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**TWENTY-FIVE SUNDAY MORNINGS  
WITH SAMUEL CHADWICK**

Selected and Arranged by  
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Samuel Chadwick used to write out one of his Sunday sermons for distribution during the following week. Twenty-five of these have been chosen as examples of his preaching, covering a wide range of subjects. Their sharp staccato sentences illustrate his effective style.

Originally preached at the opening of the century, the freshness and power of these eternal messages still speaks to the heart, with a Gospel centering in the unchanging Christ and His uplifted Cross.

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## FOREWORD

It was Samuel Chadwick's custom on a Monday morning to write out one of his Sunday sermons. This was used for leaflet distribution by his workers at the Leeds Wesleyan Mission. On the outer cover of each leaflet was a picture of the famous Oxford Place Chapel, where he ministered so mightily from 1894-1907. These sermons have never been published and now, out of three hundred, we have chosen a small selection in the hope that a generation too young to know 'Chadwick of Leeds' may yet benefit by his challenging ministry.

These are not 'sermonettes' (how S.C. would have hated the word). On the other hand, they do not represent his preaching in all its fullness, as those who used to hear him can well realize. They do, however, gather up the essential keynotes of his message. The limitation of space only adds to the intensity of style. In sharp machine-gun like sentences he ministers the truth. Something of the pungency and the power of his evangelical ministry can be felt as one reads. Fifty years have not robbed these messages of their aptness or their effectiveness. We therefore send them forth with the hope and prayer that they may inspire in others something of the faith that some of us knew and loved in Samuel Chadwick.

D. W. Lambert  
Lebanon College,  
Berwick-upon-Tweed.

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1  
BEHIND AND BEFORE

"The Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rearward." Isaiah 52:12.

An honest review of life is not a pleasant exercise. To look in cold blood at our past may be wholesome, but it is calculated rather to humble than to flatter. Our follies, our blunders, our defeats, and our sins have a woeful preponderance. The might-have-beens abound everywhere. It is a record mostly of misery and mischief, failure and folly, disappointment and shame. A startling contrast to our lofty ideals and confident hopes! Our sword that was going to pierce many giants has twisted and broken in the assault. The difficulties that were going to be our opportunity are still our problem instead of our pedestal. A little experience soon stops our boyish swagger, and chastens our confidence. The future! Well, we are not so sure of it as we were. We step into it not knowing what things will befall us. What surprises, reverses, trials, may await us we cannot tell. We know not what an hour may bring forth. Where may we look for security amid such uncertainty? Where can we find confidence to tread a path so enveloped in darkness, and where every ambush may conceal a deadly foe? This is our confidence: "The Lord will go before you." This is our defense: "The God of Israel shall be your rearward."

A Man's Path Is Beset With Peril

There are perils that come up from behind. The deadliest foes are those that attack us in the rear. Man never gets away from his past. It has become part of himself. There is no escape; we cannot flee from ourselves; a man's present comes up from behind him; his yesterdays greet him on the threshold of every new day.

The mistakes of the past pursue us. That we meant no harm makes no difference, for nature punishes blunders as though they were crimes. Fire burns whether it be kindled by accident or of malice. The innocent blunder of a moment may wreck the chances of a lifetime. One act of folly will dog a man to the end of his days. And who has not blundered? Who has not stood aghast at the remembrance of senseless and stupid mistakes! Few men know how often the wise man calls himself a fool. And every blunder of today sends forward an enemy to imperil the life of tomorrow. We go through life chased by foes bred of our own blunders and indiscretions.

The sins of the past are on our track. If sheer mistakes survive and pursue us, we may be sure our sin will find us out. There is no greater delusion than to imagine that sin can be committed, covered up, forgotten, and done with. Sin breeds; and its progeny slays the transgressor. An evil deed once done can never be undone, and in it there may lurk an enemy that years after will rise up and strike its deadly weapon in your back. Sin lives in the memory, in the body, in the soul, and worst of all in the lives and souls of others. Neither remorse nor repentance can undo the horrid thing once done. What hordes of foul fiends dog our steps! All the way is crowded with malignant and vicious enemies that seek to destroy us. And they are mostly, if not all, our own creation. They are the offspring of our folly, our sin, our shame. If they reach us, any one of them is strong enough to drag us back to slavery and death. Who can deliver us from this avenging host at our heels?

There are perils ahead as well as behind. Happily no man can see far ahead. If we could foresee all that a single day might bring, it would drive us mad. A merciful hand veils our eyes. And yet this very uncertainty is our peril. The way is strange, the crossroads are many and we shall undoubtedly be lost unless some One be our guide. Behind, innumerable hosts pursue us. Before, unknown trials await us.

#### The Good Man's Path Is Beset With God

He is in the rear to protect, and in the van to guide. "Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid Thine hand upon me."

God stands between us and our past. To forgive its sin; to cut off our retreat; to defend against its assaults; and to make our enemies His slaves. Jesus Christ stands between the sinner and his sin. The Avenger's sword has been thrust into His bosom. His blood covers my sin. We may leave the past with Him. Every pursuer must get past Him before he can reach me. But the rearguard cuts off our retreat as well as defends the rear. There are laggards and deserters in every army. There is always a tendency to slip back. But the rearguard is between us and the old life. With a sharp command or a cheery promise He will urge us forward in the march. He defends the rear. Our worst enemies are at our backs, where we are most helpless. We have neither eyes nor hands behind. A brave man never fears an open foe. But a slanderous coward and a slouching sneak who can fight? The devil always strikes from behind. The yelling rabble of the pit follow in hot pursuit. But God is at the rear. He is behind the last man. The feeblest and sickliest are safe, for He is keeping guard. Be not afraid. Trouble not one whit about the cunning and lying adversaries at your back. Keep straight on. Let thine eyelids look straight before thee, God watches behind. The forces of Hell as well as the hosts of Heaven are under His control. Even

your past wrong-doing He will make the minister of good. Leave all your past with Him who defends us at the rear.

He goes before us in all the way of the future. We don't know the way, but He does: every inch of it. He prepared it, appointed it, and has trodden it. That is enough. I don't know where I am going but I know I am going with Him. What more can I want? There may be uncertainty about the way, but there is no uncertainty in Him. The way is His. He is with me. I am content. I have neither to find my way nor make it. I follow Him.

God is behind but He never turns back. He goes before and the whole host moves forward. Thus led and thus protected we shall neither stray nor fail. We shall arrive. God's Canaan shall surely crown the pilgrimage of years.

\* \* \* \* \*

2

## THE VISION OF GOD

"Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." St. Matthew 5:8

Sight is the most vivid of all our senses. We are all conscious of the difference it makes to our realization if we have seen for ourselves. We may know much of people and places without having seen them. We may hear much of persons, study them, and even become their disciples and champions, and yet not have seen them. Faith and love may be given to those whom we have not seen. The mind builds up a definite personality and has its own conceptions of the unseen, but one moment of vision will often give a truer impression than years of meditation. When once a leader or an author has been seen, there is a new interest and a new consciousness. For a year I was deeply interested in Evan Roberts, the Welsh Evangelist. I followed his movements, studied his words, watched his ways, but a day spent with him did more than a year's interest. The sight of the man gave me a new conception, and supplied a key to his work and experience. It is the same with places and events. With the aid of photography, stereoscopes, or the cinematograph, we can bring the ends of the earth to our feet, but however familiar we may have become with a place by such means, there is a new sense of realization when we stand and look at an Alpine peak or the deep blue of an Italian lake. We hear or read of some thrilling event and our hearts are stirred, but it is another thing to have been there and seen it.

### The Vision Of The Soul

Sight in religion makes exactly the same difference as it does in other things. It gives a new sense of certainty, and a more vivid consciousness of spiritual things. Jesus Christ declared that no man hath seen God at any time. When Moses prayed that he might see the Divine glory, Jehovah replied, 'Thou can't not see my face: for man shall not see me and live.' God is a Spirit; invisible and intangible. And yet men are commanded to seek His face that they may live. All through the history of the world men have been seeing God. They have found Him in nature and in history, discerned Him in those to whom they have ministered and for whom they have suffered, and have communed with Him in the exercise of worship and prayer. In these words of Christ there is the

promise of vision; not merely proofs and signs of His presence, or communications from Him, but the open vision of God. The promise is not future but present. Stephen and Paul, Peter and John beheld His glory, and so may we. It is only through Jesus that we can come to the Father, but He undertakes to reveal Him to those who come to Him. He makes atonement for sin, and restores men to God.

### The Eyes Of The Heart

Soul-vision in religion is not common. There are many believers who have never seen God. They have no vision. They have heard His Gospel, and believed to the saving of their souls; they follow but do not see. Many Christians are like the blind man whom the Lord healed twice. Most of His miracles were immediate and complete, but this blind man needed a second touch. When He had spit on his eyes and laid His hands upon him, He asked him, 'Seest thou aught?' And he looked up, and said, I see men; for I behold them as trees walking. He could see, but the vision was blurred, uncertain, and dim. His sight had to be supplemented by reason. He could see something; they looked like trees but they were walking, and trees don't walk; so he concluded they must be men. We are like that. We have light and sight for our feet, but we cannot behold the glory of the heavens or discern clearly the things around us. We need the second touch that we may see all things clearly. That sight comes only with purity of heart. The pure in heart see God.

Things invisible can only be seen with the eyes of the heart. You may take a man to see a great picture or a great landscape, and though he sees with the natural eye he may be blind indeed. The loveliest sunset I have ever seen was in the isle of Skye. When I turned to my companion he was standing with head uncovered, his face radiant, and with tears in his eyes; yet a few yards away was a party playing cards, unconscious of the glory in which they sat. It takes a poet to understand poetry, and an artist to appreciate art. If a man would understand truth, he must himself be true. If we would see the God that dwelleth in light, we must be pure in heart.

### Not A Dungeon But A Temple

Can a man's heart be made clean? This is the only beatitude that is known only to God. None but God can judge the heart. A face may be a mask, and the holiest exercises a cloak. God knows the heart. He looks at the hidden motives of which no man can judge. Every man who comes to the light discovers himself, and knows whether his motive is pure. Definitions of purity are not necessary. It is a question of light and sight, rather than of definition and doctrine. Some Christians do not believe the heart can be cleansed. The extent of their prayer is that they may have power over sin, that they may keep it under, watch over it, thrust it out of sight, control it. Jesus did not come to give men power over sin; He came to cleanse them from it. He never meant the heart to become a dungeon where the devil could be kept in chains; He came to make it a temple filled with the presence and glory of God.

### The Effect Of The Vision

The immediate effect of seeing God is a new vision of sin which overwhelms the soul. Moses saw Him, and discovered that he also was a leper. Isaiah saw Him, and cried, Woe is me, for I am undone. Job saw Him, and was silenced abhorring himself in dust and ashes. Paul saw

Him, and was broken and blind before Him. John saw Him, and fell at His feet as one dead. No man has loose views of sin who has seen God, neither is any man proud of spirit or hard of heart who has beheld His glory.

The permanent result of vision is a new joy in fellowship, and a new power in prayer. There is a new sense of communion with God. The soul abides in the secret place where God is seen. Blessed! What blessedness can be like it? For to behold Him, and to dwell in His presence is the Heaven of heaven. There we shall see Him and be like Him, but here and now, with the heart cleansed and the life adjusted in all things to His will, we may see Him, and, by grace, find the glory of Heaven begun in our souls.

\* \* \* \* \*

3

### THE STRONGHOLD OF TRUST

'They that know Thy Name will put their trust in Thee.' Psalm 9:10

God has never asked but one thing of a man since the world began; and that is, THAT HE SHOULD TRUST HIM. He does not ask that man should understand Him, or explain Him, or vindicate Him, or anything else but this, that he shall have confidence in his Maker. Man's duty to God is summed up in this: Have faith in God. In this single demand, God asks only what is in every man's power, and a simple quality that is demanded in every sphere of life. But in it He asks that which it is most difficult to give, and most precious to possess.

Faith lies at the foundation of all our life. Every man lives by faith. The human race holds together by a huge system of mutual trust. We take our journeys on trust. We trust the clerks, porters, drivers, guards, signalmen, engineers, and a whole host of other people we have never seen, every time we enter a railway train. If we waited till we had proved that there was neither conspiracy, treachery, nor fatal flaw in the whole system, we should never start. We never take a meal without great demands being made upon our faith. We do not know but what somebody may have poisoned our food. We eat in faith. At every turn and in every act we are called upon to trust.

#### We Know Because We Trust

Even our knowledge rests upon faith. There is no knowledge without trust. Before we can learn we have to trust our teachers. We must accept from them what we have no power to prove. And when we have come to the full strength of our reasoning powers, we find that all knowledge rests upon certain fundamental truths which no man can prove. The assumption of Science and Philosophy are quite as great as the beliefs of religion. The things most assured begin by demanding our faith. The foundation of things demonstrated is in things not proven. Faith is the key to knowledge.

All our activities proceed upon a basis of faith. Commercial life could not live for an hour apart from trust. Destroy confidence, and trade is impossible. We buy and sell by faith. And who can tell how large a part trust plays in our domestic and social life! All friendships are held by



trust. Every home is built upon trust. Where there is no trust there is no home. Suspicion, jealousy, distrust, these things turn homes into places of agony and torment. Hell is a place where there is no faith. That is the secret of its despair.

If the universal demand of life be for faith, need we be surprised if faith is the first requisite in religion. The Creed begins with: I Believe! Its condition of salvation is Believe! The sum of its demands rightly interpreted is Believe! Without faith it is impossible to please God. But without faith it is impossible to do anything.

But if faith is the key to knowledge, knowledge is essential to faith. This paradox is not a contradiction. There is no knowledge without faith, and there is no faith without knowledge. Faith is an intelligent grace, not an ignorant assumption. Ignorant trust is superstition. Credulity is a very different thing from confidence. Devout ignorance is as disastrous as willful wickedness.

All trust is personal. We do not trust things, we trust people. The confidence we place in things is due to the testimony of people we trust. Here again trust is essential to knowledge, and knowledge essential to trust. The only way to find out the trustworthy is by trusting. Trust for its continuance depends upon knowledge.

#### We Trust Because We Know

The stronghold of a good man's trust is in what he knows of God. Without faith we can never know Him, and only they that know Him can trust Him. It is the same paradox we have found everywhere else. Only they that trust Him can come to the knowledge of Him, and they that have come to that knowledge put their trust in Him. The battle of life is always fiercest in its assault upon our trust. All the forces, both of diplomacy and attack, are turned upon this one point. The devil slanders God. Unbelief denies what He has affirmed. And often appearances are on the side of the devil and doubt. Life seems strangely at variance with the Divine promise. Calamity and catastrophe seem in startling contradiction to assurances of Divine government. The cruel might of wrong, and the helpless sufferings of the weak, deny the existence of righteous Omnipotence. The ironies of Providence look more like the cruel sport of devils than the direction of wisdom and love. And through it all God neither argues nor explains, but simply bids us trust. And the good man trusts God.

The certainties of the Divine character are the warrant for his faith. Having committed his life to the Lord, he knows that all his days are in the keeping of God, his Father and Lord. When he cannot understand, he keeps silence, because it is the Lord's doing. He knows if He did it, it must be right. A righteous God cannot do wrong. An all-wise God cannot err. An all-loving God can only act in love. Knowing this, he trusts Him. His faith so triumphs that even in the darkness he sings, and amid the wreckage of his earthly life he exclaims: The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the Name of the Lord. We trust because we know.

Who and what is the God we trust? Search out His Names. He is the Most High; The Unchanging, Eternal, Righteous King. The accessible God of Mercy, ever ready to hear the cry of the needy. The Almighty God and all-loving Father. This is our God. And they that have trusted Him have never been put to shame. When faith is cornered, it falls back upon the Divine character,

and answers the assaults of doubt with the fact that God is God, and God is Love. 'I know Him whom I have believed.' Knowing Him we cannot doubt. In every time of anguish and trial we trust and are not afraid. There is nothing so precious, and there is nothing so mighty as trust. How we love to be trusted! To neither God nor man is there anything more precious. To us it brings Salvation, Power, and Eternal Peace. God is trustworthy. Let us trust Him always and in all.

\* \* \* \* \*

4

## THE PROPHET'S TOWER

'I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me.' Habakkuk 2:1.

Habakkuk is the skeptic among the prophets. His prophecy opens with a passionate remonstrance with God. The times in which he lived were sadly out of joint. He looked for God and found chaos; for righteousness and found confusion. Western Asia was being swept by Chaldean armies. Judah was helpless. Prayer availed nothing. The prophet's heart was sore. He had hoped, believed, and declared that God would come with swift and miraculous power to overthrow their enemies and deliver His people. He cried unto the Lord, and there was no sign of His appearing. The enemy marched forward unhindered, invincible. Then he shook his fist at the Almighty, and demanded an explanation. The facts he faced made him a skeptic; for skeptic and prophet are both seers. They both faced facts. The difference is that one finds his way to a tower, and the other does not. One beholds the confusion, and the other rises above it. They both gaze sorrowfully upon the scene of dust, disaster, and din, but the prophet gazes till he sees through it; and he discerns the eternal realities beyond the temporary confusion. That is how prophets are made. It was in the year King Uzziah died that Isaiah saw the Lord, and it was in the broken heart of love betrayed that Hosea found the secret of God's yearning for sinners.

How Long? And Why?

The prophet's problem is summed up in questions that are with us still. How long? Why? Wherefore? How long shall I cry, and Thou wilt not hear? Why dost Thou show me iniquity, and cause me to look on perverseness? Wherefore lookest Thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest Thy peace, when the wicked swalloweth up the man that is more righteous than he? How long shall the oppressed and afflicted appeal in vain? Why are the righteous so helpless against the forces of iniquity? How is it that Heaven's prospering blessing seems so often to be given to the wrong people? When Carlyle and Froude discussed the affairs of the world, Froude remarked that God did not seem to interfere much in the affairs of men, and that he could only believe in a God who did something. To this Carlyle grunted, 'He does nothing.'

Stand! Watch! Wait!

Salvation comes to the man who has a tower. There is no solution in the thick of the confusion. The seer must get above the crowd. He cannot keep his feet in the seething mass of a shouting, screaming, blaspheming multitude. He must ascend. Like his Lord, he must be high and

lifted up. He must be detached if he would understand. Only by getting above the scene can he truly see. In the tower he finds standing-ground for his feet, and control of himself. No voice is without signification, but when they are all heard at once the signification is lost. He must get away from the clamor, that he may give God a chance. With deliberation he must set himself to stand, watch and wait. He climbs that he may see.

Serenity must not be secured by shutting the eyes and hardening the heart. They are false prophets who cry peace when there is no peace. The tower is a point of vantage from which the anomalies and tragedies, that stagger the faith of man, can be seen more clearly and felt more keenly. His vision gains in comprehensiveness and perspective. History in fragments makes God a liar, but the broad sweep of centuries witness to His power. Eternity rebukes our impatience, and teaches us the secret of tranquil faith. God reigns. He may be invisible, but He is not indifferent. The lesson of history is that the just live, and right ultimately prevails. Things puffed up may loom large, but they do not last. Through all the confusion and contradictions God works to plan. He has His appointed time. It will not fail, neither will it be late. Though it tarry, wait for it, for it will surely come. In the tower men learn that the just must triumph, and right -- not might -- prevail.

### The Wrong Telephone

The weakness of modern life is that it has no tower. We have many politicians, but no prophet. When Lord Rosebery was Prime Minister he made a speech in which he said all a statesman could do was to keep his ear to the telephone of public opinion and carry its wishes into law. That explains much. The most colossal failures in modern politics are due to the fact that the men had no tower. They put their ear to the wrong telephone.

The Church suffers from the same cause. Ecclesiastics wrangle over property and privilege. The Church is in the thick of the world's activities. There never was so much perspiring haste to hurry up the Kingdom of Heaven. We have no time for towers. The drains are bad, and the devil is everywhere; so the Church hustles and jostles with the rest. Prayer is abandoned. Our fathers imagined Satan was to be conquered with weapons not carnal, but we are a practical generation and we find it handier to fight the world with its own weapons. To the tower all ye fuming, perspiring, fussy unbelievers who bear the name of Christ! Take your stand upon the eternal realities, look out upon the history of the world, wait to see what God will speak. There you will learn the secret of God's eternity, and receive of His quietness and strength. The tower makes the prophet. It is the place of vision, the place of wisdom, the place of power, and the place of song.

\* \* \* \* \*

'Say not ye, There are yet four months, then cometh the harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, for they are white already unto harvest.' -- John 4:35

Jesus seemed to be always correcting the estimates and calculations of men. He worked out His problems by a different system of arithmetic from that of the marketplace. According to His method of reckoning two farthings were a bigger sum than much gold, and worldly wisdom was the maddest folly. He carried a different measuring-line from other people, and by it He corrected men's theology and judged men's lives. He put His 'I say' against the Law of Moses, the teaching of the scribes, and the standards of the world. Two things manifest in His corrections are Inwardness and Immediateness. Things manifest are symbols of deeper realities. In such common things as Water and Bread, Law and Lineage, Life and Death, He saw spiritual truths of which these things were but the outward and visible sign. Their calculations as to time He declared to be all wrong. They misjudged signs, and worked out their arithmetic on a false basis. Things they thought remote He declared to be near, and things they believed were imminent and urgent He ignored. When they calculated there were yet four months to harvest, He declared it to be already overdue. There was always a note of immediateness in His speech. Concerning the kingdom, He startled them by saying that some who heard Him should in no wise taste of death till they had seen the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom. The fields are not green, but white. The date -- not four months hence, but now.

### The False Basis

Unbelief works on a false basis. It judges by appearance, and is influenced by bulk. Arithmetic is its strong point. Its schedules are marvels of statistical information. Every adversary is not only counted, but measured and weighed. The giants parade in the greatness of their strength, and the chariots are terrible enough to strike terror into the soul. The devil knows the value of parade. Men forget the unseen, and in their fear leave God out of their reckoning. We are unduly influenced by surface appearance. Jesus warns us to 'Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment'. Laths can be painted to look like steel. Giants are not as strong as they look, and certainly their bulk makes them all the easier to hit. Sin is great at fiction. It can make tinsel look like gold, and to the flimsiest material it can give the appearance of strength; but it is childish to be deceived by mere glamour and din. A wise man will not underestimate the resources of his adversary, but neither will he overlook the hosts that march in the mountain of the Lord.

### Miscalculations Of Unbelief

Working upon a false basis is sure to issue in a false judgment. Things so reckoned get a fictitious strength and a wrong perspective. Men conclude that great changes must take place before they can accomplish their desire. Only by slow processes can we reasonably expect to prevail against evil, and they calculate the months and years. Jesus rebukes our calculations with the note of immediateness. Things that seem remote are already ripe. We misjudge the things of the Kingdom when we reason according to the things that are seen. People who seem to be farthest from the Kingdom of God are often at its very door. Communities that seem most hopeless are often ripest for the Gospel. Reforms that seem most remote are often nearest at hand. The Lord can do great things suddenly, and His word is always TODAY. But a little while ago those who have labored for years to free the British nation from the reproach of its opium traffic were greatly discouraged. Members of His Majesty's Government gave them no hope. The revenue of India was more sacred than the honor of Britain or the souls of China. While they were calculating the months China spoke, and what seemed a generation away suddenly appeared at the door.

## The Compromises Of Unbelief

Miscalculation blinds men to the signs of the times. They cannot see the present opportunity or hear its urgent call. Unbelief concludes evil to be invincible, and seeks to manage what it cannot destroy. There are Christian men who seem to believe that the devil is too much for Jesus Christ. They do not believe he can be cast out, and so they seek to make the best terms with him they can. Regarding evil as necessary, they seek to control and regulate it so as to minimize its resultant mischief. The message of Christ is that no evil is necessary, neither is any stronghold of the devil invincible. Compromise appeals mightily to men because it has the air of breadth and statesmanship. It has the appearance of sanity, moderation, and reasonableness, but it is the policy of defeat and despair. We are told that the drink curse in this land can never be uprooted. It is too firmly established in our national life, too strongly entrenched in our social custom, too thoroughly organized to be cast out for generations to come. Even religious newspapers and Christian preachers denounce prohibition as a dream, and the Direct Veto as a fad. So it has always been. It was thus they spoke of slavery and of every evil that has cursed the earth. When men regard evil as inevitable, they have forgotten their arithmetic and are working with the devil's multiplication table. While they calculate the resources of the enemy, they forget the Lord is at hand.

\* \* \* \* \*

## 6 SIGHING FOR WINGS

'O that I had wings.' Psalm 5:56

There are seven kinds of sighing in the human heart, and the first is

### The Sigh Of Discontent

There is an element in man that despises the things it has for the things it has not. So long as a thing is out of reach it seems to be the only thing worth having. But as soon as it lies in the lap its charm vanishes and we sigh for something else. Satisfaction is always supposed to be in the unreach. If we only had the wings then we are sure we should be at rest. If we only had something we have not, we should for ever be content. Some sigh for wealth. Others sigh for gifts. Others sigh for power. If only our lot were different, if we only had \_\_\_\_\_, then we should be happy. So sighs discontent. In the winter it sighs for summer, and in the summer wishes it were winter. In the valley it longs for breezing heights and on the mountain tops it shivers and sighs for the sheltered nooks of the earth. No place is right, nothing is right to the discontented.

Discontent is envious. It covets other men's money, other men's gifts, other men's power, other men's lot. It is so eager to possess that it has not, that it fails to appreciate what it has. Discontented people are never grateful. Instead of sighing for wings, be thankful you have hands and feet. Instead of groaning over what you have not turn what you have to the best account. Your disadvantages may be turned to advantage. Both your safety and your chance may be in the very limitations you mourn.

## The Sigh Of Regret

Discontent sighs for what it cannot have, regret sighs for what it has been. It sighs for lost chances. Solomon says, 'Time and chance happeneth to all.' But how carelessly we let time slip, and how thoughtlessly we throw chances away. Then when it is too late we realize their value and sigh over their loss. A suicide who lay down on the metals and waited for the train to pass over him left a letter saying he died friendless, penniless, hopeless and an outcast; AND IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN SO DIFFERENT! How many sigh over what might have been! But once gone no regrets can bring them back. Opportunities once lost are lost for ever. Regret sighs over lost possessions. They had once what they now have not. Esau had his birthright and sold it. Saul had the kingdom and lost it. The man in 1 Kings 20:39 had a distinguished prisoner and lost him. Oh that I had! Can you not hear the sigh of Esau, the moan of Saul, and the wail of the man who lost his captive, every day of our lives. And some sigh over the loss of the greatest of all possessions, the pearl of great price. Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me. When Saul lost his kingdom he sought a witch, when the young man lost his axe he sought a prophet of the Lord. The witch mocked the royal deceiver, the prophet restored that which was lost.

## The Sigh Of Disappointment

Wings bring no rest. What we have wanted does not bring what we expected. We sigh and say, we had hoped, but! but! but! The apples of Sodom turn to ashes between the teeth. Longing turns to loathing. Lust dwells hard by hate. It is said of some, 'God gave them their request but sent leanness in their soul.' The coveted possession brought leanness. How many reach the goal of their ambition and say, 'Would to God we had been content and dwelt on the other side of Jordan.' Wealth may bring misery more bitter than poverty. Gifts may mean heartache, heart-wounds and tears. Covet no man's lot. Envy no man's possessions. All is not gold that glitters. A big house may be full of ghosts, and soft beds do not always bring sleep.

## The Sigh Of Discouragement

This is the good man's snare. Elijah sat down under a juniper tree and sighed for death. Jeremiah longed for a lodging-place for travelers in the wilderness that he might leave his people and be freed from the terrible strain of caring for men's souls. They sighed for wings. The good man has many discouragements, but his sighs usually come from ill-health and overwrought nerves. God did not give His servants the wings for which they sighed. He sent them for a month's holiday and rest instead. That is better than wings. Let good people have faith in God and take care of their health. Then like our Master we shall neither fail nor be discouraged. We shall sing, not sigh.

## The Sigh Of Sorrow

This is the sigh of grief over loss, grief over affliction, grief over sin. Jacob sighed much, but he sighed over wrong things and at the wrong places. When he thought, he wept. But if men thought sooner they would weep less. Jacob wept over Joseph and Benjamin instead of over Judah and Rueben. He sighed over things that he declared were all working against him when all the time they were working for him. God declares that in the very place of sighing, when we know, we shall sing our loudest song. We sigh over sorrow, God sighs over sin. Oh that thou hadst

hearkened! Oh that thou hadst known! This is the sigh of God. And they that are like Him sigh with Him. The mark of God's man is that he sighs and cries over sin. He sorrows with God.

### The Sigh Of Jesus

Twice we are told that Jesus sighed. When He healed the man who was deaf and dumb, and when the Pharisees came tempting Him; once over the unused and the other over the misused faculties of human life.

### The Sigh Of God

That is man's last sigh. It is the sigh of relief. In Him sorrow and sighing flee away. It is in His wings there is rest. To the soul that rests there is neither grief over loss nor grief for the unreached. He is careful for nothing. He has learned the secret of contentment. The soul hungers for God. The heart cries out for the living God. There is no rest but in Him. Cease sighing for wings and come to Jesus. Satisfaction is not in circumstance, happiness is not condition, rest is not indolence. You are sighing for the mirage which recedes as you pursue and only mocks and maddens your thirst. God is the giver of living water, heart-peace and soul rest. 'Come unto me... I will give you rest.'

\* \* \* \* \*

7

### THE GRACE OF FORGETTING

'One thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' Philippians 3:13-14

We need grace to forget. We are often exhorted to remembrance and warned against the snare of forgetting, but it is as important we should forget as that we should remember. A tenacious memory has been the undoing of many a student, and the remembrance of things that ought to be forgotten has brought paralysis and despair to many a soul. Joseph thanked God that He had made him forget, and the Apostle Paul speaks of forgetting as a condition of progress. Preachers manifest great anxiety lest the Apostle should be misunderstood, and exhaust themselves in warning us against what he did not mean. Of course, there is a sense in which no man can ever forget his past, nor is it desirable he should. As the years of our pilgrimage increase, we dwell with grateful recollection upon the wonders and mercies of the way. We delight to recall the days of God's right hand, and to tell of all His grace and power. Such remembrance strengthens faith, and kindles the fire of God in the soul. But memory does not always inspire. Sometimes it fastens on to the wrong things. The past may be so remembered as to paralyze the present and imperil the future. We may brood over its failures and losses till the spirit within us droops and dies. There are saints of God who go mourning all their days in the remembrance of past sin and folly. There is neither strength nor joy in their souls, because they lack the grace to forget.

### God Forgets

There is no grudging remembrance of the sin He forgives. 'I, even I, am He that BLOTTETH OUT thy transgressions for Mine own sake; and I will not remember thy sins.' To the sinner who turns to God He gives the assurance that 'none of his sins that he hath committed shall be remembered against him'. So completely does He forgive that He casts all our sins into the depths of the sea. Nothing could be more absolute. If He blots out, why should we be careful to remember? An old river bargeman used to quote Micah whenever he gave his experience: "'Into the depth of the sea"! Think of it? The devil has often offered me his dredging tackle to see if I couldn't fish them up again, but I always decline them with thanks.' The Lord threw them in. Let us be content to let them lie. It is pitiable to see some people's morbid distress over their past. God has forgiven them, but they think they are somehow honoring God by mournful recollection. Do not brood and mourn -- forget and sing. He forgets -- why should we recall? If we believe in the forgiveness of sins, let us not torture our souls with useless and needless gloom. Forget the things which are behind. Leave sin where He has placed it -- under the blood of the Cross.

### Fruitless Regrets

In every life there are serious losses. When the opportunity has been missed we discover its value. Much of our wisdom arrives too late. Our track may be traced by the milk we spill. The loss ought to steady the hand and discipline the mind, but in some people it only gets on the nerves. If they had only discerned more truly and acted more wisely, how different life would have been! They sit down and fret over what might have been, unconscious that all the while other opportunities are slipping by. Forget past chances, and bend your back to the one at your feet. The inspiration has gone out of some hearts because they could not forget. Some sore trial swooped suddenly upon them, and they have never rallied. Bereavement often leaves the soul stunned.. The memory haunts the graveyard, seeking the living among the dead. We do not honor our dead by such remembrance, and we greatly dishonor God. Hankering after things irrevocable unfits for present duty and is an end of all progress. Joseph thanked God that He had made him forget not only his toil, but also his father's house. Of course, he never forgot his home, but it ceased to hold him captive. The bride should not be always wanting to go home, and husbands should not be always wanting their mothers. There should be a limit to home-sickness. Life should be so filled with present duty and noble purpose that its attraction should be in the future, not in the past.

### Forget The Triumphs

Our successes may be so remembered as to be a greater peril than our failures. Every triumph ought to inspire a new hope, but sometimes success calls a halt. It creates a standard to which we are content to work. A great achievement may be our undoing,. if we do not forget. We had better burn what satisfies us, or we shall never get beyond it. The best is always ahead. We are saved by hope. We are lost when we have to look behind us for the best that is in us. The moment we have a reputation to live up to we are undone. Forget the things which are behind. Forget the years with their record of folly and failure, in the grace of God's forgetting. Forget the missed opportunity and the lost prosperity, in the sense of God's wisdom and love. Forget every past success in the inspiration of a greater hope. Keep a broad back to the past, and a full face to the appointed goal. Let us shake off all slackness and repining, and gird ourselves for the things that remain. It is a good thing when by grace we forget.



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8

## THE OPEN WINDOW

'And when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; (now his windows were open in his chamber toward Jerusalem;) and kneeled on his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.' Daniel 6:10.

Every crisis is a revelation. It discovers hidden flaws and demonstrates the resources of strength. The railway accident on the twenty-seventh anniversary of the terrible Tay Bridge disaster recalls the awful night when the express train fell from the broken bridge into the river beneath. The Board of Trade inquiry ended in the statement that the bridge had been badly designed, badly constructed, badly maintained. The storm discovered the bad workmanship, and tore it in pieces. It was built for fair weather, and did not reckon for storms of such violence. Every man's work is similarly tried. The storms of life try every man's foundations, and the fires of judgment will try every man's work. Wind and tempest, fire and flood, show no mercy. The wise man tests himself in view of the testing he cannot control. Stocktaking is a process of overhauling. Principles and methods, administration and organization, are closely scrutinized to test the soundness of the whole. Self-examination may not be a pleasant occupation, but it ensures safety in the stress of trial that must sooner or later overtake us all.

### Prosperity And Prayer

The objection is often raised against godliness that it handicaps a man's success. Men say they cannot be Christians and do their business. The keenness of modern competition compels them to adopt methods which are not straight. They must either do as others do or go to the wall. This statement is in flat contradiction to the teaching of Scripture. Daniel's prosperity is attributed to his spiritual fidelity, and the Apostle Paul declares godliness to be profitable for the life that now is, as well as for that which is to come. The qualities developed by godliness are the very qualities that make for success in business. A simple conception of duty, a steadfast adherence to principle, and a diligent fidelity to method, are essential to the cultivation of godliness, and by these things men prosper. The man who retires regularly for prayer three times a day is not the sort of man to fail, however great the odds against him.

To discover the secret of Daniel's prosperity we have to go back through many chapters of his life. Heroes may be discovered in an hour, but they are long in the making. The secret is in the early choice of God and truth and a brave stand in matters of comparatively small importance. He sat at the king's table a mere youth and a captive, but he had the courage for conscience' sake to refuse the king's meat. There was no rude defiance, but with courtly dignity he firmly declined to defile his body or disobey his conscience. Bluster is not necessary to conscientiousness. We may be civil, but we must always be firm. That is where the battle begins. Not with giants and lions, but with ourselves. Self-mastery is the first condition of a victorious life. The occasion may seem trifling; a glass of wine at the table, a hand at cards with personal friends, an informal dance at a party, but the issues may be momentous. It determines whether self-indulgence and custom, or

self-mastery and conscience are to be the rule of life. Daniel would never have faced the lions if he had not refused the wine.

### An Open Window

He kept an open window in his soul. A window lets in the light of heaven, and gives an outlook to the skies. He lived in the light, and judged all things by the light. The Almighty was his teacher and Lord. Protestants who avowed their faith in God's Name came to be called 'By God's'. From their nickname we get our word 'bigot'. Daniel swore by the God of Heaven and earth. To the open window he brought all his life, and prayed unto God for guidance. Three times a day he rehearsed his duties in the light of God's countenance. He was a busy man burdened with great responsibilities but, at the beginning, middle, and close of each day, he found time to pray. No wonder he became great. His soul dwelt in the infinite spaciousness of the eternal. Through the open window there came the light, which illumined his mind with wisdom and filled his heart with peace. For want of it, many of us grope in darkness and languish in sickness and gloom. The soul needs light and air, if it is to be strong and triumph.

### The Saint Under Trial

Religion is tested in the day of adversity. If it fails when calamity overtakes us it is useless. The crisis tries all things. In one hour a man may reap the harvest of a life-time. There is no time to reverse, remedy, or repair when flood and fire overtake us. Everything depends then upon the way we have lived and worked. How did Daniel act under trial? 'When he knew,' What then? He was a Jew with the cunning of Jacob in his blood, but he did not meet the crafty with craftiness. He had great influence with the king, but he did not seek his presence. There is a serenity and dignity about the man that is majestic. He went home, and happy is the man whose home is a harbor of peace in the day of trouble. He went to his open window, and kneeling down prayed and gave thanks as aforetime. He had nothing to alter. We should probably have closed the window and drawn the blinds, but there are times when attitude involves principle. Martyrs gave their lives rather than bow a knee or cast a few grains of incense on an altar. Duty lies in a straight line, and the man of God turns neither to the right hand nor to the left.

True religion has its roots in principles that are simple and eternal. The man of God has faith in the Divine ownership and government of the world. He has an inward witness and the light of the Word of God. He lives in communion with God at the open window and practices his religion in his daily business, and leaves the issue with God. Daniel's God delivered him, but if the lions had eaten him it would still have been well. John the Baptist lost his head, but what of that? The soul with an open window towards heaven would rather die than sin. Such death is the way through the window to the throne.

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9

THINGS! THINGS! THINGS!

'A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth.' Luke 12:15.

I have ceased to wonder that Jesus Christ was crucified. For many years it was impossible to imagine how men could so misunderstand and hate Him. But a fuller understanding of His teaching and wider knowledge of the world have led me to the conclusion that there is only one end to a ministry like His -- and that is a Cross. There are woes enough in these two chapters to account for all that happened. He unmasked iniquity where it was least suspected; and attacked the vices of the wealthy and powerful in terms of liquid fire; He shocked and angered the most religious people of his time; called them 'whited sepulchers', and defied their traditions; He hurled woe upon woe in all directions. His own friends understood Him but little better than His enemies. He talked of His Kingdom, but rebuked their determination to make Him King. He denounced sin in terrible terms, but would not let them call down fire from heaven. He preached righteousness and justice; poured scorching scorn upon hypocrisy and oppression, but when actual cases were brought to Him He declined to interfere or even to pronounce judgment. He condemned wrong, but refused to take sides. Here is one of many cases that might be cited. A man, perhaps a follower, has been wronged by his brother, and appeals to this preacher of righteousness to secure him his rights. Instead, He rebukes the petitioner, and asks, Who made Me a judge or a divider over you? Disappointment was inevitable. To preach sternly and then refuse the responsibility of practical application to particular cases always brings provocation.

The explanation of His attitude is plain enough now. He came to establish a world-wide spiritual kingdom. He laid down principles that are universal, not precepts which were local. He sought to correct the dispositions of men rather than to secure their rights. He would destroy wrong, not by direct attacks upon vice, but by saving the sinner. That is His method. A new world through a renewed humanity. So here, instead of interfering in the quarrel, He reads the motive behind the appeal, and warns against covetousness. He detects the undue eagerness to gain possessions, and corrects the false estimate of the things of this world. And in so doing incidentally states one of the profoundest truths concerning the true philosophy of life. 'A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth.'

### The World's Estimate Of Things

To the world things are everything. It longs for them, works for them, fights for them, lies for them, lives for them. Its one ambition is to possess abundance of things. To secure them it will pay any price, endure any hardship, suffer any obloquy, sacrifice any thing. Its homage and its envy are reserved for those who have the most things. It never troubles about how they got them, nor what they do with them, it is enough that they have won for themselves piles of things! The cry of the world is for things, things, things; always more things. This is a purely pagan view of life. After these things do the heathen seek. Pagan philosophy is based upon the supposed supremacy of things. Heathen religions find their heaven in the abundance of things. And, alas, most of us are pure pagan. We live for the things. We toil and strive for the possession of things. Our only idea of heaven is a place where we shall have undreamed abundance of glorified things. We call ourselves Christian, but our lives are heathen.

### Christ's Teaching Concerning Things

He declares that true life does not depend upon things at all. Indeed the only way into life is by the renunciation of things. We must forsake them, sacrifice them, die to them if we would live. Not only He, but all the world's greatest have proved that life is not measured by the possession of the world's things. The greatest of all had not where to lay His head. Things are an encumbrance to the man who would rise.

They cannot secure for their possessors the best even of this life. Even here the best things cannot be bought with money. Wealth can give much. Solomon says, 'it answereth all things'. But its limitations are as marked as its power. It can give you doctors, but not health; a good table, but not appetite; houses, but not homes; followers, but not friends; envy, but not love. An abundance of things becomes a useless burden. You can only use a few of them, the rest are a care and a snare. You may have many carriages, but you cannot ride in all of them at once. You may have many houses, but you can only live in one at a time. You may have many courses, but you can only eat till you are full. Wealth consists not in the abundance of things. For the greatest needs of life they are utterly useless. They cannot even ensure existence, let alone life. And it should never be forgotten that the world can only be secured at the cost of the man himself. He who wins the world loses his soul. To live for things is to die to all that is spiritual and divine.

Life is being, not having. It is what a man is, not what he has that really matters. What you have will perish, what you are abides for ever. Seek not things. They perish, they corrupt, they pass away. SEEK TO BE, To be manly, honest, brave and good. 'Seek first the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you.' Seek God first, always first. In Him only is the true life.

\* \* \* \* \*

10

## THE LOVE OF MONEY

'For the love of money is the root of all evil.' 1 Timothy 6:10.

Money is a defense and answereth all things, but the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. It is necessary that we may provide things honest in the sight of all men, and a man never knows its value till he finds himself penniless. In a civilized community it seems as if there were nothing money could not buy. The world's treasures and its prizes yield to the touch of gold. It opens up a world of beauty and wonder. By it men can travel and become the possessors of luxury, comfort, and beauty. It can command the best skill and the costliest treasures. Money is power. Men see that gold is mighty, and they desire earnestly to possess it. They toil and scheme, sacrificing all things that they may get wealth. And yet its limitations are as marked as its power. Life's best things cannot be bought with gold. It can give the best dinner, but it cannot buy an appetite. It provides the best doctors, but it cannot secure health; and often it seems as if the more money men have, the more doctors they need. It can buy servants and company, but love is not at the command of gold. The rich man in the parable clothed gorgeously, fed sumptuously, lived daintily, and had a big funeral; but when he died he lifted up his eyes in hell. Money cannot bring heaven into a man's life in this world, neither can it secure an entrance into Heaven when he comes

to the next. There are no pockets in shrouds. We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

### A Root Evil

The Epistle to the Hebrews links impurity and covetousness as the root sins of humanity. Between them, they may be said to cover the whole ground of wickedness and vice. They are the world and the flesh through which the devil does his work. Even Christians need to be warned against these deadly sins, for the sanctified may turn to fornication, and the consecrated may yield to the love of money. Covetousness is idolatry. Money rivals God. Men turn away from Him, that they may become rich, because they believe that money will do more for them than God ever can. It is a root evil. It lies at the root of oppression and injustice, and makes men indifferent to suffering and wrong. Men keep slaves, sell drink, gamble, and traffic in the blood of men because there is money in these things. Nothing blinds the eye and hardens the heart like love of money. Brewers and publicans come to look upon the damnable results of their wicked traffic without pity. Slave-holders on the Congo rake their dividends complacently, and smile at the cruelties and abominations of brutality by which their wealth is made. Men sell one another for money, and lovers of the bag barter their souls, their salvation, and their God for thirty pieces of silver.

### A Universal Peril

Its influence is not limited to men of the world. In the Church, the love of money binds men who have escaped the coarser sins of the flesh. Among the children of God it fosters pride, restrains beneficence, kills enthusiasm, and robs God. It is the only sin that the New Testament calls idolatry, and there is no sin that so effectually turns the heart from God. If Christian people were free from the love of money, and as stewards faithful to the instructions of Scripture, what evils and hindrances would be swept out of the Church! There would be an end of Bazaars, Vanity Fairs, and screaming appeals for money to carry on the work of God. The Revival will come when in God's way we bring His whole tithes into His treasury.

### Poor As Well As Rich

The love of money may be as great a snare to the poor as to the rich; perhaps greater. Covetousness is not for things we have so much as for things we want, and the poor know the want of money as the rich never can. In poverty, the love of money manifests itself in discontent, envy of others, and distrust for the future. To them is the preciousness of faith preached. Apostolic counsels do not find favor with socialistic demagogues, but they are full of wisdom. Have faith in God, and be anxious for nothing; be grateful, and neither envious nor covetous; share what you have with those needier than yourself; and though poor in the things of this world, you shall be rich towards God. The Lord is thy helper, and He hath said, 'I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee.' Jesus Christ calls that man a fool who lives to make money. He becomes its slave instead of its master, seeks to satisfy his soul with gold instead of bread, sells true riches for glittering tinsel, barter God and Heaven, salvation and peace, for things that perish, and when he dies, leaves the gold that has damned him to be a curse to those of his own household. 'Be ye free from the love of money.' Consecrate it to God, and with it He will pave the New Jerusalem. The right place for gold is not in the heart, nor in the fist, but under the feet.

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11

## THE WAY OUT

'Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of all their distresses.' Psalm 107:6,13,19,38

This Psalm is a sort of Old Testament Love-Feast. In the first three verses the redeemed are exhorted to speak out their experience of the goodness of God. In response four representative testimonies are given. Travelers who had lost their way tell how they were found and led to a city of habitation; captives who had been delivered from their dungeons, tell the story of their deliverance; sick ones who had been brought back from the gates of death speak to the praise of their Healer; and others who had been in peril on the sea declare the wonders of the Lord upon the great deep. These typical experiences represent the various phases of Israel's history, but they also typify human experience which stretches beyond the limits of any nation. The closing stanzas of the Psalm sum up the teaching of experience concerning the mercy and goodness of Divine Providence.

### Many Ways In

There are many ways into trouble. All the people in this Psalm got in by different ways. And the different ways led to different sorts of trouble.

The first lot got lost. They strayed in the wilderness and wandered about not knowing where they were nor where they were going. They could find no place of habitation. Their food and water were exhausted, a prey to every kind of peril they sank in faintness and despair on the desert. Then they cried unto the Lord and He came to their help. They got into trouble through inexperience. They needed a guide. But inexperience in its self-confidence is apt to despise the counsels of the wise. They got into trouble not so much through wickedness as silliness and vanity. They are senseless rather than vicious.

The second came into trouble through their rebellion against the word of God. They held God in contempt, refused to submit to His dominion, or to take heed to His counsel. Asserting their liberty they came into bondage. Rejecting the authority of God they became the slaves of the Devil.

The third class is spoken of as fools. In the Scriptures this term is used not of mental deficiency so much as moral perversity. According to Old Testament method sickness is attributed to moral delinquency, a doctrine that is considerably modified in the New. All sin is folly. And a life of sin ruins health. Even if the body escape transgression it brings sickness to the soul. The appetite fails, strength ebbs out till the sick one lies in feebleness at the gate of death.

The fourth came into trouble in the course of duty. Only one calamity out of the four is 'the act of God.' He commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind. Most of our trouble is of our own making. It is due often to our ignorance and vanity, sometimes to our downright badness, and not

infrequently to our moral perversity. But trouble comes to the best as well as the worst. It meets us not only in the way of sin but in the path of duty. The folly of inexperience leads to wandering and hunger. Rebellion is the way to the dungeon with its darkness and chains. Wrong-heartedness brings the soul to the gates of death. Calamity soon finds the end of our wits. How helpless we are in trouble! Lost! Captive! Sick! Storm-tossed! What can we do?

### Only One Way Out

There are many ways into trouble but there is only one way out. They could not deliver themselves, they cried unto the Lord. If they had consulted the Lord sooner most of them would never have needed to cry. It is good to cry when lost, but it is better to seek guidance at the start. It is good to cry when we are in darkness and bondage but it is better to walk in the light. It is good to cry at the gates of death but it is better to live in abundance of life. It is good to cry when we are at our wits' end but if we prayed in fine weather we should be calm in the storm. Herein is the mercy of God made manifest that He bids us call on Him in the day of trouble. He makes no exceptions. Need, not merit, is our passport to God. He does not stop to inquire how you got into trouble. As the mother hastens to the cry of her child so God comes to the help of the soul. If you are in trouble, Cry! No matter how you got in, Cry! It is your only chance. If you are lost, Cry! If you are in bondage, Cry! If you are sick unto death, Cry! If you are in peril, Cry! No man can cry from the wrong place this side of Hell. No man ever cried unto God in vain.

### The Lord Our Deliverer

When there is none to help, the Lord is our helper. What resources of wisdom and power He has for delivering the distressed. With what promptness He comes to our aid. He comes to the lost and leads them by a straight way to shelter, comfort, and home. He breaks the bands of the captive and in the open light of day sets him free. He sends forth His healing word and brings back the sick from the margin of the grave. He comes to the storm-tossed and gives them calm for tempest, safety for peril, progress for struggling, and gladness for fear. He delivered them all out of all their distresses. He did not simply relieve them. He delivers, and His deliverance is complete. He satisfies as well as saves. Whom He makes free is free indeed. There is no clanking chain to remind the escaped of their captivity. When He heals He makes perfectly whole. When He rebukes the storm there is perfect peace.

Through the Psalm there runs an exhortation to the delivered. They are to tell of their deliverance. If God has helped, the redeemed of the Lord are to say so. Tell it to others. God also is to be praised. How easily we forget past perils in present comfort and safety. O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness! Praise is to be accompanied with the sacrifice of thanksgiving. Offer some gracious gift of gratitude to His Name. Having been delivered be grateful and glad. Let no terror cast its shadow upon the soul. Delivered people should rejoice. Exalt the Deliverer. Speak well of His Name.

If not in trouble, KEEP OUT. If in trouble, GET OUT. If you have got out, Praise the Lord.

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'John did no miracle; but all things that John spake of this man were true.' St. John 10:41.

This was the testimony of John's own disciples. Jesus had come into the district where John the Baptist had exercised his wonderful ministry, and presumably where many of his followers lived. When they saw and heard Jesus they were struck with the difference in the two ministries. It almost seems as if they admitted the superiority of Jesus with some reluctance, as if such admission were a reflection upon their dead leader. The confession is balanced with an assertion. He wrought no miracle but his witness was true to the minutest detail.

#### The Absence Of Miracle Is A Remarkable Feature Of John's Ministry

He had in him all the elements of the miraculous and yet he wrought no miracle. There were miracles at his birth. His father was a priest, and as he was ministering in the Temple an angel announced the coming of a son who should be a mighty man of God, who should go before the Lord's anointed in the spirit and power of Elijah. The priest asked for a sign by which he might know these things were true, and in response he was dumb until the prophecy was fulfilled. Unto the mother also there came a vision of angels. Both parents were of godly character and filled with the Holy Ghost. Their child was dedicated to God from his birth. He is one of the few people in the Bible who were christened before they were born; a privilege specially preserved for those who were specially set apart for God. The ministry of John was epoch-making in its character. It marked an epoch not only in Israel but in the history of the world. He was the reincarnation of Elijah the great wonder-worker of the Old Testament; he was full of the Holy Spirit who is the Source of power; he was the Herald of the coming King and yet he wrought no miracle. The sick were all around him but he healed none of them. Blind people, deaf people, dumb people were there, but no healing hand was stretched forth to open their prison doors. He preached mightily, and wrought wonders, but he did no miracle.

#### Not Miracles But Truth

He was not a miracle-worker but he was a true prophet. After he was dead, men testified to the words he had spoken. To be a true witness bespeaks great moral and spiritual qualities. Meaningless repetition of empty platitudes may be cheap and easy. Parrots can repeat and children can prattle, but to be a discoverer, interpreter, and faithful witness of truth demands great qualities of the soul. Truth can only be discerned by the true. To proclaim it in the face of the world requires unflinching fearlessness; and to preach it with power demands greatness of the highest kind. Christ's testimony concerning John places him above all the heroes and prophets of Old Testament times. He was no weakling shaken with every breeze; no time-server clothed in soft raiment; he was a prophet and more than a prophet, the greatest man the world at that time had ever seen. His preaching awakened a nation and turned sinners unto righteousness. He had understanding of the times, discovered the Christ, and prepared the way of the Lord. He wrought no miracle, but he did more than work miracles, for he achieved the miraculous along the plane of natural powers,

#### The Clamor For Miracles



The people still clamor for signs. The craze for the miraculous is as great in the twentieth century as in the first. Culture and civilization do not destroy it. Christian Science wins its disciples among the educated and rich. Faith-healing is not common among the poor. People clutch eagerly at whatever bears a semblance of the supernatural. The Welsh Revival created a world-wide impression because men were compelled to acknowledge that no human agency could account for it. Notorious conversions are paraded in the church because they manifest divine power in a sudden and startling form. When men seek the baptism of power it is often that they may be able to work miracles and startle the world. They seek the gift of the spirit rather than the fruit, whereas the fruit is greater than the gifts. All men filled with the Spirit do not work miracles, but every Spirit-filled man may live the miraculous life. The power of the Spirit is first for living and then for work, and life is more than service. There are diversities of gifts and these He divides severally as He will, but His grace and power for goodness He gives to all. A true character is better than a big whistle.

### Miracles Not First

Miracles are but signs, and therefore cannot be other than secondary. Signs are of necessity temporary and outward symbols of eternal and inward realities. Truth is greater than mere strength. The reality signified must be greater than its sign. Being is better than doing and character ranks higher than work. A woman who sought the gift of tongues got her tongue cured, and what she got was the greater gift. We cannot all work wonders, but we can all be true. The secondary value of miracles is confirmed by Jesus Christ. When the seventy returned exultant over the power to work miracles He said, 'Howbeit in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rejoice that your names are written in Heaven.' St. Paul says, 'If I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but have not love I am nothing.' We all know that great deeds are discredited if the character be not true. It is a greater thing to do the will of God than to work any number of miracles. Many will plead in the last day that they have done many mighty works, but to that plea Heaven's door never opens. In an age of hustle and sensationalism it is well to remember that truth stands first and stands fast. Its verification is sure to come and the harvest of a true and faithful life cannot fail. We may die, but truth lives. The fruit of our goodness may not come while we live; we may work no miracle, but if we live in the power of the Spirit we shall not live in vain.

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13

### PRAYER IN TIGHT PLACES

'And Asa cried unto the Lord his God, and said, Lord it is nothing with Thee to help, whether with many or with them that have no power; help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on Thee, and in Thy Name we go against this multitude. O Lord, Thou art our God; let not man prevail against Thee.' 2 Chronicles 14:11.

The King was in a tight place. He had done that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God, and the Lord gave him rest on every side. The days of peace were devoted to cleansing and strengthening the land. They removed all traces of idolatry, restored the religious

life of the land, and prospered exceedingly. All went well for years, and then suddenly their Ethiopian enemies marched against them. There had been no backsliding, no change of policy, no provocation, and yet in a moment the whole aspect of Providence was changed. Humanly speaking, defeat was inevitable. The enemies were two to one, and their fighting strength beyond comparison. Asa was in great straits. In the emergency for which he was not responsible and from which he could not escape, he betook himself to prayer. In times of emergency our wants are soon told. The prayer comes out in broken fragments of speech without regard to grammar or rhetoric. The enemy is at the gate. The need is urgent and definite. We are helpless but not hopeless, for in God there is infinite wisdom and power. It is a day of trouble, but God told us to call upon Him and he will deliver us.

### God Never In Straits

Prayer in times of emergency falls back on the power of God. His resources are not measured by anything we can do. It is nothing with Him to help with many or with them that have no power. In military science, able generalship, numbers, and all that counts in the armies of the world, the case of Asa was hopeless. But God counts. If He fight for us He is more than all that can be against us. At the Red Sea, at Jericho, and in many a great baffle, God had done great things for Israel, and Asa hemmed in on every side appealed to God. Nor did he appeal in vain. The Lord fought for Israel that day, and Israel triumphed over Zerah and his Ethiopian host. There are Christian soldiers whose success has been a mystery to military experts. General Havelock, in India, used to succeed where by all the rules of war success was impossible. In the American Civil War a General exclaimed to his staff, 'We have got them now, and they know it. God Almighty Himself cannot save them!' 'Yes,' responded his colleagues, 'We are sure of them now.' So they were by all human reckoning. It happened, however, that the Commander on the other side was a praying man who that morning was appealing to his God for deliverance, and somehow the close of the day found him offering thanksgiving to God for victory; while the General who defied God Almighty to defeat him was fleeing for his life. Yes, God counts. He is never in a tight place. The mountains of the Lord are full of horsemen and chariots. All the resources of the Infinite are at his service whose prayer God hears. Prayer attempts the impossible, because it commands the supernatural.

### We Have No Power

The poverty of our resources is no hindrance to God. We have no power, but in Him there is everlasting strength. In us there is no wisdom, but He giveth liberally the wisdom from above. We have no resources, but the heaven and the earth are His. We have no wealth, but the silver and gold and all the treasure of the earth belong to Him. It is when we realize our need that we pray and prevail. So long as we think we can manage without God we do not trouble to cry unto Him. That is why the answer is sometimes delayed. The trial gathers intensity as the crisis deepens. The need gets desperate, and prayer becomes fervent. All other help is cut off, and the soul is flung back upon God. Our moment of extremity becomes God's opportunity, and He appears glorious in holiness, doing wonders. Whitefield said in one crisis of his life: "'I have thrown myself blindfold into His Almighty arms.'" Though our resources seem ridiculously inadequate they must not be withheld. God often works by what we have. The widow had to use her little oil and meal, and the lad had to give up his five barley cakes and two small fishes. Weapons that are useless in our

hands become mighty in His. Methods are nothing apart from inspiration, and the most faulty tools are better with Him than the most approved without Him.

### We Rely On Thee

The reliance was not new. Faith is not born in a panic. It is the people who pray in fine weather who know how to pray in a storm. People who only pray when they are at their wits' end do not pray like this. This is no mere desire to be got out of an awkward situation. The battle is not Asa's, but God's. There is a profound oneness of interest. His work is theirs, and their honor is His. 'In Thy Name we are come.' We are inadequate, but we have come. We may be of no importance, but we are at Thy disposal. Such as we are, we are Thine; save and deliver us, O Lord. Our failure will be Thy failure. 'Let not man prevail against Thee.' In all prevailing prayer there is concern not for the petitioner so much as for the glory of God. 'What wilt Thou do for Thy great Name?' is the final appeal. Desperation is better than despair. When all the odds are against us we can still rely on the power, goodness, and fidelity of God. A godly mother asked her wayward son where he was going as he took up his cap to go out. 'To Hell,' was the heartless reply. He slammed the door behind him, and went out into the darkness. The mother went upstairs, and flung herself into the arms of God, weeping bitter tears for her son. He went to the public house, but as he put his hand on the door something arrested him and he could not go in. The same thing occurred at three public houses in succession. His conscience was awake. He sought out a meeting and gave his heart to God. The mother's tears were turned to joy. Cast your burden upon the Lord. Call upon Him in the day of trouble. He is able to deliver.

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14

### THE ROD OF GOD

'And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek; tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.' Exodus 17:9.

This was Israel's first battle. They had been brought out of Egypt with a strong hand. Their own arm did not save them, but the right hand of God delivered them. When Pharaoh pursued them the Lord fought for them. The command at the red sea was, 'Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will work for you today.... The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.' Now the command is, 'Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek.' Then they were sheep under the protection of the Shepherd, now they are warriors led forth to battle.

Amalek did not come by accident. The children of Israel had become petulant and fretful. They were tired of the marching and delay. They had been promised milk and honey, and had got a wilderness. Egypt had at any rate leeks and onions and plenty of water. If they had been cruelly driven they were decently fed. So they grumbled at everything, their mercies included. It is useless to argue with peevishness, so the Lord sent Amalek to stop their whining. Petted people are always apt to become critical and petulant. Nothing corrects theology like adversity. Persecution is a tonic that takes the fretfulness and pettiness out of life. We need the Amalekite! A common enemy is the

healer of inward strife. In face of common peril men forgive one another, close their ranks, pray together and fight side by side. Joshua girded on his armor and Moses ascended the hill with the rod of God in his hand, for the Amalekite was at the gate.

### The Wonderful Rod

The staff of Moses was first called the rod of God in Exodus 4:20. Until then it had been his own. With it he had shepherded the flock of Jethro. It had been an ordinary shepherd's crook, and suddenly it became the emblem of Divine authority and the medium of Divine power. That which he had carried daily in his hand became a sacramental sign and an instrument of the most High God. We never know the possibilities of the things in our hands till we lay them at the feet of God. Kept from Him they remain commonplace, consecrated to Him they are charged with omnipotence. Five barley loaves in the hands of a lad are but a meal for one; placed in the hands of God they feed a multitude. What is that in thine hand? A rod; a common stick a homely crook! Cast it on the ground at His feet, and it will become a thing of life and power. Take it again at His bidding, and the common thing will be the very rod of God in thine hand.

God trusts men with His rod. They speak His words and wield His power. In His name they command His forces and smite His enemies. It is the rod of God's strength in the hands of a man that explains His power. It is not by the gifts and native resources of men that the exploits of faith are achieved. The excellency of the power is of God. Not by might, not by power, not by wisdom, not by organization, but by the Spirit of God is the work of God accomplished.

### In The Hands Of Moses

It is not given to every man to carry the rod of God. For one man with the rod, there are thousands carry the sword. It was not given to Joshua or any of the elders of Israel. Only Moses could be trusted with the rod. By great sacrifice, prolonged meditation, vision, and consecration, he had been prepared to become God's deputy to Israel. He carried the rod because he was to Egypt and to Israel the spokesman and representative of God. 'Thou shalt be to him as God. And thou shalt take in thine hand this rod, wherewith thou shalt do the signs.' The power was not in the rod apart from the man. It was the power of God, and to use it unworthily was a sin so grievous that it cost Moses the prize of his life; but its power depended on the moral and spiritual conditions of the man. In the hands of officious Gehazi the prophet's staff wrought no miracle. The rod that healed and saved in the hands of Moses was broken in pieces by Hezekiah, for it had become Nehushtan -- a bit of old brass fit only for the scrapheap. The rod of power may become a sign of death. The scepter is a bauble when there is no king. Many a man's rod has become a stick. Creeds that have ceased to be the expression of faith, and methods that have lost their power, are dead relics of a living past. Like Saul they have lost their kingdom, but they still keep up the appearance of power.

### The Rod And The Sword

Moses went into the Mount carrying the rod, and Joshua led forth the troops to battle. There were thousands in the field but only three in the mount. The place of prayer had only an attendance of three, and they were all over eighty years old. Of the three only one really prayed, but the others

were necessary, for he could not have prevailed alone. It is nothing new that the prayer meeting is small, and that it is left mostly to the old and infirm. Prayer is too hard work to be popular. It is not said that the hands of Joshua grew tired with fighting. He could thrust and cut and hack all day; but the hands of Moses grew heavy in prayer. Men still faint in prayer, for it is harder than the toil of battle. When Jesus prayed He sweat as if it were great drops of blood. Intercession left William Bramwell exhausted and prostrate. Men who prevail in the mount know what the Apostle meant by labor in prayer. Mock the old men who may, they are the elect of God and the saviors of the world. The intercession of the rod in the hands of the old men was mightier than ten thousand swords.

### It Was The Rod That Won The Battle

Neither the church nor the world believes it, but the issues of the day are with them that pray. Work must not be divorced from prayer, and prayer must be backed up with earnest toil. By hard fighting and hard praying the victory is sure. Moses took the rod because he had proved it to be the rod of God. It had conquered Pharaoh, delivered Israel, divided the river, and wrought wonders in his hand. Like David with the sword that had hacked off Goliath's head he said: Give me that; there is none like it. Others may object to its age, shape, and style, but we have proved it. Let us be careful, lest in exchanging the old for the new we exchange the rod of God for a fancy stick. Many are finding fault with the religion of the Bible and the Cross, but in them is the power of God by which hell is conquered and sinners saved. There is none like it, neither is there salvation in any other.

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15

### CHRIST'S GIFTS FOR MEN

'When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.' Ephesians 4:8

The Psalm from which this passage is quoted celebrates Jehovah's entry into Zion. The Ark of the Lord has been captured from the Jebusites and brought with rejoicing to its place on the Holy Hill. In the song of conquest David's victory is celebrated as a day of the Lord. Jehovah, as represented by the symbol of His presence, returns in triumph, and the rejoicings of the people are put into the lips of the conquering Lord. The victory is not David's but God's. Without any sense of incongruity they attribute emotions like unto their own to their Lord. He is represented as having mourned in exile, and as rejoicing over the conquest that has made possible His return. He has desired it, and here will He dwell for ever. In the procession are captives and trophies, and as the king takes his place upon the throne he receives the gifts of the conquered peoples in token of their allegiance. With regal bounty these are given to the faithful warriors who have accompanied their king through fire and sword, and in the hour of triumph even the rebellious share the bounty and the honors. St. Paul's adaptation of the passage is significant. The ascension of Jesus is represented as a triumphant return. In the train of His triumphs are the spoils of war, but instead of receiving gifts He gave them. There is no mention of the receiving, but He did receive and what He received He gave. The end in both cases is the same. In the Old Testament the dwelling-place of Jehovah Was

established; in the New Testament it is that the Temple not made with hands may be filled with the presence and glory of God.

### The Conqueror's Return

Captives imply warfare and an ascension implies a previous descent. With whom had the conquering Lord been in conflict, and what were the depths from which He arose? He came to seek and to save that which was lost, but recovery involved more than search. The lost have fallen into the hands of an enemy who was fully armed and prepared to hold them with all his might. Before sinners could be redeemed the power of Satan must be broken. He came therefore to destroy the works of the devil and to deliver us out of the power of darkness. Jesus came to meet man's foe and to emancipate him from a life of bondage. He was at war with the devil, of whom He did not hesitate to speak as the prince of this world. Satan had wrested man's scepter and acquired some sort of dominion over him. He is the prince of darkness, and had power in the region of death. It was no empty boast of the devil when He offered Jesus the kingdoms of the world in exchange for His worship. Whatever the explanation of Satan's power may be there can be no doubt that Jesus regarded His mission as one of personal conflict with the Arch-ruler in the kingdom of evil. The duel in the wilderness was typical of the antagonism that was maintained to the end. Demons raged in His presence, and hell assailed Him in fury. He attacked the powers of sin in the temple and in the grave, and conquered all hostile forces. His foes were destroyed in their own strongholds. He spoiled captivity by becoming a captive, and by dying He brought to nought him that had the power of death. He led captivity captive, and 'having spoiled principalities and powers He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them.' In the world, in the grave, and in the underworld He had fought and conquered. He returns with garments crimson with blood, but they are stains of glory, and He marches in the greatness of his strength with His captives in chains and having conquered and annexed all their dominions. No wonder Heaven welcomed Him and angels received Him up into glory.

### The Conqueror's Gifts

The conqueror received gifts and honors, The Father 'made Him to sit at His right hand in the Heavenly places, far above all rule and authority, and power and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things.' What He received He gave. That is the eternal principle of love. He never keeps anything for Himself. Having given Himself He freely gives all He has. When He said to His disciples, 'Freely ye have received, freely give,' He was only urging upon them His own invariable rule. This is the method of salvation.

### What Are The Gifts Of Christ?

He conquered for the race and through Him the race is delivered from the dominion of darkness and death. There is one gift that includes all other benefits of His passion and that is the gift of the Holy Ghost. Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath poured forth this! The Holy Ghost is God's topmost gift to His Son, and the Son has given Him to the world for which He died. In the Spirit dwells the eternal fullness of wisdom, love, and power. With Him comes the gift of salvation, for Jesus is

exalted a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins. Conversion, sanctification, illumination, assurance, and power all come to us in the gift of the Spirit.

To the church He gives Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Where does He get them? They are given to Him and He gives them again. What He receives in consecration He returns for service. But what a change there is between the receiving and the giving! He receives Pharisees, and gives apostles: He accepts prize-fighters, and turns them into evangelists: He welcomes Magdalenes possessed of seven devils, and transforms them into saints of God and channels of blessing. Swearing Simon became the Apostle Peter, and Saul breathing out threatenings and slaughter, became the messenger of life and peace. This miracle of grace has never ceased throughout the ages. The spoils of war become the gifts of peace. Every new captive goes forth to preach liberty, and to open prison doors to them that are bound.

Gifts cannot be forced. They are offered, but they may not be thrust upon us. We are at liberty to accept, and we are free to decline. They cannot be earned or bought. We must accept them as gifts or refuse to have them. What we refuse we lose. Rejected gifts are withdrawn. It avails nothing to want what we have despised and flung away. Today the priceless gift of Christ is offered without money and without price. It is for you. In it is life, peace and heaven.

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16

## THE CRIPPLE AT THE GATE

'The man was more than forty years, on whom this miracle was wrought.' Acts 4:22

The story of this man's healing is soon told. He was a cripple from his birth, and was turned forty years of age. Friends carried him daily to the door of the Temple, and there he sat asking alms of those who came to the House of Prayer. One day soon after Pentecost, Peter and John went up to the Temple about three o'clock in the afternoon. The cripple appealed to them for help, and they stopped and looked earnestly at the man at their feet. Peter said to him, Look on us: and he looked; at the same time stretching out his hand. His countenance fell as he heard Peter say they had neither silver nor gold. It was money he wanted. If they had no money why stop and mock his misery by raising hopes they could not fulfill? 'But,' he went on to say, 'what I have that I give thee. In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!' The man might have protested that he had never walked in his life. Did they think he was a cripple by choice? He was born lame. How could he walk? Peter stretched forth his hand. Something in the men inspired faith, and gripping the proffered hand he rose to his feet, and immediately his ankle bones received strength, and he found he could walk. For the first time in forty years he felt his feet, and, in the exuberance of joy, he began to leap and shout and praise God. A crowd gathered, and finding a congregation to hand Peter preached, and the man shouted. For disturbing the peace and decorum of the Temple they were arrested and brought before the magistrates. The man who had been healed followed and stood beside his benefactors. In the presence of the man the good work could not be denied, and the preachers were dismissed with a caution to keep the peace and refrain from preaching the Name of Jesus. They protested that they could not undertake to be silent, but after further threatenings they were let go.

## The World And The Cripple

The cripple at the gate is the standing problem of the world. He represents the great army of the world's unfit. Many of them are crippled from their birth. They have abandoned all hope of ever being able to rise. In forty years they have ceased to experiment, and have taken their place among the world's incurables. A fatal defect has rendered them a problem and a burden. There is much in them that is sound and good, but it is neutralized by one diseased spot. One leak may sink a ship, and one weakness may ruin a life. Men are good, but their ankle bones won't work. They let them down. They know how to walk: indeed, they have watched other people walk for so long that they may be experts on walking, but they themselves cannot walk. Day after day, there they squat. One man is good enough, but he drinks and it lets him down. Another is sober, but he gambles and he lands in the gutter. So the tales go on. One fatal defect destroys the life, fills the world with woe, and damns the souls of men. The world regards its cripples as a nuisance and deals with them as such. It gives them its surplus, and talks of the elimination of the unfit. For its moral and social cripples it opens prisons and asylums. It has no hope of their recovery, much less a gospel of redemption.

## The Church And The Cripple

It is significant that they gather at the door of the Church. They have a dim consciousness that if there be any help it is in the Church of Christ they will find it. What has the Church to say to these people? In them is the test of every gospel. The religion that can do nothing for the helpless and wretched is of no use for the salvation of the world. The whole need no physician; it is on the diseased His power must be proved. These two apostles illustrate for us the mission of the Church in the world. First of all they looked sympathetically and steadfastly at the man. Others may pass him by, but they stop and look. The sin of many Christians is that they do not take the trouble to look. In every city there are citizens who are criminally ignorant of the condition of the people. They go to worship regardless of the sin and misery that huddles at the gate. Go and look into the eyes of the people, see how they live, discover their need. Secondly, having looked, they invited inspection. Look on us! Why? Because we have an experience that will bear scrutiny and a character that will stand looking at. Thirdly, they had a gospel to preach. It is useless to go unless we have that. Good advice is no use; they have abundance already. No! it must be a Gospel: a Gospel of certainty and power.

## A Grip Of The Hand

Lastly, they took him by the hand. It was Peter's grip that put heart into him and made him get up. When the Rev. James Flanagan first went to a place of worship, it was an hour of unintelligible weariness to him. He was utterly godless, drunken, degraded, and ignorant. The language of the Sanctuary was a foreign tongue, but as he came out a Christian man shook hands with him and spoke cheerily to him. That handshake won him for Christ, and made him a preacher of the Cross. A gospel in the grip of the hand is mightier than the sermon. We must get to close grips if we would save. The Church can ignore the critics so long as she can heal the cripple.

## The Cripple And The Church



This man believed, obeyed, and stood upon his feet. The first thing to be done is to take your stand in the Name of Christ. Don't argue about your ankle-bones; get on your feet and stand. Put them down as if you mean business, turn full face towards God, and walk. He will give the strength; it will come in the act of obedience. Give praise to God from the start. If you want to shout, shout; no man has better reason. Having found your feet, stand by the people that helped you to your feet. This man might have gone home, and left Peter and John to get out of their trouble as best they could, but he went with them and stood by them. You need not say much; your feet will say more than your tongue. From being a beggar, become a giver. Carry the same sympathy, the same gospel, the same handshake that saved you to others, who are where you were. The healed cripple must walk straight, and remember he is saved to serve.

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17

## THE ABSENT MEMBER

'But Thomas ... was not with them when Jesus came.' St. John 20:24

When Evan Roberts joined the Church at thirteen years of age, a saintly old deacon said to him: 'Evan, be faithful to the means of grace; remember it was when Thomas was absent that Jesus came; don't let Him find you absent when He comes.' The seed fell into good ground, and from that day Evan Roberts was an eager and faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. Great issues turn on small hinges. It may seem a small matter that a boy of thirteen should decide for Christ and join the Church, but it makes an incalculable difference in the life of the boy. If thousands of the grown-up people who are in their forties and fifties had been converted and joined the church in their teens, things would have been different with them today. All who join do not follow the old deacon's advice. How different life would have been if they had. In the gutter, in prison, and in the grip of Satan, we find those who were once in the fellowship of the Church. They grew slack and irregular, pleasure allured and the world dazzled, till finally they slipped from their moorings and drifted into evil ways. Most likely the blame was laid elsewhere. When the heart has cooled, occasions for offense are never far to seek. The parting message of a man who went to the gallows for his crime was, 'Tell the young people everywhere I am here because I got too big for Sunday School, went walks instead of going to Chapel, and exchanged the House of God for the music hall and the public house. If I had stuck to the people of God I should never have been here'. Neglect of the means of grace does not land every man at the gallows, but it leads away from the spring of life, and strength, and joy. To Thomas it brought an eclipse of faith, and there are no depths to which loss of faith may not lead.

### Why Join The Church?

Is there any real value in Christian fellowship? Is it worth while in a strenuous age like ours to give precious hours to spiritual and devotional meetings? Such practical questions demand a straightforward answer, and they shall have it. Generally speaking, association implies identification and co-operation. A man associates himself with the party or society in which he believes, and whose interests are identical with his own. When he joins a political party, he

identifies himself with its creed and policy, and is expected to be both an advocate and worker. If he joins a trade union, he associates himself with those of his own calling, and is expected to co-operate for the good of his class.

Association with the Christian Church, in the same way, means identification and co-operation. It marks a decision, implies an experience, and involves obligation. When a man joins the Church he takes his stand with Christ and His people, and enters into a relationship which involves mutual interest, mutual obligation, and mutual service. Every Christian is under obligation to join the fellowship of believers. Some have been known to object for various reasons. Some stand aloof because the Church is not good enough for them, others because it is too expensive, whilst some protest that it is not necessary. All such need to examine their own hearts, and consider the will of Christ. Every believer owes his salvation to the Church; and every believer needs its ministry; and the Church needs the witness, co-operation, and support of every believer.

### Why Attend Meetings?

May not a man be identified with the Church without being expected to attend what are called its spiritual meetings? What benefit is there in weekly fellowship, meetings for prayer, and sacraments? What contribution do they make to a man for his work in the world? What good do they do? They feed nobody, they save nobody, they effect nothing! Is not a social or educational fellowship of greater service? Such questions are being asked by earnest and good men within the Church, and there are signs that the center of church life is being shifted from spiritual reality to social service. Social clubs are taking the place of meetings for fellowship and prayer, and the change is applauded as a mark of wisdom; but it is not the wisdom that is from above. The Church is a spiritual organization with a social mission. It seeks to make earth like Heaven by bringing Heaven down to earth. The philosophy of the Gospel is that spiritual realities are at the root of human life. Salvation is not by culture but by conversion, and social reformation must begin in spiritual regeneration. Spiritual power is the dynamic of reform, and the forces that degrade men and disintegrate society cannot be cast out by anything but prayer. The Gospel is mightier to save drunkards than the most costly homes for the scientific treatment of inebriates, and the revival in Wales did more to solve its social problem than a generation of political agitation. Social and political machinery is not only good but necessary, but it is useless without the spiritual power.

### Lost Through Absence

If the Church abandons its meetings for mutual fellowship and prayer its Apostles will soon lose their power to cast out devils, and to say to the world's cripples, Arise and walk. The absent member soon begins to lose interest and relish for the means of grace. Then it is not difficult to lose faith and the joy of brotherhood. When he is told of seasons of refreshing power he smiles an incredulous smile, and if they tell him they have seen the Lord, he forthwith stoutly denies. The Lord came when he was absent! All who were there come to him with shining faces and glowing hearts, but he is in darkness and despair and the Lord comes not to him. How lightly men miss the appointed hour and place of prayer! They stay away because they are in doubt and trouble as if that would help them. Some childish people take offense and withdraw where they ought to forgive. Others that have not much depth of soul put off every social call. Such neglect kills the soul.

Cleave to the Lord 'not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the custom of some is.' If you have withdrawn, return, and you will find your Lord waiting for you.

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18

## THE CRY OF DARING FAITH

'And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening oblation, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, O Lord, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me that this people may know that Thou, Lord, art God, and that Thou hast turned their hearts back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell... and when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, The Lord, He is God; the Lord He is God.' 1 Kings 18:36-39

St. James gives us the key to Elijah's power. Out of all the Old Testament records he chooses this incident as the example of prevailing prayer. It is the most dramatic scene in history. The nation is summoned to a battle of rival Gods. Jehovah had been utterly forsaken, and under the patronage of a heathen Queen the worship of Baal had been established in the land. The prophets of the Lord had been slain. Jezebel exulted in her triumph, and boasted that she had ousted the God of Israel from the midst of His own people. Like a bolt from the blue came Elijah the prophet. Standing in the royal presence he declared that there should be no rain in the land but by his word. Having uttered his challenge he disappeared as mysteriously as he had come. For three years and six months he was hid by the brook Cherith, and in the house of a widow at Zarephath. The land was parched and famine gripped the nation, for neither dew nor rain had fallen since the memorable day when Elijah had spoken in the presence of the king. Then the prophet returned, and challenged the prophets of Baal to open battle. The test was to be by prayer, and the proof a descent of fire. They assembled on Mount Carmel. The champions of Baal eight hundred and fifty strong. The God of Israel was represented by the one solitary witness. One man against a nation. According to the terms of the challenge the prophets of Baal prepared their altar and put no fire under. Then, from morning until far into the afternoon, they cried unto Baal to send the fire. In their frenzy they cut themselves with knives and cast themselves upon the altar, but there came no sign. Elijah mocked them and urged them to greater madness. When they had exhausted all their resources he called a halt. The altar was repaired, and in his daring faith the prophet commanded them to flood it with water. All was ready. The multitude watched in breathless stillness as the man of God lifted his hands in prayer. His voice rang out in quivering earnestness. He appealed to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and challenged Him that day to vindicate His servant in the presence of his enemies. Then he prayed for the people, that He would come and turn their hearts from idols to serve the living God. As he prayed the fire fell. It burnt up the sacrifice and the altar, licking the very dust from the ground. When the people saw it, they fell upon their faces and cried, The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God.

The Power Of One Man

The story of Elijah is a striking example of the power of one man in the life of a nation. God always saves by a man. If He can find one man to stand in the breach there is hope. Salvation is not in machinery but in manhood. Personality counts for more than anything else in the world. All things are possible where there is a leader who can appeal to the best instincts of the people. Joseph saved Israel in the time of famine. Moses led forth the captives into freedom. Gideon delivered the people of God from the hand of the oppressor. Nehemiah restored Jerusalem. So the story runs from Genesis to Malachi, and from Matthew to Revelation; and so it runs still. God saves by a man. Luther, Cromwell, Wesley, Lincoln, and a host of the world's heroes are witnesses to the power of one man, called and equipped of God. The world is not saved by men of straw. They are men conscious of a divine mission, inspired by a great faith, sustained in prayer, and men who count not their lives dear unto themselves. They carry the burden of the people's shame and woe. The open victory is the fruit of secret prayers and tears. Such men may appear suddenly but they are not made in a day.

### Against Great Odds

Elijah stood that day against tremendous odds. His enemies had the advantage of numbers, influence, and power. It was a fanatic's dream to think that he could succeed in uprooting an evil so gigantic and powerful. Happily the fanatic knows no fear. All things are possible to his fiery soul. He glories to assail the impregnable, and attempt the impossible. Confident in his God and his cause he attacks the enemy at his strongest point. The line of least resistance does not appeal to him. Baal is the god of the elements; then the elements shall be the test. When his turn came he threw prudence to the winds. Where others would have been glad of paraffin, he flooded the altar with water. Difficulties do not count when God works. It was a tremendous risk. His cause and his life were in the issue, but he had no fear. He knew his God, and he knew his mission. Whatever the odds, one plus God is always a majority. Nothing is impossible to the man who works with the Almighty.

### The Great Prayer

What a prayer! It trembled with passion, for St. James tells us he prayed earnestly. Battles are not won in cold blood. This man's soul was kindled within him. He had mocked the frantic cries of those who cut themselves and covered the altar with their own red blood. Now that he prays there is no frenzy but there is great fervor. His pleading was divinely based and God-inspired. He pleaded the covenant and the honor of the Divine Name. He stood for God's cause, and sought God's glory. We can only be mighty in prayer as self is lost. A false motive paralyses faith, and freezes the fount of intercession. Prayer was followed by judgment and slaughter, because of the prophet's zeal for the honor of his God. Zeal never spares. Even Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord. We need not wonder that Elijah slew the false prophets with the edge of the sword, or that Cromwell took off the head of Charles I. What is past redemption must be destroyed. In this sense also deliverance is often by blood. After the fire comes the rain. When the work of judgment was accomplished, the man of God returned to the mount of prayer. There again he pleaded. Fire might vindicate, but it could not fertilize. Judgment prepares the way for grace. Again God hears. The uplifted hand of the intercessor is answered by the hand of God in the heavens. Then came the shower. Israel was delivered, but through it all Jezebel hardened her heart against the Lord though He answered in fire and in flood.

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19

## PIETY ON CRUTCHES

'And Joash did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest.' 2 Chronicles 24:2.

The piety of Joash went on crutches. He did that which was right so long as his uncle was there to keep him straight. 'But Jehoiada waxed old and was full of days, and he died.... Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the King. Then the King hearkened unto them.... Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada had done to him, but slew his son.' It is impossible to imagine a more complete moral collapse. From being earnestly religious he became notoriously profligate, and when the son of his dead friend of better days ventured to remonstrate with him he ordered him to be stoned to death. He is a striking example of all those whose moral character lacks independence, courage, strength. They have no root in themselves. In goodness they lean on others, in wickedness they go as they are led. Chameleon like, they take on their color from their surroundings. Instead of mastering circumstances they are molded by them. If they could be kept in a glass case they would never get spoiled, but they cannot stand against crosscurrents of the world.

### A Wicked Mother And A Good Aunt

The life of this man opened in tragedy. His grandfather, Jehoram, was the son of Jehoshaphat, and might have done well if he had not been handicapped with a bad wife. 'He had Ahab's daughter to wife', and woe be to the man who marries a daughter from Jezebel's household. The father of Joash was the son of this dare-devil pair. He only reigned a year, and when his mother saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal of the House of Judah that she might sit securely upon the throne. There is no fiend so cruel as a wicked woman. History abounds with examples of their cruelty. In this instance one child escaped. His father's sister stole little Joash from among the king's sons and hid him in her own house. So Joash was brought up in the house of his uncle Jehoiada, the priest. When he was seven years old they brought him forth and crowned him in the temple, and Athaliah the wicked queen was slain. Jehoiada directed the counsels of the nation, and carefully instructed the young king in the principles of godly living and good government.

### In Leading Strings

So long as he was in leading strings he did well. It is nothing new for men to sneer at leading strings, generally said to be attached to a mother's apron, but the influence of a godly home is of great price. Let no man ever be ashamed of it. Its treasure is worth more than millions. There is not much grit in the man or woman who will hear his home religion ridiculed without protest. Better have a praying washer-woman for a mother than a painted queen or a godless princess. Not that washer-women have a monopoly of prayer. The blood of the priest's wife was as blue as that of Athaliah. She also was a king's daughter, and of a devout spirit. There are thousands in the busy

cities who owe all they have to homes of simple and earnest piety, and it is no mark of manliness to be ashamed of a godly parentage.

So long as Joash was under parental control he was upright in character, straight in conduct, and religious in spirit. Mark his qualities. He had great zeal for the House of God. The slackness of its priests troubled him and he set himself to stir them up. He honored the Scriptures. At his coronation Jehoiada gave him a copy of the law, even as in England they gave Elizabeth a Bible in the City of London; and he observed it. He put his religion into the business of the state. There was no sweating in Government Departments. He dealt faithfully with carpenters and masons, priests and tradesmen. Trade unions would have approved his goodness, and Jehoiada the priest thanked God for the young King's wisdom and piety.

### The Fall Of Josiah

Unfortunately all this excellence was circumstantial. It was due to the influence of something outside the man. In the stress of the world's power we may thank God for everything and every life that holds us for good. The companionship of Jehoiada is better than that of the princes. Youth is safer in the Church of Christ than in the Synagogue of Satan. The house of prayer is better than the place of revelry and riot. It makes all the difference whether you have saints or fools for your friends. Environment is not everything, but circumstances and companionships, voluntarily chosen, determine our character and our career. 'If sinners entice thee, consent thou not.' A man becomes one of the company he keeps. So long as Joash walked with the good he went well, but when he became the companion of hair-brained dandies he excelled in wickedness and folly. Who could have believed that such possibilities of wickedness lay hidden in the heart of one so circumspect and devout? If the veil could have been lifted, the bare suggestion of such a change would have been repudiated with scorn.

### Stand On Your Own Feet

Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed. Circumstantial goodness is never safe. Pious homes have to be left, and devout relatives die. Conditions change. God does not keep men in cotton-wool. The devil is abroad, and temptation is inevitable in the world. God takes away our props that we may find our feet. We cannot live on other people's goodness. We must have salt in ourselves. Religion is a personal matter. One man's grace is never enough for two. The weakness of Joash is the curse of thousands. Men take their opinions secondhand, and adopt a course because others are in it. Wickedness gets its pull, because it appeals to the vanity and lust of human nature. Goodness calls for independence, courage, and sacrifice. In getting religion, get the real thing. Do not lean on the grace and strength of another. The gift of God is within the soul. It is a well that never runs dry. Hell's poisons cannot reach it, neither can changes of condition affect it. The soul's roots strike deep when God does the planting. Props grow old and perish, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. To the goodness rooted and grounded in God it does not matter who lives or who dies. It depends upon neither priest nor prince, circumstance nor ordinance. Whom God makes to stand nothing can overthrow.

Take heed to your friendship, take heed to yourselves, for every man is not only influenced by others, but is himself to others a minister of grace or an ally of hell.

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20

## THE GOSPEL AND THE KINGDOM

'But I hold not my life of any account, as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus to testify the Gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I went about preaching the Kingdom, shall see my face no more.' Acts 20:21-22

The charges of the Bible are among its most impressive records. When men are aware they are uttering their last words they speak in the presence of the Eternal. All temporal and secondary considerations are lost in the solemnities of the hour. There are no tricks of speech, no staging for effect, no thought of gain. A study of the parting counsels of Jacob and Joseph, Moses and Joshua, Samuel and David, in the Old Testament; and of Jesus and Paul in the New, will reveal the care with which their words were chosen, and with what conflicting emotions they were uttered. The experience and hopes of a lifetime are packed into a few pregnant and vibrant phrases. The speaker's heart is laid bare. He speaks with unreserved freedom of his aims and work. Paul's leave-taking of the Ephesian elders is among the most memorable utterances in human speech. He is reminiscent, and recalls his labors among them. He is confident, and reaffirms his Gospel and his mission. He is solicitous, and warns and exhorts with the tenderness of a pastor and the earnestness of a prophet. Trouble awaits him but he has no concern for himself. His course is ordained by the sovereign will of God, and dearer to him than life is the ministry he received of the Lord Jesus. He has no aim but to accomplish his course and fulfill his ministry. His work is summed up in the two phases, 'To testify the Gospel of the grace of God' and 'preaching the Kingdom'. He is a witness to the Gospel and a preacher of the Kingdom. These two things are inseparable in the work of the Church of Jesus Christ.

### The Gospel Of Grace

The messenger of Christ is the bearer of Good News. Some of them never seem to have realized it; but their supreme business is to bring Good Tidings. The world ignores the preacher because he brings no news that excites and thrills. The Gospel is news, and there is nothing for which men are so eager as news. Preachers are not sent to scold and upbraid, but to declare Good News. The Gospel is not good advice; it is Good News. Stale news nobody cares for and bad news nobody wants, but good news is always welcome. God does not send his messengers into the world with a trombone; He puts a trumpet to his lips, and makes him the herald of Glad Tidings. There is something wrong with the preacher when the people are indifferent to his news: perhaps it is that he has forgotten he was a news-bearer, and instead of throbbing to bursting point with his news, he has degenerated into a prosy talker of things for which nobody cares.

The Gospel of Christ is a Gospel of grace. It is news of a free gift. It is glad tidings for the sinful and the unworthy, the over-burdened and the poor. The message is not for the righteous, the rich, and the full; Jesus Christ never has anything for these. They are sent away empty. He seeks the lost. He wants the poor. He calls the weary. There was no diviner act in all His life than when He

stood in the midst of sin-stricken and sorrowing humanity and with arms wide open cried: 'Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.'

Nobody else wants them. Nobody else knows what to do with them, but he wants them and He knows. The Gospel is Good News of Pardon, and Deliverance, Renewal, and Peace; Restoration and Power. It is the Gospel of the free grace of God, without labor, without respect of persons, and without price. To this Gospel the preacher is not only a messenger but a witness. He testifies, for he has proved. He is not a retailer of creeds, a defender of dogma, a repeater of formula; he is a living witness of the truth received at first hand from Jesus Christ.

### Preaching The Kingdom

The Gospel of the grace of God involves a kingdom of God. Jesus Christ came to establish a Kingdom. His Gospel is the Gospel of the Kingdom, and His Church exists to establish the Kingdom. All Christians believe in the Kingship of Christ, however they may differ as to the time and location of His Kingdom. It is to be established in this world, and not in some remote and celestial region. When He said, 'My Kingdom is not of this world', He did not mean it to be inferred that it is not in this world. There is a great difference between 'of' and 'in'. It is not to be established by the forces of this world, nor according to its maxims and standards. It is the Kingdom of Heaven, but it is the Kingdom of Heaven come down to earth. Its weapons are not carnal, and its method is not of this world. It comes by the Gospel of Grace. There can be no Kingdom of God apart from the Gospel of the Grace of God. Many are seeing the social and material conditions of the Kingdom, who despise its Gospel and ignore its King; but the Kingdom can only come in God's way and on His terms. The salvation of the individual is the only way to the social order of the Kingdom of God. The two must not be separated. Personal salvation must be followed by the preaching and practice of the Kingdom.

### Principles Of The Kingdom

The New Testament has a great deal to say about the Kingdom of Heaven. There is no detailed instruction as to its realization among men, but its principles are stated and expounded in all the teaching of Christ. He preached the Kingdom. Three things He declared it was not. It cannot be established by force, John 18:36; it cometh not with observation, Luke 17:20; and it does not consist in anything external, Luke 17:21. St. Paul tells us it consists of Righteousness, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost. These are the foundation and essential conditions of its life. It imposes no economic order, but it does lay down principles which must govern -- Production, Distribution, and Administration. It gives no details of Government and Social Order, but it insists upon brotherly love and mutual service. The Kingdom is a real Kingdom and all true progress moves towards its realization.

The Kingdom comes by the grace of God and preaching. It rests not upon compulsion but consent. Like the mustard seed and the leaven it always moves from center to circumference, and never from circumference to center. 'It is within you.' It is not of law but of grace. The Kingdom of Heaven can never be imposed from without; it must be implanted within. The conditions of entrance are repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ. 'Except a man be born from above



he cannot see the Kingdom of God.' If we seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness all needful things will be added unto us. Jesus Christ 'opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.

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21

## THE TRAGEDY OF THE COMMONPLACE

'And they went to another village.' St. Luke 9:56

That is the commonplace record of an event full of judgment and tragedy. The end of Christ's earthly ministry was at hand. He had left Judea 'and set His face to go to Jerusalem'. The journey took Him through a Samaritan village, and because of the retinue which accompanied Him He sent messengers ahead to make ready for his coming. The villagers refused Him hospitality, and when He arrived at the gate they were forbidden to enter. His followers were indignant. at the insult offered to their Master and wanted to bring down fire from Heaven and burn up the village. Jesus Himself did not complain of the churlish villagers, but rebuked the disciples for their temper, and went to another village. There was no fuss, no fury, no fire, but in that silent turning away the destiny of a village was sealed.

### Small Hinges

So it is in all our life. Great and momentous issues turn on most trivial and commonplace events. We can never judge the importance of an event by its appearance. There is no saner counsel than the exhortation to 'Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment'. It is never safe to take things at their face value. Things most deadly often look most harmless, and things beneficent often seem least likely to be good. Poison may be sweet to the taste while healing herbs are bitter. The way to ruin seems pleasant, profitable, and safe enough, while the way of life lies through agony and crucifixion. Things vital often look unimportant, while things trivial seem momentous. Moral issues are not so clamorous as the problems of food and raiment but they are incomparably greater. Great issues turn on small hinges. In every commonplace there are incalculable possibilities.

One of my friends for years escaped the snare of matrimonial fowlers. He smiled at all the arts of seductive beauty until he was relegated to the hopeless and dwelt secure in his bachelor paradise. One day he took it into his head to spend the weekend at a Hydro, where he was well known. He missed his train in the morning through pressure of business and had to take the four o'clock instead of the ten. The train was crowded and his compartment filled up mostly with women of varying bulk and years. Next to him sat a stranger with whom he exchanged but few words. They rode together in the same bus, and when he went down to dinner he found the seat on his left allotted to the same lady. The weekend extended to a week, and they liked sitting together so much that they have sat together ever since. Life is full of such experiences. The commonplace is the momentous. No man can forecoast the issue of the most trifling event. An introduction to a stranger, a casual remark, a chance decision, and it seems as if fate turned on the toss of a penny. Jesus found a door closed against Him and He turned and 'went to another village'. That is all, but in that simple act there lay hidden the tragedy of a lost opportunity.

## Deity In Disguise

God comes in the commonplace. The Lord of Glory sends His messengers to prepare His way. They are not heralded with pomp and splendor. There is no imperious demand. No demonstration of power. No announcement of unusual importance. Opportunity comes disguised in the commonplace. The days of momentous issues open without portents, and pass without thunder. The villagers in Samaria never suspected that they had slammed the door against anyone more important than a wandering Jew. The Christ does not come in fire and judgment: He comes seeking, not demanding. 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.' He is a suppliant at the door of the soul He died to redeem. He cannot enter without consent and where He is not welcome He cannot come. If He is refused He will go away. There will be no fiery curse, No tragic indignation. His heart will break and in silence He will leave you even as you wished. Amazing grace! That God should stand and plead at the bar of man's will. Awful Power! That man should have the power and the wickedness to refuse the entreaty of his God. He comes seeking hospitality and fellowship; He comes bringing salvation and peace; and we may reject Him in thoughtless indifference and churlish contempt.

## The Silent Tragedy

The disciples wanted to call down fire and consume them. That is man's way. If men will not accept our kindness we consume them in anger. Not so the Master. He rebuked the spirit of the disciples and led them to another village. The judgment of God is not theatrical. It comes not with observation; but it comes. 'Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.' The sentence is delayed but the judgment is immediate. The Samaritans were not alarmed when Jesus turned away from their gates. Very likely they smiled and thought themselves happily rid of an awkward presence. They slept that night and many a night undisturbed though they had turned away the Christ. There was no sign of alarm. No fire fell. The real judgment of the soul is in the silent departure of the despised and rejected. There is no need to call down fire from heaven, for it is already kindled in the soul. Hell is the doom of lost opportunity. Light rejected is followed by darkness. The soul that refuses Christ is left Christless. Nothing more; nothing less. To be left without Christ is, to perish, He comes again today. Comes seeking a home in your heart! He brings heaven with Him. What is your answer? You may welcome or you may refuse. If you open the door He will come and abide with you. If you refuse He will not 'storm and curse, but with a broken heart He will turn away and leave you. He can do no other. His entrance is salvation. His departure is your damnation.

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22

THE COVENANT BY BLOOD

'This cup is the New Covenant in my blood, even that which is poured out for you.' St. Luke 22:20.

The word covenant has a rather technical sound, and seems rather to belong to the study and to legal documents than to practical life. It may be defined as a mutual agreement upon a common basis. Unfortunately we have left out the common basis and given currency to the idea of compact. In common speech a covenant is a bargain of unusual solemnity. It is an agreement in which obligations and penalties, privileges and rewards are duly set forth and attested. In the Scriptures it implies a larger fellowship and community of interest than mere compact. It is used for admission into the membership of a family by marriage, and into the privileges of citizenship by naturalization. In each case a covenant is reckoned equivalent to a birth. The person admitted by marriage may be of alien blood, but once married, all the privileges of the family are possessed. The naturalized citizen stands before the law as if he were native born. We come into the spiritual fellowship by adoption, and Jesus Christ is the author of the new and better covenant.

### A Covenant Of Blood

It was the custom to ratify the most solemn covenants with blood. In some instances blood was taken from the veins, and drunk as a symbol of identification. The blood is the life and they drank of one blood as a token that they had become of one life. Then the blood of a beast was substituted for human blood, but the significance was the same. Both parties to the covenant were of one blood, or of one life, as represented by the life of the beast poured forth. They became blood-brothers. All Christ's redeemed ones are blood-brothers in Him. We are saved by His blood, and by His death we who were strangers have become sons of God; we were aliens, and by His blood we have been made citizens of the Heavenly Kingdom, and we have all drunk of the cup which He called His blood. By His blood-shedding we have the remission of our sins, and a new and living way into the life of God; but he took up again the life He laid down for our sins, and that life He now imparts unto all that come to Him. The life was not only offered for us; it is imparted to us, and thereby, the blood cleanses and purifies the soul. Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins, and without the personal appropriation of the blood there is no cleansing from sin; but if we walk in the light as He is in the light the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.

### The Old And The New

A new implies an old, and a contrast between the two. As there is a new covenant so also there was an old covenant. The old covenant was a great covenant. It marked a new era in the history of the world. In religion, it declared against all idolatry and proclaimed the Lord God to be the one and only God; in worship, it emphasized spiritually, and forbade the worship of idols; in righteousness, it made the holiness of God the standard of human life and conduct. It was great, not only in what it signalized but in what it foreshadowed, and for which it prepared the way. It furnished the material for progress in the revelation of truth, and prepared the way for the Kingdom of Christ. Prophets and poets discovered its deeper meaning and thus educated Israel for the new by means of the old. From the first the covenant was missionary in spirit and purpose, and God scattered His people that lines might be laid for the Gospel in due time. The wise men came to Jerusalem, but the Apostles went forth to the ends of the earth, and everywhere they found people prepared for the Gospel.

### The Better Covenant

If the first covenant had been perfect there would have been no need for a second, but God has taken away the first that He may establish the second. The advantages of the covenant sealed in Christ's blood are manifold. It exchanges truth for figure, and reality for shadow. It gathers up and perfects everything that was symbolized in the old. The chief feature of the old was its outward sign, the chief feature of the new is its spiritual reality. In the old the law was written on tables of stone, in the new it is written upon the mind; in the old it was carried upon the body, in the new it is in the heart. The Gospel of Christ gives us an inward and personal experience instead of an outward and representative religion of ceremony and priest. Every man has access to God, and the only priest he needs is Jesus Christ, the one Mediator between God and man. The new covenant is of grace and not of works, and it is therefore for aliens and rebels, strangers and sinners. In the old, God was the avenger of His people; in the new, He is the Father of love and the God of grace.

The new covenant sends forth a Gospel of pardon for past transgression and salvation from sin. The blood of Jesus atones and cleanses, and he is able to save to the uttermost all them that come to God by Him. He opens the way to a new fellowship and a divine inheritance. By His blood I receive His life, and share all that belongs to His name. We are sons of God and fellow-heirs with Jesus Christ. He undertakes our cause and supplies our need; and in return there is expected of us loyalty and obedience to the terms of the covenant. God solemnly swears that he will pardon, bless, and save; and we solemnly undertake to obey and trust in Him. Let us put our name to the covenant, and take from His hand the cup of salvation and pledge ourselves to Him by whose blood we are redeemed.

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23

## THE FIRST PRAYER MEETING

'These all with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren.' Acts 1:14

The Prayer Meeting is a distinctly Christian institution. In Pagan religions there are great religious festivities and in times of panic there are great assemblies for humiliation and prayer, but there is nothing that corresponds to the Christian Prayer Meeting. In the Old Testament there are no prayer meetings. They had Class Meetings, for we read, 'They that feared the Lord spake one with another: and the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His Name'; but there is no such record of meetings for prayer. There were great and solemn assemblies in times of national peril, but their spokesman uttered their plea while they bowed in silence before God. Jesus Christ held no prayer meetings. He gave His disciples a form of prayer, but there is no record of a fellowship of prayer. Twice He took three of His disciples with Him when He went to pray, but on each occasion we are told they were heavy with sleep. They found the Prayer Meeting a weariness, and slept even while Christ prayed. The first real prayer meeting was held between Ascension and Pentecost. The last words of Christ were a promise and a command: 'Behold I send forth the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high.' They

returned to Jerusalem with great joy and with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer until the promise was fulfilled.

### A New Center

The ascension of Christ gave them a new conception of prayer. The heavens had received a new center. In the Old Testament visions God was always exalted in majesty and transcendent in glory. His throne was revealed in splendor that filled the soul with wonder and awe. He dwelt in light too dazzling for man to approach. When men prayed they withdrew to solitary places, entered into clouds or bowed themselves in the dust. In Christ prayer finds a new meaning. Instead of speaking into space the throne of God is located by His presence, and they prayed to Jesus whom they knew and whom they had seen ascend unto the Father. The Glory of God no longer filled them with awe and terror, for it was embodied in the Christ with whom they had walked the streets and lived in daily companionship. They were not afraid of Jesus. He was their familiar friend whom they loved and in whom they placed implicit trust. The fact of Christ's presence in the heavens gave vividness, definiteness and certainty to their praying. A new era had dawned in the experience of prayer.

### A New Name

They prayed in a new name. In the Old Testament they prayed in the name of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They appealed to Jehovah as the God of the Covenant, and pleaded in the name of the fathers to whom the covenant was given. In the Christian prayer meeting Abraham is superseded by the Name of Jesus; the Name which is above every name. Christ promised great things to those who pray in His Name. See John 14:13; 15:16; 16:24 Whatsoever we ask in the Name of Christ we are assured will be granted to us. 'Hitherto' (up to that time) men had asked nothing in His name but from henceforth that is to be the way of access unto the Father.

What do we mean by praying in Christ's Name? It means something more than the mere form of adding Christ's Name at the end of our petition. It pleads His Name, and takes refuge in His redeeming and mediatorial work. We have no standing ground in prayer. Whatever rights we had have been forfeited by sin. In the Old Testament Jehovah declared 'I do not this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for Mine Holy Name', and now He blesses for the sake of Jesus, who ever lives to make intercession for us. Salvation is of grace and it is at the throne of grace we pray. We are heard not for our own sakes, but for Christ's sake. But it means more than that. In the Scriptures a name is more than a label. The name expresses character and being. Prayer in Christ's Name is prayer according to Christ's mind and purpose. An ambassador speaks in the name of his country, but he only speaks in its name so long as he speaks according to its mind and policy. If he takes to speaking his own words he is speedily silenced. So with prayer in Christ's Name. It is the prayer of one whose mind is as the mind of Christ and whose desire and purpose are one with His. He wants his prayer answered in the Name and according to the Name of Christ.

### A New Promise

The prayers of the disciples were based upon a new promise. They were waiting for the promise of the Father. From Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost we learn that the Holy Spirit

was the promise of the Father to His Son, and the gift of the Son to His Church. It is God's supreme and all-inclusive gift. Until He came they were forbidden to enter upon their work. In Him was the source of their wisdom and power. 'Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.' He comes to inspire and energize so that our lives shall be lives of power. He does not change us into somebody else, but He so fills all that each becomes the best that he can be. He becomes the soul of our soul and 'clothes Himself' with all our faculties and powers. The change in the men and women of Pentecost demonstrates His power to transform and energize the mental, moral, and spiritual powers of men and women.

The prayer meeting gave a new basis of fellowship. During Christ's earthly ministry the little group had been rent with rivalry and strife, but now they continued with one accord in one place. All their divisions were healed, and they were united in one common fellowship of prayer. The privileges that were new to them are with us still. We have the same Intercessor at God's right hand: we have the promise to those who pray in His Name, and to us also is the gift of power in the Eternal Spirit. 'Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.'

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#### THE CRY OF A BROKEN HEART

'And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore.' 1 Samuel 1:10

Great prayers are begotten of great sorrow. Hannah was a broken-hearted woman. Her grief was in her own home. She was childless, her husband Elkanah had taken a second wife who bore him sons and daughters. Moses had conceded so much to primitive custom and the infirmity of human nature, on account of the hardness of men's hearts. Many things are lawful that are not expedient, and those who took advantage of the concession paid dearly for the privilege. No house is big enough to hold two women who are wives of the same man. It would be as reasonable to expect two cats to agree over one mouse. Elkanah's folly wrecked his home. Peninnah was a woman with a jealous heart and a cruel tongue. Hannah was a good woman, but she was still a woman. Her rival knew the sore place in her heart, and she 'provoked her sore to make her fret'. There is no grief like domestic grief, no wound like the wounds of disappointed love, and the stricken woman wept and did not eat. Her husband was kind and generous, but generosity cannot heal the smart of a wronged heart. His very efforts to sweeten her lot only embittered her, so long as her rival was there to taunt her. She sought relief in prayer. There is no other way to bear the persistent trials of home. How many homes are made places of exquisite torture by some disquieting thing that turns heaven into hell! A spiteful temper, a jealous disposition, a cruel tongue, these are the miseries that wear out the strength, and poison the life. Self-crucifixion brings no relief. Brave resolutions avail nothing. Our only refuge is in God. He can make us serene of countenance and brave of heart in the midst of provocation and grief.

Drunk, But Not With Wine

Great grief prays with great earnestness. Elijah prayed fervently and prevailed. So intense was this woman that Eli the priest rebuked her for being drunk in the House of Prayer. She was drunk, but not with wine. There are sorrows that make men reel. There are paroxysms of the soul that drive men mad. Under the pressure of grief the balance is lost, but such madness is not lunacy; it is the sublimest reason. There are prayers that are cold and correct, decorous and formal, but they work no miracles. Prayer is not a collection of balanced phrases; it is the pouring out of the soul. What is love if it be not fiery? What are prayers if the heart be not ablaze? They are the battles of the soul. In them men wrestle with principalities and powers. Shame on Eli that he should have been so blind. No wonder his sons went so sadly astray. His soul had lost its passion in the perfunctory round of official piety, and when the heart cools the eye grows dim. If he had seen that his own sons put away wine he would have had less disgrace in his own home. Only grief can understand grief, and such praying as Hannah's was unknown to the heart of the man who got his bread by prayer. The prayer that prevails is not the work of lips and fingertips. It is the cry of a broken heart and the travail of a stricken soul. Of Jesus it is said, As He prayed, He sweat. He never sweat over the wonders He wrought, but praying brought the sweat of blood.

### A Mighty Faith

Broken hearts cannot pray by rule. Sorrow ignores maxims, instructions, and regulations. Theologians may draw up lists of subjects suitable for prayer, but the heart is the supreme instructor in the things of God. Hannah prayed for a man child. It is useless to explain to her the inevitableness of nature's laws. God is above nature, and her heart will not cease its cry. There is one overmastering hunger in her soul, that defies all difficulties and surmounts all obstacles. Even a divine act is not taken as final. It was the Lord who had withheld this mercy from her, but her faith turns the reason into argument, and prevails. He who had closed could also open. Like all true praying the woman pleaded better than she knew. She knew not why she prayed except that her sorrow was greater than she could bear; but the burden of womanhood was the means through which the Spirit groaned within her. The Lord inspired the prayer that He might answer it. This is the mystery of prayer. God works within us to will and to do the things He purposes for us. Prayer begotten of God in the soul, whatever the immediate occasion or circumstance, cannot fail.

### A Burst Of Song

Great prayers inspire great songs and greater lives. The woman who pleaded in tears and anguish returned to give thanks. When she went back from Shiloh her countenance was no more sad, for she knew her prayer was heard. Whatever the issue she was content because she knew the Lord had remembered her. She kept her vow. It is easy to forget promises made in affliction when the danger is past. Many a man has cried unto the Lord on a sick bed and within a month been back in his sins. Long prayers are often followed with short thanks. Not so, Hannah. She is the first of women minstrels who exulted before God over their first-born; the forerunner of Elizabeth and the Virgin.

Blessed are the boys that have such mothers. They can never quite get away from their sacred influence. The mother's devotion will inspire the boy's veneration and be to him a lodestar in many a dark hour. A good mother is God's greatest gift to a boy, and a noble father is His supreme gift to a girl. To forsake a godly lineage is a heavy responsibility. Hannah's prayer should

inspire every troubled heart to cast its burden on the Lord. Instead of fretting over your sorrows pour out your soul unto God. He still hears prayer.

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## THE CRY OF DEFEAT

"And Joshua said, alas, O Lord God, wherefore hast Thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites, to cause us to perish?... Oh, Lord, what shall I say after that Israel hath turned their backs before their enemies ' Joshua 7:7-8

Joshua can hardly be ranked among the great intercessors of the Bible, but for all that he was a man of prayer. He did not go up into the mountain heights like Moses and Elijah, but he kept his eyes ever towards the hills from whence cometh our help. The Lord met him in the path of duty, and directed him in the day of battle. William Ewart Gladstone is reported to have once said that Buller was a greater general than Joshua, but that was before Ladysmith. Soldiers make good saints when they take to religion. There is a directness, simplicity, and thoroughness about them that combine strength and humility in an unusual degree. General Gordon was a brave soldier and a great saint.

It is significant that we learn more from men's failures than their successes. The lessons of defeat are writ large while the secret of triumphs remains unrevealed. It is easier to see the weakness through which a thing goes to pieces, than to understand the complex mechanism by which it bears the strain. In the hour of defeat men are revealed more than in the day of success. Calamity takes them by surprise, disturbs their balance, and throws them off their guard. Grief lays bare the hidden workings of the soul. Defences are broken down, and the artifices with which men cloak their motives are torn away. We learn more about Joshua at Ai than at Rephidim and Jericho.

### The Distress Over Defeat

The defeat at Ai came as a great surprise. Jericho had fallen so utterly that Ai seemed mere child's play. The intelligence department had assured the commander-in-chief that it was not a serious business. There was no need to send a great army, neither would it be necessary to trouble the Almighty. The attack on Jericho was preceded by prayer and consecration, because it was a difficult and humanly speaking impossible task. This, however, was a very small affair; a mere detachment of the army would be sufficient. So they marched as to a picnic, and came back helter-skelter like a flock of scared sheep. The experience is not unusual. Ai generally comes after Jericho. It is not every horse that can carry corn; and great heights need steady heads. There is something about success that makes men self-confident, and self-confidence is fatal to the spirit of prayer. So we often fail where we are most confident of success. More souls are lost through prosperity, than adversity. When Jeshurun waxes fat, he is apt to kick.

The Defeat Was A Humiliation And A Disaster.



To be beaten in some battles may be no dishonor; but to be beaten at Ai! No wonder the General took it to heart. He was dumbfounded. The thing was so ridiculous and disgraceful that he knew not what to say. The mere loss of a skirmish in which thirty-six men were left upon the field was not in itself a very great matter as battles go, but its issues were serious and far-reaching.' Bad news travels quickly; Their enemies would hear of it. That Israel could be put to flight meant that their God whose name had struck terror through the land was not invincible. If Ai could chase them the united forces of Canaan could surely crush them. When the cause of righteousness is feeble the forces of wickedness wax valiant. As Israel's heart melts the face of the Philistines become brazen.

### The Soldier's Challenge

Joshua took his defeat to God. It would have been better if he had come before he started on the campaign, but it is better to come now than never. He ought to have come in a better spirit, but it is better to come in the wrong spirit than not come at all. He blamed God, but he did it to His face. Whatever there is in the heart against Him is best spoken right out in His presence. The Lord is patient and pitiful, and knows how to bear with our fiery spirits. Both God and Devil get more blame than is their due. It is easy to reproach God in the day of calamity. We forget that to every covenant there are two sides, and expect God to keep His contract regardless of our disobedience. He promises bread, but He will not feed us if we are idle and improvident. No promise of God is unconditioned. When He promised that no enemy should be able to stand before them, He commanded them to be obedient and faithful to His commands. Joshua appeals to the covenant, pleads for the people, and challenges God to take heed to His great Name. That is patriotism. Not shouting but tears; not a vainglorious pride but a broken heart is the proof of the patriot's creed.

### The Lord's Reply

God's first word to the defeated general is a command to get up. It is possible to be on our knees when we ought to be on our feet. That generally happens when we have been on our feet when we ought to have been on our knees. Prayerless enterprises usually lands us on our face. The cause of failure is not in God but in ourselves, and our business is to search it out. Sin destroys power because it alienates God. One sinner destroys much good. Achan's sin was stronger than three thousand picked men of war. Hidden forces count. At Rephidim the rod of God was mightier than the sword; at Ai the treasure hidden in Achan's tent decided the issue of battle. God never hushes up sin. Men are dreadfully afraid of scandal, but Achan exposed is a less evil than Achan hid. He that covereth sin shall not prosper. It must be searched out, held up, condemned, destroyed. We cannot pray while we hide our Sin. Israel can never prevail so long as Achan is spared.

The way back to power is by the valley of humiliation. God is not mocked. We cannot hoodwink the Almighty. Every man knows the cause of his defeat. He needs no man to tell him what robs him of power and hinders his praying. Search must be made but the culprit knows on whom judgment will fall. Let every man's life be reviewed before God. Challenge tribe after tribe, family after family, man by man. Let God judge your business, your social ties, your family life, your motives, your affections, and your thoughts. He will put His finger on the secret cause of failure and disgrace. What He condemns let no man spare. Lay bare the soul to His searching, cleansing fire, and when our life is sanctified in His will there will be an end of defeat. We shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

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THE END