it an advantage to close our eyes when we pray. The first object in closing the eyes is to assist with the body the effort of the soul to get alone with God--in the same manner that the bodily posture of kneeling seems to help the inner spirit of humility and dependence. But in the secondary sense by closing the eyes we shut out "the world of time and sense," and by our very attitude affirm our determination to give no heed to the things that would hinder and contradict while we call upon God.

George Mueller said we are not to account probability a ground for faith, neither our own feelings regarding a matter. The Word of God is all that counts. First, we must assure ourselves that what we ask is in accordance with the Word of God and in agreement with the promises He has made in that Book. Then we are to pray until we arrive at an inward assurance amounting to a conviction that what God has promised in His Word He is able and willing now to perform. This assurance or conviction is of the very essence of faith, and whatsoever we thus take from God we without exception receive.

Faith is blind, purposely so, to the odds which stand against it, to the improbabilities involved, and to the consequences likely to result. It is blind both to the price demanded and the compensation promised. Faith can afford to be reckless for, armed with the assurance that God is now able and willing, nothing else can matter anyhow.

We have heard of the man who prayed for rain, but announced that there would be no rain, so long as the wind stayed in the west. We have heard of the woman who prayed for the removal of the mountain, and then looked, and seeing the mountain still in its place, said, "It's just as I expected." We have heard the preacher say that his faith for a good offering increased as the pledges approached the goal. But we have also read of Abraham who "staggered not at the promise of God" when he was promised a son in his old age, and we have read of how the same man, in the act of making the body of his son Isaac a burnt offering to God, yet looked for the fulfillment of the promise that "in Isaac shall thy name be called," accounted that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead to bring about the fulfillment of His word.

Our faith for answered prayer rests solely upon the premise that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Questions of probability and improbability do not enter in, since a God who is all wise, almighty, and all merciful certainly can do anything He wills to do. Therefore we deliberately close our eyes when we pray and take counsel alone of God and His promises, utterly refusing to see or consider anything else besides.

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Our bible says, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue," and "The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright, and is as choice silver." Anacharsis says, "The tongue is, at the same time, the best part of man and his worst; with good government, none is more useful, and without it, none is more mischievous." Justin observed that "By examining the tongue of a patient, physicians find out the disease of the body, and philosophers the disease of the mind." When a comely lad appeared in his presence, Socrates cried, "Speak, lad, that I may see you."

Quarles said, "Give not thy tongue too great liberty, lest it take thee prisoner. A word unspoken is like the sword in the scabbard, thine; if vented, thy sword is in another's hand. If thou desire to be held wise, be so wise as to hold thy tongue." Sir Walter Raleigh said, "It is observed in the course of worldly things, that men's fortunes are oftener made by their tongues than by their virtues; and more men's fortunes are overthrown thereby than by vices. "

St. James was more pessimistic than the others. He declared that although men have tamed the wild beasts of the earth, "The tongue can no man tame." That is, James was pessimistic regarding ability to govern the tongue directly. The tongue is an instrument, not a force. Its words are effects, not causes. Its sins are symptoms, not the seat of disease. If one would cleanse the stream, he must purify the spring. If he would manage the tongue, he must let Christ master the heart. The Calmer of the sea is also the Tamer of the tongue but only when He is the Sanctifier of the heart.

False words, slanderous words, impure words unkind words: words that are true but unnecessary, idle words, cruel words, blunt words, words with stingers in them--what a swarm of filthy flies and stinging hornets this list involves! Words of truth, words of kindness, words of hope and faith and love --how like the cooing dove and the healing balm are these! Judged by your tongue, what is the state of your health, of your mind, and of your heart?

But just as we must be delivered from the world while yet living in the world, so we must be saved from evil speech while yet using the tongue. The monastic took the literal and easy way of getting out of the world. Likewise some would be saved from the sins of the tongue by becoming non-communicative. They would be saved from evil words by abstaining from talk altogether. But for silence to be golden it must be found upon the background of fitting words. Take our own Master: He was silent before Pilate, and the governor marveled that He was able to hold His peace. But this silence would have had no meaning if the fair prisoner had been known to be dumb. But there were those present who had, in the past, hung breathlessly upon the gracious words that poured forth from His pure heart and well-stored mind, and to them, especially, the silence was eloquent.

You know the story of the man who took the hands of his clock to the clockmaker to have them fixed so they would keep correct time? Well, all direct efforts at regulating the tongue are like that. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Therefore, there is just one way for us to be safe: we must obtain grace from God to give us clean, pure hearts. Then we shall not need to ask who is present before we begin our speech, for we shall know that naught but pure, wholesome words can come from a heart that knows no malice, pride or uncleanness. A clean heart results in clean lips.

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65

The Challenge of Monotony

If you want to analyze yourself there is no better leading question than this, "Can you bear up under monotony?" Anyone can flit about like an inconsequential bird passing from tree to tree in search of new scenery and easy prey; but the test is on ability to endure the prosaic and continual dripping of a rainy day. It is easy to look forward to new surroundings and new work, but the test is on ability to arise with courage to the word of the new day when the intimations are that today will be much the same as yesterday, and much the same as a hundred other days of the past and of the future. It takes a better soldier to endure siege than it does to lead attack. It takes a better

Christian to occupy an unexciting layman's place than it does to lead some notable crusade or serve as a spectacular leader.

Dependability is a higher virtue than brilliancy. Those who are brilliant, but not dependable, have been likened to small children handling sharp razors. And since a man's life is better appraised by the sum total of its accomplishments than by a few brilliant exploits which may mark its way, the work of the world is done by dependable plodders, rather than by brilliant eccentrics.

Good oak timber is not solely the product of good soil and favorable surroundings. Much of its desirable texture and toughness has resulted from a long struggle with alien elements. And just see what a long list of saintly qualities are directly connected with patient endurance --"Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed." And it is after we have done all to stand that we are yet exhorted to stand.

But just as dependability is of highest rank in the subjective life, its practice is of the same class in the objective. Monotony is a challenge in service. Perhaps the preacher is not gifted, and the services are not interesting. Nevertheless, it is good for the influence of the individual and for the strength of the church that I should be regular in attendance and punctual and systematic in support. To be simply "a big meeting Christian" is to testify better to my selfish preferences than to my devotion to God and the work of His kingdom. There is much about the work of the church that is unromantic: the light and fuel bills have to be paid; the janitor has to be supported; the insurance premium has to be taken care of; the petty repairs on the building and equipment must be provided. If I must, no doubt the brethren will exempt me, and just let me direct my giving to things that have an emotional appeal. But if I take this way it just shows that I cannot meet the challenge of monotony. The regular budget irks me. I like "specials." But "these ought you to have done, and not to have left the other undone." If I spare myself, no doubt others will spare me, and I shall become shallow, swayed by emotion, and undependable. Lord, help me to meet the challenge of unromantic monotony! Help me to live right before God and men, and seek always to do good in the big things and the little.

Jonah was swallowed by a whale. But, bad as that was, it at least drew attention. The great majority of us suffer more from the nibbling of minnows, but by God's grace we shall meet the challenge, and join the overcomers who shall enter through the gates into the city.

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66

Redeeming the Time

Joseph Jefferson, the actor, closed his biography with these words: "And yet we are but tenants; let us assure ourselves of this, and then it will not be so hard to make room for the new administration, for shortly the Great Landlord will give us notice that our lease has expired."

The early temptation is to think that life cannot matter much, seeing it is so transient and so brief. But fuller thought compels the conclusion that one of the reasons it does matter is that it is

transient and brief. If it were permanent then there would be no hurry. But seeing what is done must be done quickly, there is reason for early and earnest application.

The first thing to do is to become a genuine Christian by seeking and obtaining the pardoning and regenerating grace of God. The time for this is now--in youth, if youth is still the heritage; but now, regardless of the time of life. The next thing to do is to seek and obtain the sanctifying and filling baptism with the Holy Ghost, which is the heritage of all God's people. And since this heritage is conditioned on faith, the time to receive it is also now--today, this hour, even this very moment, "Wilt thou be made whole?"

And as early as you may, set in upon the foundation of these vivid religious experiences to build an enduring character. Develop a scientific mind which is neither credulous nor skeptical, but which accepts proved truth from any source. Train yourself to be unselfish in all that pertains to holding and giving. And "practice the presence of God" by living continually in His fellowship and communion. As soon as you may, find the work by means of which you are to eat bread and wear clothes and have shelter. Henceforth make living your business. Say not, "Let us be merry for tomorrow we die." Rather say, "Let us live with care, for soon life's work will be ended and life's rewards will truly begin."

Someone has observed that while we shall have all eternity in which to rejoice over souls brought in and over victories won, we have only from now until we die to bring in souls and win victories. And, if we may come a little closer to ourselves, we have only the day which is "life" to build our personality, and then we must live in that personality forever. "What we weave in time we must wear in eternity."

In the old psychology (called Intellectual Philosophy in those days) they used to parcel out the mind, and even go so far as to locate intellectual functions in certain segments of the brain. But more and more we are coming to see that the unity of man is more apparent and more important than diversity. Man is a personality, and instead of being many, he is one functioning in divers offices. And duration is like that. Time and eternity are one in more senses than they are divided. We are not just getting ready to live, we are living now. And all ideas of "killing time" are wicked. We must neither kill time nor pass time nor yet waste time. Our task is to redeem time and put it out to interest on which we shall realize at a time when we can enjoy the fruits better and keep them longer.

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67

The Central Christian Motive

Look not every man on his own things but every man also on the things of others (Philippians 2:4) .

We were well on the way to a solution of our problem," wrote an earnest brother, "but selfishness cropped out in Brother Q and he would not co-operate with the plan unless and until he

was sure he would be taken care of without any sacrifice or inconvenience on his part, and we could not go on through without his Christian co-operation."

Willingness to sink one's own interests and conveniences for the sake of the cause of God and the convenience and joy of others is the earmark of a Christian. If others come up to this high standard we are glad. But if a professing Christian comes below this standard we are disappointed. And as to ourselves, knowing the standard as we do, we shall probably come up to it, but for us that is not enough: we must come up to it joyfully and uncomplainingly. Others are of course dependent upon our words and actions. If they occasionally judge us harshly, that need not concern us--Christ will adjust that later. The danger is that they will judge us too liberally and give us credit for what we do not deserve; for our deeds may easily be better than our inner temper. For me, then, nothing will satisfy but that I must rejoice to be set aside, and that I shall account the opportunity for preferring another a prize to be sought. Anyone can be selfish, but it takes a Christian to be truly unselfish, and by truly unselfish we mean unselfish in motive as well as in word and deed.

It would be easy to preach at a point like this, but I forbear. The thought before us is too solemn. The roots of the sin of selfishness go too deep, and the venom of the tree is too deadly. A man may be selfish even in condemning selfishness in others. But there would be little need of other rules if only we would all keep well to the principle to possess the mind of Christ in that He counted it no prize to hold on to the form of God, but chose the lowly estate of a servant and died the death of the cross for those "others" who had no just claim on Him.

One of the marvels of Jesus was His ability to bring the highest motives to bear upon the simplest deeds. He never praised the builders of cities and nations. He never estimated the reward due the great. He spoke of the authors of kind words, the givers of cups of cold water, and visitors to unknown people shut up in prison cells. He never extolled the builders of synagogues, but He gave to the donor of two mites, when it was her all, the highest score among the liberal. Motive, not efficiency, is what counts with God. And motive is what we all may have. I do not have ability to give away a million dollars, but I may have motive to do this and more. I do not have ability to relieve the suffering of men, but I may have motive to do so without limit. And I am glad I am judged by my motive, and not by my accomplishment; for now I can compete with the rich in giving, with the great in doing good, and with the angels about the throne in worshipping and adoring. It is the motive that counts.

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68

There Is Glory in the Commonplace

And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them (Mark 1: 31).

Here in a sentence of twenty-four words is drawn the picture of a woman, the subject of a miraculous healing, immediately busy among the pots and pans in the kitchen, and willingly engaged as a serving maid. The transition is so rapid that we feel almost as though there were

sacrilege. Surely one healed by direct divine intervention would require time for adjustment before she could be at home amidst the commonplace.

But perhaps we have misjudged the order of things. We have accounted the lowly as despised, and have thought of the arrogant as exalted. But there is no higher order than servant, and the lowlier the service, the larger the number it is empowered to benefit. Men can get along without luxuries, but none can endure without air and water and food.

The Master himself gave us an example. There were nice services about the house which were dispensable. But every sandal wearing traveler needed water for his feet when he came in from the road. So Jesus bid for the task which was so simple that it was universal--and He secured the task, for there were no other bidders. Doubtless there were many who would sit at the table. There may have been some who would have felt honored to serve food and drink to honored guests. But none cared for the job of washing feet. That work could be assigned to some crippled servant who was not capable of "higher" service. But the Master of all became Servant of all.

The glory of the heights is the object of contention, and one who has it must live in dread of being dispossessed. But the glory of the commonplace has few bidders, and so it is given as an everlasting inheritance to the meek. And so the low place becomes the high place. The foot of the table becomes the place of honor. The foot washer becomes the Master of the house. The poor become possessors of true riches. And the man who demands nothing is given all.

The disciples complained that mothers pressed the Master to waste His time and strength in blessing children. But He who sees that the much is often in the little, said, "Suffer the little children and forbid them not to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." In the leprous beggar at the rich man's gate the Master of all saw an honored saint in disguise, while in the solemn Pharisee He saw but a lifeless, whitened sepulcher. In the praying publican he heard the call of a sincere soul, but in the long prayers of the experts He heard nothing but heathenish repetition of words.

Many of us, no doubt, have wasted our time looking at those whose service requires exhibition, and we have thought ourselves overlooked, because we must serve "in a corner." The headstone has more appeal to us than the cornerstone. But the cornerstone is the one upon which the greater weight rests, and it is the one upon which even the headstone must depend. And since the glory of service is in the number it is empowered to benefit, the place of honor is really down out of sight, where in uncomplaining isolation, the foundation stone bears up under the weight of the whole wall. And for the glory of the commonplace there are few contenders.

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A brother beloved who must sit in perpetual darkness, being physically blind, is by no means without compensations. He does not simply sit; for much of the time he sits and thinks. One day he said, "I have just had a beautiful thought about that Samaritan woman that Jesus met at

Jacob's well. You know the record says, 'She left her water pots and went away,' after her conversation with Jesus. But you recall that that conversation was regarding the Master's promise to give the woman a well of living water. And so it has just occurred to me that she left her water pot, but went away with a well." This strange observation caused me to pursue the thought of our forsakings in the Christian life. All life, you know, is composed of leaving and taking. No one can both stay where he is and go where he wants to be. And I yet it would be unfair to say he does not like it where he is. You must leave childhood to become an adult, and yet we all feel now that there were many fine advantages in childhood. You must leave the old homestead if you would have a home of your own. You must leave your intimate neighbors if you would make friends abroad.

There is really only one principle involved, so far as our choices go, in this matter of leaving and taking: and that is, we must always go forward in the quality of the things chosen. It is not enough to merely increase the quantity. In fact that is not always possible. But we must take consolation in the fact that we are on the way from the simple to the complex, and from the childish to the employments of the sage.

In the beginning it is leaving Satan for Christ, leaving sin for holiness. It must ever be leaving the wrong for the right. It will often be leaving the material for the intellectual, and forsaking the body in the interest of the soul. Bulk and avoirdupois do not tell the story; for "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked." That is, we get more out of the little that comes to us when we do right than we could get out of any amount that might come to us at the cost of soiled honor or an offended conscience.

But now the field narrows yet more, and we must leave the good for the better, and even leave the better in our pursuit of the best. It has never been easy for me to explain the theology of God's "second best." My trend is toward simplicity by which is no middle ground between angels and demons and between heaven and hell. I would like to hollow out the means and leave only the extremes of highest reward and direst punishment. But I know it is not like that. There are times when if I stay, God will bear with me, and if I go He will reward me. If I seek only for the good, I will stay. But if I am in quest of the best, I will go. The water pot is good, but the well is better, and the rivers of pentecostal glory are best.

And it must be like this with me forever, for even in heaven I can think of those circles which begin out in the suburbs of the city and finish with the four living creatures close up to the throne as being open circles with invitation to all to draw nearer to the center always. And I know that a prophet who had been in heaven for a while had grown so tall and so mighty that John, the newcomer, took him for Christ himself. Forgetting the things that are behind, let us press forward to the things that are before.

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My cousin and I were chums as small boys, but now we were having our first meeting in twenty-nine years. I told him about my family and my work in the intimate fashion becoming blood brothers. "Does your wife have a sense of humor?" my cousin inquired. "Oh, yes, she has that all right," I replied, "and she finds plenty in me at which to laugh." "You are lucky," said my cousin. "You should make it all right. Many people take the grind of life too seriously, and drive their associates to distraction and before it is over they usually break their own nerves or go mad. Burdened with trifles they come to their big cares weary and depleted in resources. Then there is tragedy. We should laugh away all the cares we can--there will still be enough left over which to pray and plan."

But surely you would not say God has a sense of humor? I do not know. But know that God made elephants and baboons, giraffes and monkeys, long-haired puppies and woolly worms, and I have heard that scientifically a frown involves seven times as much muscular action as a smile. I know also that Solomon said, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine; but a broken spirit drieth the bones." I understand this to mean that a good disposition helps the digestion, but a grouchy nature hurts the body down deeper than material remedies can go. Jesus commended the birds for being lighthearted, and Paul exhorted his converts to avoid anxious care.

But just as excessive food produces a glutton, I and excessive sleep a sluggard, so excessive humor leads to shallowness in both thought and feeling. The natural way is the right way. Rejoice with them that rejoice and weep with them that weep. Laugh some and weep some, but do not become either a clown or a grouch.

It is well enough that we should take our work seriously. Any worth while work demands that we give it attention--serious attention. It is a sin to be either idle or triflingly employed. After obtaining personal salvation, the next thing for any man to do is to find honorable employment by means of which to earn his daily bread. If his work is preeminently with things, it will be less straining on the nerves, and if God will permit, that is the kind of daily employment to prefer. If his work is with people, then there is sure to be strain and trouble. Dr. R. T. Williams says, "We have inconveniences with things, but have trouble only when personalities are involved." And especially if our work is to make men healthy, wise or good we shall be bound to take our task seriously.

But the big danger is when we come to taking ourselves seriously. When we come to feeling that I the world cannot well get on without us. When we come to feel that the good we are trying to do will go utterly by default if we do not live and carry it on, it is well to take yourself seriously, but not too seriously. You may be doing some good, but it would doubtless surprise you how well things would go on if you should drop out. Doubtless there is someone looking on right now who thinks he can do what you are doing better than you are doing it and perhaps he can if he gets a chance. But if you smash your nerves by over-anxiety or ruin your heart by excessive work, the poor fellow may have to either spend his time looking after you or use up his energies trying to husband the scattered fragments of the task you should have passed on to him intact. Yes, take yourself seriously, but not too seriously.

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The Martyr and the Fool

Stephen died a martyr; Abner died like a fool. They were alike in that both died; they differed in the cause and purpose for which they died. Stephen died because he was a faithful witness for Christ, and to save his life meant to deny his faith. Abner died the victim of credulity born of pride--he overestimated his value to other people and neglected the simplest precaution for self-preservation. And always men have been given to calling the martyr a fool and the fool a martyr --causes and purposes are subtle things.

Sometimes the martyr dies in a dungeon, unknown and unsung, while the fool's gibbet is on the public square where the multitudes can see him and sing his praises. Sometimes the martyr's death is by the slow process of physical or social starvation, so that observers give it out that he died of typhoid fever; while the fool's death is really moral and physical suicide which men mistake for courage and undeserved persecution.

Others may be unable to discern the difference, but I should know whether I am a martyr or a fool. I am persecuted: but is it really for righteousness' sake or is it only my own boomerang returning to my hand? I work too hard; but is this because I am truly zealous for Christ or is it because I have an exaggerated notion that I can do almost everything better than anyone else can do it, so I try to do ten men's work instead of putting ten men to work? I carry a heavy heart: but is this because I love the souls that Jesus died to save or is it that I make so many blunders in my attempts to live the Christian life that I have developed a morbid conscience through overmuch self-accusation? I am hurt by the treatment accorded me by the brethren; but is this because the brethren have mistreated or neglected me or is it because my bump of pride is so highly developed that I think men should honor me and show me favor beyond my real deserts?

We are now in a world where wheat and tares are mixed in the fields, and where strength and weakness are mixed in us all. Perhaps we are all part martyr and part fool. Or perhaps we are martyrs at times and fools at other times. Perhaps our cause is often worthy of a finer zeal than we show for it. And perhaps our zeal is sometimes worthy of a better cause than that to which we apply it. Take our conversation for example, sometimes we yield too readily when the truth is on our side, and sometimes we argue, when the conclusion does not matter. In the former case we keep our friends at the price of an injured conscience; in the latter instance we lose our friends just for the sake of a victory of words.

But perhaps there is nothing better than that we should seek to be more martyr and less fool. Or it may be we are martyr enough, and need principally to be less fool. Speaking again of words, I think the majority of us can remember more instances in which we over-talked for a poor cause than instances in which we were silent when our voice was demanded. Our words have been silver; our silences have been golden. We have been wisest when we have listened. Our passive virtues are our best.

The call is for a closer examination of our motives; for motives are the criteria of character. Material for this examination is not wanting, and if we really want to know, we can all find out without much delay whether we are martyrs or fools.

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72

The Mysteries of Providence

Tarbell remarks that the life paths of men follow strange courses over the face of the earth, and gives the examples of Joseph Jefferson and Franklin Swift in illustration. Jefferson was born in the great city of Philadelphia, traveled over every continent, and came at last to be buried in Sandwich, a tiny village on Cape Cod. Swift, on the other hand, was born in Sandwich, but went out beyond the far horizon to become the meat packer of metropolitan Chicago.

Yesterday the train was crowded; some were setting off on journeys, others were coming home on the same train. If each could be content to stay where he is, there would be no need for travel, and yet there would be just the same number of people in every place. But in every heart there is an urge to go; so men go, and then they come back so they can go again. The throngs go on without cessation. Whence? Why? Whither?

There are those who tell us to plan our lives, and then work our plans. The ambitious ask us to hitch our wagons to a star and then set out to reach the post to which our wagon is hitched. But none of us can ignore the fact that we often do not go where we started, and that we do not find what we expected when we get there. This is not the wail of disappointed ambition, but the interpretation of the providences of life. Jowett set out to be a lawyer, but became a preacher instead. Some of the best known missionaries did their life's work in another field than the one to which they first felt directed, and one of them changed his destination after he was already at sea. Chance meetings often frustrate marriage plans, and the average person will tell you that an apparently insignificant incident turned him east when he had planned to go west, and that the whole program of his life was altered by the injection of some unplanned factor. Ask the man of affairs what turned his mind and heart to the work in which he has wrought so nobly, and more often than not, he will begin by saying, "It so happened," and go on to tell you of something that seems almost detached from the question before you.

But do things just happen? Not if we mean by the word that they come with no intelligent direction. Things result, but they do not happen. How then shall one find his way around in a world and in a universe like this? It is really easier than it seems. There is only one thing to do. Just "fear God and keep His commandments." then all else that should come into your life will come. Sometimes it will come according to your desire, sometimes it will come according to your dread. Sometimes it will come according to your plans, and sometimes it will come in spite of your plans. But it will always come either by God's appointment or by His permission, and by the time it reaches you, it will fit into the program of your life in a manner that will work for your good. It is not necessary that you should immediately see and know the place the unexpected is to take, it is enough for you to know it will find its place. "If I live a holy life; shun the wrong and do the right, I know the Lord will make a way for me." Some men boast that they are internationalists, but the obedient child of God is a cosmopolite; for, being a child of God, he is at home anywhere in God's universe. And the pathways that seem to make a meaningless maze are intelligible and consistent, in that they all lead to Him.

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Why Do Not the Dead Come Back?

Plato may have made his case a little too strong when he suggested that thinking or speculation" is the highest work which it is possible for a man to do. But at any rate, it is impossible for one to avoid thinking, unless he is willing for his intellectual powers to atrophy. Sometimes our thoughts are comforting, sometimes they are tormenting. When loved ones slip away into the shadows, and we vainly wish they would come back to us, it is difficult to avoid asking, Why do they not come back to us and let us know what it is like? Is it a mark of their limitation that they do not come to us again? Is there intimation here that our vanished loved ones have just gone out like the flame of the candle?

But since we must think on such matters, it is better that we think thoughts that comfort than thoughts that torment. I was therefore thankful to have my attention called to the following illustration: Some larvae, it seems, held a conversation at the bottom of the pond, and in the conversation discussed why that from time to time members of their company that climbed up a water lily stem to the surface of the pond never returned to tell them what the world beyond is like. Finally the larvae made a solemn compact that the next one to disappear beyond the surface should return to tell his friends all about it. Then one of the chief spokesmen began to feel the urge to climb up the lily stem, and soon found himself on the pad above drying in the sun. Then a wonderful thing happened: he passed through a transformation, and found himself skimming over the surface of the pond as a beautiful dragon fly. As he looked down into the dark depths of the pond, it came over him that it was utterly impossible for him to ever penetrate those murky depths and make the larvae understand how glorious was the life in the world of sunshine above.

But if the transition in thought from larvae to men is too difficult for our thoughts to follow, let us think again with Nicodemus how utterly impossible it is for us to return to our prenatal world in which we formed eyes, when as yet there was nothing to see, ears when as yet there was nothing to hear, feet when as yet there were no paths to walk, and hands when as yet there was nothing to handle. But if we cannot go back to that world, even though we are advanced much beyond what we were in that world, need we be disturbed because our dead cannot come back or communicate with us? The limitations are on our side, not on theirs.

But really the answer to every question as to the present place and state of those whom we have "loved and lost a while," is, "Have faith in God"; for in such a faith there is ample explanation for every mystery, and adequate power for every projected result. He is able to perform all that He has promised, and if in our limitations we have pictured the state and position of our dear ones different from what is true regarding them, let us be assured that whatever is different from what we think is better than we think. And when the mists shall all clear away, we shall be astonished by what we see, but we shall not be disappointed!

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John Edward Bushnell speaks of "Magnitudes beyond the narrows" from the words of the Master in Luke 12: 50, "How am I straitened till it be accomplished." He says that the child must pass the narrows of the alphabet and the multiplication table and the copy book before he reaches the magnitudes of learning and mathematics and the author's sphere. In traversing the countryside, narrow gates must usually be passed before the wide fields are entered. But always the glory is in the magnitudes, not in the gates. If there is glory in the gates, it is just a reflection from the magnitudes beyond.

The gate of repentance with its "wormwood and gall" is a narrow gate, but beyond the gate are the expansive plains of pardon and peace. The gate of full consecration, likewise, is narrow, but beyond the gate lies Beulah Land. The gate of death is so narrow that one must pass through it alone. Even the closest friend cannot walk beside. But beyond the gate is heaven.

Everyone is restricted when the things he desires to do are prohibited or penalized. He alone is free whose desires do not exceed his privileges. Paul and Silas in the jail at Philippi were yet free because they did not desire to go anywhere besides; but the roamer of the seven seas is restricted if his happiness calls for more travel than the limits of time will allow.

The man who is scripturally "dead to the world" is the only one who is really free from the world; for desires for the world have a way of outrunning the realization of the things of the world, so that the worldling is a slave to the world, and the genuinely spiritual man is free from the world. The happiness of men is not to be judged by the abundance of the things they possess, but by their ability to live contentedly without the things the world has to offer. Therefore the poor man may be rich, and the rich man is often pressed with poverty.

No man is free to do as he pleases, but a genuine Christian is free to choose what he must take. He may not be able to obtain health by praying for it, but he may and does prefer sickness in the will of God to health and strength with grace withheld. The Spirit-filled Christian very definitely desires nothing but the will of God, and this he can find without limitation.

David rejoiced that God had brought him out into a "wealthy place" (some margins read "a wide place"). The language is that of a man who has passed the narrows and come out into a life in which he feels no restrictions. He wants only what he can have, and does not grieve for the things that are denied him. His desires have been chastened until they have become the slaves of holiness, and the man himself no longer chafes under discipline, for he delights to know and do the will of God. Such a Christian has room not only for life, but for life more abundant. The life of holiness is not the narrows--it is the life beyond the narrows. It is not the Jordan crossing, but the valleys of Eschol and the plains of Esdraelon and Sharon. It is not a perpetual search for the unpossessable, but the actual staking of a blessed inheritance.

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Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh

They presented unto him gift; gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Matthew 2:11).

The Wise Men from afar came to worship before the one whose name is Wonderful, and whose many-sided person and office no single term could describe. What gifts shall they bring? Well, He was a king, so they brought Him gold; He was a prophet, so they brought Him frankincense; He was a priest, so they brought Him myrrh. The gold spoke of His deity; the frankincense told of the beauty and holiness of His character and life; the myrrh testified of His coming death for the sins of men.

Like the Wise Men of old, we would come to worship before the Savior today. Let us bring our gold of unselfish love, our frankincense of heartfelt praise, and our myrrh of true contrition for sin. He has promised to abide with us, if we but love Him. The sacrifice of praise is comely to the upright. And God dwells in the high and holy place, and with him also who is of an humble and contrite heart.

Gold is an element--not an alloy. Nothing can add to its purity, and nothing can be subtracted from its essence. It is a gift of God. Love, likewise, must be "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us," if it is to be acceptable with God. All we can do is to will to possess this unmixed affection--it is God's to give. We can consecrate ourselves, but God must sanctify. We can present ourselves, but God must fill that it may be truly said, "Herein is our love made perfect."

Frankincense (frank means pure) is fragrant only when it burns. Cold it is odorless and useless. Love is like that. Our hearts must be enkindled with vital, holy passion for our beloved Lord. Love is indeed a principle; but it is an active, not a static principle. And whatever burns is itself consumed. Forney Hutchinson observed that it is said of John the Baptist that "He was a burning and a shining light," and he says, "He was shining because he was burning." Love never asks how little it can do, but strains at the leash of ability to do more than is required. Our giving, as the Master taught by the example of the widow who gave the two mites, is not to be judged by the amount we give, but by the amount we have left. Two mites was an insignificant sum, but it represented even the widow's food. Let us come and pour out the full measure of frankincense upon the altar of burning love that it may produce a sweet smelling odor in the nostrils of God.

Myrrh is bitter and pungent. As frankincense speaks of devotion to God, myrrh speaks of aversion to sin--that despicable thing which God hates. We hate sin in proportion as we love God. We especially hate it in our own breasts; for it is sin that drives God from us, and we want Him with us. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." For if I show consideration for His enemy, I am no friend to God. I therefore dismiss sin from my life and from my heart. I dismiss it summarily. I do not treat it with the slightest respect. In fact, I feel no respect for it. I love God so fully that I hate sin with a perfect hatred.

Let us come, then, to Christ today. Let us bring to Him a love that is gold for purity, frankincense for hot, moving passion, and myrrh for hatred for that which is evil. And let us worship and bow down before Him who is King, Prophet, Priest, our Savior and Lord!

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Detached By-products

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Matthew 6: 33).

Recently I listened to a speech by a noted educator on the subject "Education for what?" The speaker was evidently very learned, and said many very good things. His vocabulary sparkled with such words as civilization, democracy, and free institutions. He plainly sought to approach something behind or beneath the ideas suggested by these words, but he was not fully successful. The fault, I concluded, was not so much within the speaker himself as in his listeners. At least in the listeners as they appealed to him. He hesitated to quote from the Bible, lest his listeners should not be familiar with the Book or else be unwilling to give it full credence as a source. When the speech was analyzed it amounted to a plea for the recognition of the value of the individual, and a proper appraisal of that kingdom which has its throne in the individual heart. I really liked the address, but longed to have its concepts placed in more clear-cut language. I wished he might have cried, "Ye must be born again!" I longed to hear him recommend prayer and implicit faith in God and the verities of the Christian religion.

But the case is typical. Men want the fruit of Christianity without cultivating the tree of personal piety. They want a workable democracy without troubling to attend to the New Testament plan for making men morally capable of self-direction. They want free institutions without demanding of themselves and others the foundation in personal holiness. They want civilization such as results from deep and widespread revivals of old-time religion without bending to the price such revivals demand of those who promote them or become immediate partakers of their benefits.

Wherever men in considerable numbers are cursed by physical poverty it is not chargeable to want of natural resources, but to the absence of proper motives. Men will not give attention to the production of natural bread until they have first become partakers of the Bread of Life. Wherever men are cursed with ignorance it is not because there is nothing worth learning, but it is because they have not yet found the source of wisdom in God himself. Spiritual enlightenment always precedes intellectual enlightenment. Men seek for the secrets of nature when they have first been introduced to nature's God.

Even in national affairs ideals are father to laws and to institutions. The greatest element in national defense is the consciousness that we have something worth defending. It helps when men, especially the leaders of men, can see that the individual, and not the masses, is the hope.

Mere forms and appearances will not do. A national day of prayer and fasting is helpful only as individuals seek God with hearts filled with genuine contrition. Christ crowned within the individual heart is the beginning of the kingdom that shall outlive all other kingdoms.

I may not be able to give an intelligent answer when you ask me, "What is the matter with the world and what can be done about it?" But when you ask, "Is thy heart right with God?" I can give answer, and if the answer is not good, I can do something to make it good. And if there is ever a good home it must be composed of good members. If there is ever a good church it must be composed of good members. If there is ever a good state it must be composed of good citizens. If there is ever a good and peaceable world it must be composed of good and peaceable men. Christianity is the tree, all other good things are the fruit. Good men are the product, good institutions and good things are the by-products. And the by-products cannot be detached without losing both their meaning and their existence.

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THE END