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LIVING WATERS
By Daniel Isom Vanderpool

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BACK COVER TEXT

Dr. D. I. Vanderpool, of San Jose, California, is noted for his evangelistic ministry in the Church of the Nazarene, which he also has served as a general superintendent since 1949.

Mr. Vanderpool was born near Pollock, Missouri, on September 6, 1891. He was converted in 1909, and was soon called to preach.

He received his education at John Fletcher College and Pasadena College, Pasadena, California, where he graduated. For several years he served as chairman of the board of regents of Northwest Nazarene College, Nampa, Idaho, and he received an honorary doctoral degree there.

Mr. Vanderpool joined the Church of the Nazarene in 1913. He was busy in evangelistic work at the time. He has become widely known for his inspired preaching at camp meetings, district assemblies, and conferences; and is famous for the use of his stories from his rural Missouri background as windows through which to show forth the truth.

For nineteen years he served as pastor of Nazarene churches including those in Denver, Colorado; Pasadena, California; and Walla Walla, Washington. He was superintendent of the Northwest District for eleven years.

Mr. Vanderpool has represented the Church of the Nazarene at many gatherings and in 1953 visited the British Isles, Italy, Syria, the Hashemite Jordan, Lebanon, and Israel. His book *In Their Steps* recounts his missionary travels and was published in 1956.

* * * * *

INTRODUCTION

To know Dr. D. I. Vanderpool is to love him. It has been my good fortune to have him for a friend since 1910. At first acquaintance in youthful years my admiration was sincere and my affection ardent. He became a favorite with all our family. He had much to do with helping my long-sainted brother to become an established Christian and in launching him into his ministry, which was cut short by early and untimely death. In the passing years probably no man has been so much like a brother to me. Now for nearly sixteen years it has been an honor and a rewarding fellowship to serve with him in the comradeship of the general superintendency. It is with more than a twinge of pain that I think of his release from official duties with the Board of General Superintendents.

Many thousands of people will miss the official visits and active leadership of General Superintendent Vanderpool. The Department of Evangelism seeks to enshrine his image in the memory of the Church of the Nazarene and to keep his great spirit alive through the generations following. For this purpose they have encouraged the printing of a volume of his sermons. Everyone who has heard him preach will know that here are presented sermons which denounce sin, call for repentance, urge believers to seek holiness of heart and life, and lift up Christ as this world's only Hope. For more than half a century Dr. Vanderpool has been first an evangelist,

whether engaged in camp meeting or revival or serving as a pastor, district superintendent, or general superintendent.

These messages are eloquent and scriptural. They have the common touch. There is a moving pathos that will reveal that the preacher is a weeping prophet. They throb with the compassion of a yearning heart. In them are heard the pleading accents of urgent exhortation and the warning overtones of Sinai's thunder.

To urge the circulation and serious reading of this book would be presumption on my part. The announcement of its availability is enough. Reading these sermons will be a soul-stirring experience and strong impetus to pray for revival.

-- G. B. Williamson

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01 -- LIVING WATERS

SCRIPTURE: For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring (Isa. 44:3).

Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life (John 4:13).

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) (John 7:37-39).

TEXT: For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water (Jer. 2:13).

"They have forsaken me the fountain of living waters." I am thinking of Living Waters, of which God is the Fountain or Source. The Holy Spirit is symbolized in the Scriptures in a number of different ways.

Oil with its healing, light-giving, friction-removing qualities is a symbol of the Spirit used in the case of Aaron when he was anointed with oil and inducted into the office of high priest, and with David when he was anointed king of Israel by the prophet Samuel.

Fire with its dross-refining, chaff-consuming, chill-removing qualities is another symbol of the Holy Spirit, as in Mal. 3:2-3, where He is pictured as "a refiner's fire," purifying "the sons of Levi"; and also in Acts 2:3, where "cloven tongues like as of fire . . . sat upon each of them."

In the third place I mention wind with its strange, powerful, and unpredictable activity. Jesus used wind as a symbol of the activities of the Spirit in the new birth. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). And Acts 2:2 reveals the coming of the Holy Ghost symbolized as the "sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind."

There are other symbols of the Spirit, as in Mal. 3:2, where he is "like fullers' soap"; also, in Matt. 3:16 "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him."

But I want to place special emphasis upon the scripture lesson in which water -- living water -- life-giving, thirst-quenching, burden-bearing, and crop-producing LIVING WATER symbolizes the Holy Spirit in action. You will note there were three different quantities of water mentioned -- springing wells, flowing rivers, and floods. I want to use these three different quantities of water to symbolize three different experiences in the realm of the Spirit's dealing with people.

Springing wells symbolize the new birth. Jesus had come with His disciples to Jacob's Well. There He sat weary, dust-covered, and thirsty while His disciples went to the city to buy bread. As He thus sat He heard the slow footsteps of a woman from the nearby village coming to draw water from Jacob's Well. She had a coil of rope on her arm and a waterpot on her shoulder. In silence she lowered the waterpot and drew it up full of cool, sparkling water, and was just ready to lift the waterpot to her shoulder for the return trip to the village when Jesus said, "Give me to drink." In utter amazement she said, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest a drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." Then the woman answered and said, "Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?" Yes, thank God, a greater than Jacob had arrived, though she did not realize it at the time! Jesus answered and said unto her, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Then followed a conversation that revealed the dark and disappointing past of the Samaritan woman. She answered Jesus' questions and met His requirements so completely that she left Jacob's Well a changed woman. Old things had passed away. A new life was open to her. She left Jacob's Well with her own new springing well. She dashed off to tell others the glad story. This "springing well" experience is the new birth. Do you remember when and where you got your "springing well"? O my brother, if you ever got this well you will remember the place. No spot is more dear than the one where you first met the Saviour. How well do I remember when and where I got my springing well!

When conducting a meeting in my early ministry in the state of Missouri, I noted one of the ugliest and most discouraged-looking men I had ever seen. (And I have seen some very tough characters in Missouri. Occasionally they leave Missouri and drift into other states.) This man came every night and sat toward the back. He looked worse each passing night. One night I went to him and asked him if he was a Christian. I really knew he was not, for no man could look like he did and be a Christian. His answer was, "I got religion fourteen years ago, but from what you say I must have got the wrong kind, for I never got anything that made me new or brought me joy." I said, "You certainly got the wrong kind. Come now, let's go to the altar and get the right kind." He pulled back and said, "No, not tonight." I persuaded him to come for just one prayer. Finally he said, "Well, I'll go for one prayer."

When he got to the altar I think he decided, if there was to be just one prayer, perhaps he should pray that himself. He started to pray. Such confession, such weeping, and deep concern one will scarcely see in a lifetime. He was first on one side of the altar and then on the other. He sat on the first seat a minute and then crawled back to the altar, praying all the time. No one got a chance to offer a word of instruction. Finally, when he slowed down a little, I asked him how he was getting along. He said, "I feel like I'm getting this old-time religion." I said, "Keep praying. You will get through pretty soon." In a few minutes he leaped to his feet and said, "I have found it at last." Then he told of how he had moved from first one state to another to find satisfaction -- Arkansas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Iowa, and back to Missouri to die without peace. What had he found? He had found peace. He had found his springing well of living water. He was born of the Spirit.

Our scripture lessons speaks of flowing rivers. Jesus said, "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)"

We are not left to guess what Jesus meant by the "flowing river" experience. The scripture makes this plain. "This spake he of the Spirit. . . for the Holy Ghost was not yet given."

The Holy Spirit operating in the heart of the Spirit-filled gives an experience that is different from the springing well of water which the woman of Samaria received. The springing well slaked the thirst of the Samaritan woman, while the flowing river experience furnished living water in abundance which flowed out to bless others.

A flowing river will furnish an abundance of water which will bear heavy barges, loaded with valuable freight. The same river controlled will furnish water that reaches out across the barren wastes, turning them into great farms, producing abundant crops. Or, if properly harnessed, it will generate electricity, to light, heat, and furnish power for the whole community. Just so, a man filled with the Holy Ghost will bear heavy burdens. He will live a spiritual life that will furnish living waters for the spiritually parched community. He will give light to those that sit in darkness and will radiate a white heat that warms the cold and shivering sinner and gives fervency to the lukewarm.

The man with the "flowing river" experience will in time change the spiritual climatic condition of the community in which he lives. A sanctified individual -- be it preacher, teacher, merchant, farmer, or coal miner -- will plant seed thoughts in the minds of those whom he may contact that will pave the way for the oncoming revival.

An evangelist friend of mine, now gone on to heaven told the story of an old sanctified Dutchman which goes about as follows. He met the Dutchman at a camp meeting. After a day or two of the camp he came to my evangelist friend and requested him to come over and give him a camp meeting. My friend inquired of him, "Are you a pastor? Do you have a church?" But the old man said, "No, no. I just wanted you to come and hold me a camp meeting." Then my friend told him that he did not have an open date but would let him know if he got a cancellation.

A few weeks went by and my friend had a ten-day meeting canceled. He wrote the old Dutchman and got a quick response saying, "Come on. We will try to be ready." He told my evangelist friend the railroad station to which he should come.

When he arrived he found a little, dilapidated, almost "ghost town," and the old Dutchman was not there to meet him. My friend said he thought that he certainly had missed it by coming to that forsaken place. Just then a man touched him on the shoulder and asked, "Are you the evangelist that has come to hold the camp meeting?" When he had assured the fellow that he was the evangelist, the man led him out to a buggy and said, "Come, get in. I'll take you on out where the camp is to be held." "What!" my evangelist friend said. "Isn't this far enough out?" The driver assured him that it was eight miles farther out.

As they rode along my friend inquired of the driver, "Do you know the old Dutchman?" His answer was, "Yes, do you?" My friend answered him that he had only met him at a camp. Then the driver said, "The old Dutchman is sure a queer old duck." My friend inquired, "Isn't he a good neighbor? Isn't he honest?" "Oh, yes," answered the driver, "but you wait until you get to the top of the hill and you will see why I say he is queer."

At the top of the hill my evangelist friend saw a board fence a quarter of a mile long. Painted on the board fence were a number of scripture texts: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God"; "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin"; "And holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord"; and, "Be filled with the Spirit." Pointing to the texts the driver said, "See, that is why we say he is queer. It cost the old Dutchman hard-earned money to hire that painted on the fence." He then pointed to a great barn nearly a mile away and said, "That is the old Dutchman's barn. See what he has painted on the roof." In big, bold letters my friend read the text, "Holiness unto the Lord." "That's what makes us say he is queer," the driver said.

The old Dutchman met them in the barnyard and apologized for not meeting the evangelist himself, but said he had been busy getting ready for the meeting that night. My friend inquired if he had been able to get out some advertising for the camp. The old Dutchman said, "Well, I just told them that I was going to have my camp meeting." "But," my friend asked, "When did you tell them?" "Well," he answered, "I just told them about seven years ago and I have been telling them ever since. I think they will be there."

When they came to the first service, people by the hundreds were there filling the tent and brush arbor adjoining it. A holy silence was upon the whole place. They sang and prayed. My friend said that, when he arose to preach, "God's presence was mightily upon the place." It was not his custom to make an altar call the first night, but feeling impressed to do so he opened the altar and about thirty came kneeling at the altar and about the platform. After an earnest prayer, my evangelist friend went among the seekers inquiring, "What are you seeking?" and the answer always was, "Oh, I want what the old Dutchman has."

The old Dutchman with the flowing-river experience had, in seven years of holy living, favorably affected his whole neighborhood. Though they thought he was queer, they wanted the old Dutchman's kind of religion. Let's harness ourselves to a task and not quit until it is finished.

Springing wells and flowing rivers symbolize being born of the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit. But in the scripture lesson you will note a third measure of water mentioned, which symbolizes the Holy Spirit's activity in still another area. "I will pour floods upon the dry ground." The floods which God says He will pour upon the dry ground symbolize revivals, refreshings, and anointings that He is pleased to give to His Church and to individuals.

The need today among our people is not a new church, but a revival that will renew the old church; a revival that will cause people to clean out the old wells of former years, remove the trash and rubbish that the world has piled in, and let the living waters begin to spring again -- a revival that will be like a mighty flood sweeping down a river. It is remarkable what a flood will do when turned loose. It will clean out old stagnated pools, straighten out crooks and bends in the river, cut new channels, and remove old snags and old drifts that may have hindered the river's flow for many months.

I saw an old hickory tree, not far from our home in Missouri, that a high wind had caused to fall across the creek. Its roots were fastened on one side of the creek and its branches stuck deep in the mud on the other side. It formed a perfect barrier across the creek. Everything that came down the creek lodged against the old hickory. It is amazing what will come down a creek in a period of month -- logs, brush, leaves, cornstalks, dead animals, cats, squirrels. After months this old tree, with its attending drift, finally soured and the stench became a menace in the neighborhood. My brother and I decided we would move the old drift and have a clear stream. With our long poles we pried, prodded, and pounded, and did our best to loosen the old hickory, but we only disturbed the atmosphere. It seemed an impossible situation.

I have seen churches where some "old hickory" was lodged across the stream. The high wind that put him down and across the creek was the annual church meeting. He was not elected to a church office. From that night on, everything seemed to lodge against him. The church became divided and its influence was crippled in the community. Everything was at a standstill. The new pastor came and saw the problem. He proceeded to try to pry and prod the old drift loose, but this only made people take sides and the church was divided a little more. As a result, the congregation got a new pastor. This is a stubborn situation that can be solved only by a mighty revival coming like an outpoured flood.

Sitting by our little shack one afternoon we were alarmed by a horseman racing by, crying, "Get to the hills. There's been a cloudburst in southern Iowa and a six-foot roll of water is coming. Get to the hills." We never waited for another horseman. We quickly gathered our belongings together, crammed them into a meal sack, and headed for the hills.

The flood came, sweeping everything in front of it. Railroad embankments went out; steel rails were wrapped around huge trees. Backwater from the flood covered the fields and floated barns and houses away. Large fish from the Missouri River came out across the fields, leaving in their wake rippling waves that appeared as if a small canoe had been along.

After about three weeks the flood went down and we went back to investigate the damage. We went to see what happened to the old hickory. We walked along the creek and searched carefully. We could not find the least sign of the old drift that was there. There was not a root or branch to mark the spot. The flood had swept it all away -- the drift was gone.

As that cloudburst in southern Iowa released a flood that swept out the old hickory, just so God proposes to open the floodgates and give revivals that will sweep through the church -- revivals that will change, transform, and renew until old hindrances, logs, snags, and drifts are swept away, leaving the church with an unobstructed channel through which the Holy Ghost can operate unhindered.

Individual lives may be much like churches. They may have some stubborn problem for which there seems to be no solution. These individuals need "floods upon the dry ground" in the form of fresh anointings and new outpourings of the Holy Spirit. Their need is not for a new river, but a flood to come down their river. Anointing of the Spirit heals hurts, takes the sting out of insults, and makes one strong for emergencies of life. Many of our people could permanently solve their age-old problems if they would learn the secret of pulling up close to the Lord and waiting for a fresh touch from God. The disciples did just that in Acts 4, when ordered to preach or teach no more in the name of Jesus. With the threat of punishment and imprisonment upon them, the disciples sought God for personal strength to preach boldly and for Him to make bare His arm in their behalf. As they prayed, the place was shaken. The Holy Ghost filled them afresh. Holy boldness and great grace were upon them all, and a multitude were won to Christ. What appeared to be permanent defeat became a glorious victory, all because the disciples got a flood to come down their river. The skies are full of spiritual floods for God's children who are in spiritual conflict.

I had been misunderstood and misrepresented. I was grieved in my heart. Oh, I loved everybody. I loved God and I believed He sanctified my heart. I prayed, preached, was faithful about my tithe, but I was hurt. It seemed I could not forget what had been said or what had been done. I carried this load for several months. Then one night when the folk were singing "Jesus Breaks Every Fetter," I felt the moving of the Spirit upon my heart. His blessing rolled over my heart. I thought of the old song,

Like a mighty sea, like a mighty sea,
Comes the love of Jesus, sweeping over me.

Away into the night that blessing flowed over my soul. When morning came and I walked on to the street, I felt so free, so satisfied that God understood. My shoulders were back. I was a new man. My heart was healed. I had received a flood down my river that gave me victory over every problem. Someone would say, "You were reclaimed or sanctified." No, I was sanctified before that flood came. I had my rivers of living water -- that night He poured floods upon the dry ground.

Why people will forsake the fountain of living waters and hew themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water is more than I will ever know. There is nothing on earth that is like walking with the Spirit and having Him give springing wells, flowing rivers, and floods upon the dry ground.

* * * * *

02 -- THE TRAGEDY OF LOSING CHRIST

And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers (Luke 2:45-47).

I am thinking particularly about the tragedy of losing Christ. A few years ago just outside Jerusalem on the road that led to Nazareth, our guide stopped and said, "It's just about here on the journey from Jerusalem to Nazareth that Mary and Joseph discovered that Jesus was not in the company. It was about here that they sought among the folk and then finally turned back to Jerusalem to find Jesus, whom they had left in Jerusalem."

I thought about that experience a number of times. What a tragedy it was in their lives to awaken to the fact that they had gone off and left Jesus back in Jerusalem! Of all the people in the world, you would never expect Joseph and Mary to lose Jesus. They had Him; they had walked with Him; they had had Him now for a number of years. He was twelve years old. They had had Him from His childhood. They came to know His voice and recognize His footsteps as He approached the home. They had felt the warmth of His fellowship. Again and again they had been blessed by the laughter, by the words of wisdom, by the deeds of kindness, and by the beautiful fellowship they had had with Him. What a tragedy! You'd hardly think they would ever lose Him, but they did. They went off and left Him.

I'm thinking about people who have had Jesus in their hearts. Back yonder years ago -- fifteen or twenty years ago -- people knew Him and walked with Him and really sensed His presence. And then something came along and they lost Him. They got concerned about something else and they lost Him. You know, it's strange how people lose Jesus. The strangest people, the ones you'd never think of losing Jesus, have lost Him, and lost Him in the strangest places. Mary and Joseph lost Jesus in the Temple. You wouldn't think of them losing Him there, but that's where they lost Him -- in the Temple.

When I think about people losing Christ, I am reminded that they have lost Him for many different reasons. So many different things enter in to cause them to lose Christ. David lost the divine presence of his Lord at home in quietness. Saul lost his Lord and His presence on a field of victory. Mary and Joseph lost Jesus in the Temple. How many people have lost Jesus in different places and in different ways?

When you stop to think about it, perhaps Mary and Joseph were watching other people. They had been down there now for several days and noticed other folk getting ready to go home. Other people were packing up and getting ready to go back to their cities and homes. They watched these people. I can hear them say, "We'd better get ready. We need to hurry back home, for we have duties and responsibilities at home." Perhaps they thought about the sheep and other livestock, the gardens and crops they had left, and they said, "We'd better hurry back home." And they watched other people as they were hurrying around. How many people have lost Christ by getting concerned about material things, and by watching other people, and getting their minds off the Saviour! We can lose Him by watching people and getting interested in things other than those that are vital and altogether important.

In talking about the parable of the sower, Jesus lifted up several reasons why the harvest was not thirty, sixty, or a hundred fold. He said that some of the seed fell by the wayside; some seed fell on stony ground; other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked the Word. I am thinking about the thorns that spring up and choke the Word. I am thinking about the things that enter in and rob us of Christ and bring us to the tragic place where we sense that once we had Him, once we knew Him, once we felt His presence, but it is no longer there. Our hearts are heavy; there is a sense of loneliness that has overtaken us because we have lost the Christ out of our hearts. These choking thorns are all about us.

I am wondering about those who have allowed certain things to crowd in and rob them of the Divine Presence. Once they had it, once they were happy, once they were filled with joy; but He's gone and there's a sadness and a loneliness and an emptiness. Christ has been left behind; they are concerned about other things. Their joy is gone and their hearts are heavy; their homes are not what they used to be. They don't have that same warmth of fellowship and blessing that they once had. When Mary and Joseph discovered that they had left Jesus behind, their hearts were heavy. They were filled with sorrow.

No man has ever lost Christ and been happy about it. Sorrow, and broken hearts always follow wandering and failure and backsliding. One can't have Christ choked out of the heart and the life and ever be happy about it. In all my travels and in all the places where I have preached, I have never yet seen one happy backslider. There is no such thing as a happy backslider. You say, "I have seen backsliders who were happy." Maybe you have seen backsliders who smiled, to whom laughter and joking seemed to come easy, but they did it only to cover a heart that was full of sorrow. They did it to cover a heart that was lonely, and to get them past a sense of loneliness that they can't get over until they find Christ again.

To have Jesus is supreme happiness; to lose Jesus brings direst loneliness. Mary and Joseph were so lonely when they looked about them and saw He wasn't there. They sought Him among their kinfolk and relatives; they sought Him among the others that were traveling that road,

but when they didn't find Him their hearts were heavy. It is not enough for us to find Him among our kinfolk, or to find Him among our associates. We must have Christ ourselves. We can't be happy without Him. If they had found Him among the kinfolk they might have taken Him home. But kinfolk's religion will not do; the religion of friends and associates will not do. It must become a personal matter with us until we have Him and know Him for ourselves; until we recognize His voice, feel His presence, and sense His fellowship and have that supreme joy. Without it there is a heaviness, a loneliness about life that nothing can take away.

I want you to notice their efforts to find Him. The Scripture says they turned back to Jerusalem to find Him. When they didn't find Him among the group and the caravan that was going back to Nazareth, they turned around and went back to Jerusalem. They had gone a day's journey without Him. It hardly seems possible that they could go that far without Him and yet when we become so concerned about other things we can go quite a long way without Him.

I may be speaking to people who have not seriously thought about this business of losing Christ, and things have crowded in on them. They have been concerned about other things until their prayer life, until the fellowship life, until the warmth of the Spirit and the blessings of God have not been upon their hearts for quite a while. I hope they will take invoice and seriously question in their own hearts whether or not they have allowed things to choke Christ out of their hearts and out of their homes. What a tragedy it is to have Christ in the home once and then to lose Him! They turned back to find Him.

It says that their search was thorough. They didn't find Him among kinfolk, among their own company, among their acquaintances, so they turned back toward Jerusalem. Their seeking was accompanied by deep sorrow. Everywhere Joseph and Mary went people asked them what had happened. "Oh," they said, "we've lost Jesus. We supposed He was with us, but we have lost Him." They turned back to Jerusalem to find Him. They said, "We must have Him. We can't get along without Him. We can't go further without Him. We're not going home without Him." Their intense sorrow and disappointment drove them back to Jerusalem. It was in Jerusalem that they found Him.

Though we may have been unfortunate enough to lose Him, to allow certain things to choke out the Spirit and to choke out the presence of God, I am glad that with intense seeking and sorrow and earnestness He may be found again. They finally came back to the Temple. They found Him right where they had left him. I believe that if you who have lost Christ and His fellowship from your heart would go back to where you laid down your cross, you could find what you lost. You will find Christ back there where you left Him. They left Jesus at the Temple. They turned back and never stopped until finally they found Him in the Temple, where they had left Him. They found Him with the same attitude toward them. His attitude hadn't changed. They found Him at the same task that He was occupied with when they left Him. He was about His Father's business.

I am happy to report to you that Jesus is at the same old stand. He's in the same old business and any man or woman who will come with a broken heart, anybody who will come confessing and seeking the things of God afresh and anew, can find that same peace and satisfaction that once he had.

I have thought about the stories that Jesus told us about the lost sheep, and about the lost coin. He reached the climax when He told us about the lost boy. That boy wandered away and went into a far country and wasted what he had in riotous living. A famine overtook him and he sensed that he was in rags, filth, and hunger, feeding on the husks that the swine would eat. It was then he woke up, turned his weary footsteps back homeward. But the Book says that when he was yet a long way off his father saw him. And I am glad to tell you that our Heavenly Father looks out of the upstairs window; He looks in your direction; He is concerned. He wonders when you are coming back. And when you are a long way off He will see you. The father saw this boy a long way off.

In this scripture is the first place where God is ever represented as being in a hurry. It says the father ran to meet the boy. Here's a father running to meet a prodigal boy, giving to us a picture of God's attitude toward that prodigal who has drifted away and allowed the thorns to choke out that beautiful experience that he once had. If a man will turn his steps back toward God, God will turn His smile in his direction and in a little while there will be a happy meeting. The burden will be lifted and the fellowship will be restored.

I am thinking about Mary and Joseph turning back and seeking with sorrow. They went only a day's journey without Jesus, but they retraced their steps and the Bible says they sought for three days. It may be a little difficult to get back, but it's going to be worth it. You'd better do anything that is necessary to do to get back to God and get that joy and peace in your heart.

Have you stopped to think about the day in which we live? Have you stopped to think about the perils with which we are surrounded? the uncertainties that knock at our door? If there was ever a time in the history of our lives that we need that Divine Presence ' it is now. We need Christ now; we need Him today. And if you sense that you have drifted and grown careless or you've allowed something to rob you of that Presence, won't you take steps like Joseph and Mary took? Won't you turn back and seek His face? Won't you turn back and try to find His presence? God waits and looks in your direction with mercy and tender kindness. Jesus sorrows with us when we have wandered and failed, but when we come back He is ready to forgive. There are those here who need to come back. There are some here today who are unsettled. Maybe some of you never have had Him. Mary and Joseph had Him; they really knew Him. Their religion was genuine.

I think some people today have never really known Jesus. All the religion they have ever had is wrapped up in ceremony and form. They have never had a real, definite, heart-changing experience which brought Christ into their lives. It's our privilege to have that. If you've had that and lost it, it's your privilege to get it back again. If you've never had it, it's your privilege to have that beautiful experience and know that Jesus has forgiven and washed away your sins and brought peace to your heart.

The Book says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock . . ." Jesus stands at the heart's door and knocks. If you'll unlock and open the door, He says He'll come in and sup with you. There's a banquet table all set and ready. Just as that father had a fatted calf all prepared for the returning of his prodigal boy, God has a feast all prepared for the returning of the prodigal that may be here today. If you'll turn your face back, God will bring peace, joy, comfort, and assurance to your heart.

We are in a revival meeting, and I believe that in a revival meeting one of the specific things that is done is to revive those who have allowed the fires to burn low, who have allowed certain things to choke their experience. If I were here in your place and I needed help, I wouldn't let this service close without turning my face toward God and trying to find His peace and pardon and reclamation this day. This would be a wonderful time, if you have lost ground and you aren't where you once were and where you know you ought to be. This would be the time to make your way to the front of the church, have a prayer, and pledge allegiance to God and tell Him that you will pluck out the thorns that have been choking your experience, pledge God that you'll mind Him and walk with Him from today on.

If you do that, God will meet your heart and you can go home a singing Christian. You could go home with a heart full of supreme happiness because Christ would come back to your life. You need Him in Your home. You need Him for your children's sake; you need Him for your own soul's sake; and this ought to be the time that everyone who feels he has a need would make his way to the front of this church and have a good, old fashioned prayer and get all fixed up and get ready to go out to be of service the rest of the week and the carrying on of the revival.

Mary and Joseph turned back and sought sorrowing and never stopped until they found Him. There was a little tendency, when they found Him, to blame Him. What a tragic thing that was! They said, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?" indicating that Jesus might have been to blame for their having lost Him. There are people who blame the Lord; there are people who blame others. We shouldn't do that. We are responsible ourselves if we go off and leave Him. There's nobody to blame but ourselves if we fail Him. There's nobody but ourselves to blame if we're not where we ought to be. The door is open, the altars are open, the presence of God may be yours. He invites you. He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If you'd come now, He'd give you rest. He's not ready to condemn you; He wants to forgive you if you'll only turn back to Him. He'll forgive you and establish you and you can be a victorious Christian from here on out. I trust God will help us to this end.

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03 -- PERILS OF THE SOUL

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matt. 16:26)

Jesus indicated that there was a danger of a man losing his soul. He said, What does it profit a man if he should gain the whole world, but in the gaining of the world he should lose his soul? Suppose a fellow gained all the pleasure, all the fame, all the money, all the honor that the world had to offer, but in the gaining of that he forfeited his soul. Jesus indicated that a man would lose more in the losing of his soul than he would gain if he gained the whole world with all that it had to offer.

Then He reached another conclusion. He said, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" If a man has lost his soul, then what hope is there to ever secure it again or regain it, or find his way back to favor and smile if once he has lost his soul?

In thinking about this, I thought of the many perils of the soul. Jesus indicated that a man might lose his soul. Every force of evil that can be imagined is set to rob men of their souls. Snares, traps, and lies of the devil and wicked men all fit together to rob men of their souls. Whether you know it or not, your soul now is beset by perils all about you, and if you save your soul, you are going to do it in spite of all these perils. I want to call attention to some perils of the soul.

In the first place, I think the peril of indifference is found everywhere. It's upon this age; it's upon the people all about us. And if you haven't felt the grinding influence of indifference before, you'll feel it before long. For Satan is using that scheme and plan to rob men of their souls, to get them to become indifferent about spiritual things. And when he can get a fellow to the place where there is no challenge and no thrill in religion, then he has the fellow pretty well tied up in the grip of indifference. As long as the fellow dreams of something better, as long as he dreams of peace, contentment, final satisfaction, pardon, and cleansing, as long as he dreams and thinks about that and it has a place in his heart and in his life, and he strives toward it and thinks about it, then it couldn't be said that he is indifferent.

I preached some time ago to a man who had wandered away from the Lord. He had gone for twenty-one years, wandering from God. And in that twenty-one years he made investments and carried on a great financial program, until he became a rich man in every sense of the word. But for twenty-one years he had wandered.

He came to a meeting that we were holding and the Spirit of God began to move upon him. One night he made his way to the altar and sought and found peace and victory. He stood up to say, "Oh, for twenty-one years I had never had a hope that I would get back. I had lost all hope of ever getting back to God. But the tide got so high and the Spirit moved upon me so tremendously that at last I found my way back to God."

He went back to the old crowd and told them what he was going to do, served notice on them that he had made his choice forever. His little wife, who had prayed for him and wept for him these twenty-one years, was beside herself with joy. She just celebrated at the homecoming of her husband. But he had lost that dream for twenty-one years and all that time the dream was gone. It's a terrible thing when a man becomes indifferent to the peril of his soul. No time or thought for spiritual things, using his attitude of indifference just as a cloak to turn away personal workers. I've seen men just yawn while the people of God stood about them with tears running down their faces because they were so concerned, so burdened and troubled. These men were so in the grip of utter indifference that nothing seemed to move them. This is a tragic thing and is a peril of the soul. Don't allow yourself ever to become indifferent to church or to God and to the salvation of your soul. You ought to be on tiptoe all the time, mightily concerned about the saving of your soul. Indifference ties the Spirit; indifference handicaps workers and hinders God in doing things for you that He wants to do for you.

The second peril I want you to notice is the peril of unbelief. When the person has lost faith, and unbelief has taken possession of him, it's impossible for him to please God. That's what the Book says. "Without faith it is impossible to please him [God]." When you allow yourself to be robbed of your faith and robbed of your confidence in Christ and in the Bible, and in truth, you are well on the road toward losing your immortal soul. When a fellow is gripped by unbelief, it leaves his soul unguarded. As long as he has no fear and no sense of danger, peril, or trouble in the future, it leaves him open to all kinds of subtle assaults of Satan.

I heard Rev. Harmon Schmelzenbach, our pioneer missionary in Africa, on his return to the homeland after being gone for twenty-two years without a furlough, tell about some of the incidents that took place in Africa.

One of the things he told about that impressed me was how the natives would build little huts, or kraals, or camps, along the riverbank, 50 to 100 yards back from the river. These kraals were built all along the river for miles. He said that one afternoon an English soldier, riding a horse at full speed, came down along the riverbank. He was warning the people that a storm had released a torrent of water farther up the river and that a flood was coming down. He warned that they had better flee to the hills and get to a place of safety. But those natives just looked at that English soldier and smiled. They'd been there on that river for years and there had never been a flood come down that river. They were not afraid. It was an idle tale to them. Unbelief had taken such possession of them that they didn't fear, but said, "That's just a story, just an idea. There's no danger or peril, no need to be afraid." They didn't make a move.

But the flood came that night. A mighty wall of water came down that river, sweeping out those kraals and villages, and Brother Schmelzenbach said that far into the night could be heard the screams and cries of the dying, drowning natives. They could be heard crying as they clung to the trees and branches, with the water lapping at their feet until they finally grew weary, turned loose, and were carried into the flood. He said it was the most terrible thing one could possibly imagine, and it all came about as the result of unbelief. If those people had believed the message, they would have fled to the hills and been safe.

I wish people could sense that the storm of the ages is about to break on this world and that there are danger and death ahead. I believe that God has a controversy with the world, a controversy with people, a controversy with nations, and there is a storm gathering. The man or the woman who has spiritual eyesight can see the zigzag flashes of lightning. The fellow that has spiritual hearing can hear the deep-toned thunder that tells us that the storm of the ages is about to break upon us and that we ought to see to it that our souls are housed; we ought to take care to see that our sins are washed away; see that we are sanctified wholly; see that we are dedicated to God and all out to do what He wants us to do. Unbelief is the peril of the soul and it keeps men out of the will of God. Think how many people, because they didn't believe, made no preparation and the enemy and danger came and overtook them.

Think of Belshazzar! He went to bed and dropped off into a drunken stupor, thinking that he was safe; he had no fear that any trouble would arise. "Why," he said, "these walls about Babylon are 350 feet high; they are wide enough at the top so five charioteers could guide their horses and race on the top of these walls. There's no danger. I'm safely housed." He didn't know that at that

very minute his enemies were turning the course of the river and were getting ready to file in under the walls of that city to bring death and devastation, wreck and ruin. The Book says, "That night was Belshazzar . . . slain." He thought he was safe and that everything was all right. He was filled with unbelief about any peril crowding in upon him. That night he perished. And there are people all about us that are careless and indifferent and it's all because they don't believe. They don't believe there is any danger; they don't believe that the storm approaches. Unbelief is a peril to the soul.

Peril number three, is the world. The world is a peril to the soul. The Book says that the world is the enemy of God and he that is the friend to the world is the enemy of God. This world is no friend of grace to help us on to God. We can't wait for the world's approval or smile; we've got to find out what God wants and then drive straight ahead toward that, turning a deaf ear to the voice of the world and the call of the world. The world offers a peril to the soul. Conformity to the world will bring disaster.

One of the saddest pictures in the Bible is that of Demas. It was said of Demas that he was a young fellow, bright, alert, and useful, and had every prospect of filling a place equal to that of Timothy or Titus. He was an outstanding fellow. But listen to the Apostle Paul as he sounds the saddest note I think I have found anywhere in his writings. He wrote to Timothy and said, "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: for Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica . . ." Thessalonica was a city of 100,000 people, filled with fun and frolic, worldliness and sin. The glitter and tinsel of that city had gotten hold of Demas, and Demas had loved this present world and lost out. Paul asked Timothy to bring the overcoat that he had left, for winter was coming on. He asked Timothy to bring the books that he had left and to come quickly. Paul said he was lonely, he had been forsaken. The one upon whom he counted had allowed himself to be gripped by the world and was lost in the night.

The world is the enemy of the Church. We need to be careful about letting the world find its way into the Church. We need to be careful also to watch lest the world find its way into our hearts. The man who has the world in his heart is in a dangerous plight and a dangerous situation. We may be in the world but we dare not be a part of the world. The world is the enemy of God; the world is a peril of the soul.

Peril number four is the carnal mind. We are born into this world with the carnal mind. We are born into this world with a twist in our nature. We are born into this world in a sort of a current that pulls us downstream. The pull of the current is downstream all the way. You know just any old rotten chunk can float downstream, for the pull is in that direction. But it's going to take something with life, buoyancy, and drive to pull upstream. The current of the human heart and life is downward, until every move we make that's good and proper has to be made against a force that is evil and would hold us back and pull us down. The carnal mind is a dangerous thing to have, and that's a thing that we carry past conversion. A fellow may get converted and get his sins forgiven all right. God forgives him, but he carries the carnal mind past that station we call forgiveness. After he's converted he finds that there is that warring, that pull. He has life. He is different after his conversion, in that he does have a little voice inside that pulls him, pleads with him to go with the Lord and take the high road. But there is also an occasional pulling to take the

low road; this causes a warring inside. James said, "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways" (Jas. 1:8).

You say, "Brother Vanderpool, aren't all people double-minded?"

There are two classes of people that aren't doubleminded. One is the sinner, and the other is the sanctified man. The fellow that is double-minded is the man who has been converted but has not yet been sanctified. The double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. Now listen to what James says, 'Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded.' Can you see that there are two crowds of people there, that there are two needs presented there? "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners." What they need is to get their outward lives straightened up. What they need is to get their deportment cleared up and get their sins forgiven. "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners . . ." But he turned to this double-minded crowd and said, ". . . purify your hearts, ye double-minded." What the double-minded man needs is a pure heart. Before one gets converted he has just one mind and that's the old carnal mind. But after he gets converted it's different.

I heard about an old Indian chief down in Oklahoma who got converted. He was gone about two or three weeks and came back to see the missionary. The missionary said, "Chief, how are you getting along?"

"Oh," he said, "good. Good."

"Everything's fine?" asked the missionary.

"Yes," said the Indian. "But there's one thing, Missionary. You know, before I was converted there was just one Indian inside. But since I have been converted there are two Indians in there. There is a good Indian and a bad Indian. The bad Indian says, 'Drink firewater.' But the good Indian says, 'No, no, don't drink firewater. You're a Christian now.' Oh, if I could only get rid of that bad Indian, what a wonderful Indian I would be!"

And that's exactly what the Lord wants to do for the people who get converted. He wants them to go on and get sanctified and "get rid of the bad Indian," get rid of the carnal mind. The carnal mind is a peril of the soul. Is there any scripture for that? Sure there's scripture for it. Paul said, in writing to the Romans, "For to be carnally minded is death; . . . the carnal mind . . . is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The carnal mind is an outlaw. The carnal mind is an ally of Satan. Men get converted and carry the carnal mind past their conversion. They don't live the Christian life very long until they run into this foul thing. They feel they ought to have a deeper and better experience. They long for something deeper and better inside. They sense there is a need for a deeper work of grace.

Some people say they got rid of the carnal mind when they got converted. A man said to me one time, "Brother Vanderpool, I got in one work of grace what it took you two works to get. I'm from the old country and we go in all over in the old country."

I said, "If you did you got something the apostles and early Christians did not get." And I added, "I agree with you. All that you have you got at once, but you need a deeper experience.

But he assured me he got it all at once. Some folk wanted me to preach in a nearby schoolhouse, and this man said, "If you preach over here in the schoolhouse, I'll sing. I'll be your singer and you do the preaching."

"Well, now, Chris, do you really mean that?" I asked. He said he did, so I preached in this schoolhouse.

One night I was preaching and used for my text, "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded." There was an old fellow sitting in front of me who was almost totally blind. He sat there and while I was preaching on the first part of that text "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners," he was very happy. He praised the Lord and said, "Amen." Well, I wished that he wouldn't be so loud while I was preaching on that, for I was feeling sorry for what would happen when I took the second part of my text. I was afraid that he would get silent when I came to the latter part of my text and it would be embarrassing for him. He was loud in his praise while I was dealing with the first part of it; but when I switched and began to talk about not only getting clean hands, but we ought to have that doubleminded condition removed until our hearts would be made pure, he was silent.

He was a bald-headed fellow and as I preached he bent over a little farther, until I could just see his bald head sticking above the top of the bench. He stood it as long as he could and all of a sudden he stood right up and said, "Young man, young man, you're spoiling an awfully good sermon. You were doing all right there for a while, but now you are spoiling it all."

Chris, my singer, was sitting right back of him. I looked at Chris when the old man began to talk out in meeting and Chris's face got pale. I thought, O Lord, help Chris not to blow up there. Then Chris's face turned red and then it got purple. And while the old man was talking Chris just reached up and took one swipe and got hold of the old man's coattail, and he just yanked that coattail until one could almost hear the seams pop. He said, "Sit down, old man. The boy's got the floor." Of course the old man sat down. With 175 pounds swinging on his coattail, there wasn't anything else to do but to sit down.

When we were on our way home I said to Chris, "Chris, I want to ask you a question. Just how did you feel when you yanked that old man's coattail tonight?"

He said, "That old man had no business being up there. He was altogether out of place and he got exactly what was coming to him."

I said, "Chris, that's not the question. I want you to tell me, how did you feel when you yanked his coattail like you did?"

He said, "I didn't feel very good." That told me he was having a war with the carnal mind. The "old man," the carnal mind, that he said he got rid of, was causing him trouble.

There came a time, though, when Chris dedicated his life to God, and God gloriously sanctified him. He called me to his bedside just before he died. He took me by the hand and said,

"Brother Vanderpool, I want you to promise me something. I want you to promise me that you'll preach sanctification as long as you live."

I clasped his hand and said, "All right, Chris, I'll do it. But tell me, why do you want me to preach sanctification?"

"Brother Vanderpool, I am where I can see things that you can't see. Holiness comforts a dying man." I'll tell you this, holiness does comfort a dying man. There isn't anything in the world that will bring comfort to a man quite like that deep inner sense that his sins are gone and that his heart has been made pure and that everything is all right between him and his God. That carnal mind is a peril of the soul, the enemy of the soul, and every converted person ought to go on and get sanctified wholly. Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Nazarene, it doesn't make any difference who he is -- if a fellow ever gets converted, that makes him eligible for the Father's special blessing, which is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This baptism cleanses and sanctifies the man's nature, and that is God's experience to fit a man for the emergencies of life. And everybody that gets converted ought to press right on and get sanctified. He ought to do that! That's God's plan to establish you. That's God's plan to fortify you. That's God's plan to strengthen you. The carnal mind is an enemy and a peril of the soul.

The last peril I notice is procrastination. Procrastination robs us of time. It steals the best opportunities of life; it grieves the Spirit of God; and it will bring a fellow to the place where it's too late to do anything about his soul. And anything that leaves a man in that state certainly is a peril of the soul.

Do you remember how Paul preached to Felix? Paul was preaching mightily and laying it on him, telling him about what God had done for his own soul and the wonderful change and transformation that had come to his own life. When he got through Felix announced, "When I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." But if you follow the Scriptures you will find that that convenient season never came. Felix never did find that convenient season. And Satan will see to it that you will never have a convenient season to be converted. If men ever get converted, if men ever get sanctified, they are going to do it when it's inconvenient. Satan will see to it that it is never convenient. Procrastination, to put it off until a more convenient time, is a peril of the soul.

While God's Spirit talks we ought to yield; while He pulls we ought to say yes. Procrastination is a peril of the soul. "If any man hear my voice . . ." The danger is that men may not hear it. "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." I believe the longer we procrastinate in our return to God to get converted, to be reclaimed, or to get sanctified, the less conviction we'll have about the matter. How many people have said to me, "Brother Vanderpool, when I was first converted I felt I ought to go on and get sanctified. You know, I don't feel that way any more"! That's a tragic confession for a man to say he does not feel the tug and pull to get what Jesus died to give him. Jesus suffered outside the gate that He might sanctify the people with His own blood; and when a man reaches the place where he no longer has an urge, no longer has a pull, or a tug, to get what Jesus died to buy for Him, it's tragic. Jesus died to sanctify you, and if you are not concerned about it, it's a tragic thing. And to delay and put off your return to God is tragic.

Perils of the soul are the peril of indifference, the peril of unbelief, the peril of the world, the peril of the carnal mind, and the peril of procrastination. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" And just now I'd like, if I could, to arouse you to do something about these perils that knock at your door. I beg of you to become aroused. Don't lose the dream; don't lose the vision. I beg of you to take God at His word. He's coming back one of these days. He said He'll come in an hour when you think not. "Therefore be ye also ready." This is the warning and you ought to believe that. You ought to make preparation and keep ready day by day.

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04 -- PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Amos 4:6-12 -- And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. And also I have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered. So two or three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured them: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel (Amos 4:6-12).

TEXT: . . . prepare to meet thy God, O Israel (Amos 4:12).

Note the latter part of this twelfth verse: "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." As I look at this text I see it as God's ultimatum to His people. We have read how God had been dealing with His people. They had drifted from Him and failed to serve Him. God's infinite love caused Him to try to bring the people back to himself. He said that He had permitted famine to come among them until they had had "cleanness of teeth" and had become hungry, and had felt the pinch and pang of a famine. "Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord."

Then He said He had allowed drought to come until two cities wandered into one city to drink water, but they were not satisfied. "Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord." Again the Lord said He had permitted blasting, mildew, and the palmerworm to come, but "yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord." He reminds them how He had permitted war to come and He said, "Your young men have I slain with the sword." He said, "I ... have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord." Again he said, "Ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet

have ye not returned to me." That is, they were in the fire and it looked as if there was not a chance to get out. Notwithstanding, the mercy of God reached over and plucked them out of the burning.

Five times He said, "Yet have ye not returned unto me." God reached a decision. His ultimatum to His people was this: "Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." God had tried to get them to come back to Him and meet Him and get things adjusted; but they had gone their own way, had lived their own lives, and had refused to meet God in the hills or in the valleys, refused to meet God in His judgment or in His mercy. Now God says the ultimatum is this: You have sidestepped Me, you have evaded Me, you have run away from Me as long as you can. Get ready. Make preparations to meet Me, for meeting Me is certain. God had a controversy with Israel because of her sins.

I keep thinking that God has a controversy with our country. I don't believe that our country can go on and gamble and drink, carouse and forget God as she is doing, without one of these days God sounding an ultimatum. I'm inclined to believe that God is getting ready to rein us up and make us to feel that we cannot trample the blood of His Son beneath our unhallowed feet, reject His call, turn down His mercy, and refuse the claims of the gospel and get by with it. Oh, no, God is sounding an ultimatum. He has a controversy with the nations today just as He had one with Israel. His ultimatum is, Now prepare to meet Me.

I believe God has a controversy with individuals. God has brought you to several places where you should have returned to Him. He has talked to you about returning to Him and you have evaded Him, you have offered excuses, you have found hiding places, you have run from God and haven't returned to Him. The ultimatum comes to you now in your hiding place. The ultimatum is this: "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

I want you to notice that Israel had a God. You have a God; all of us have a God of some kind. Israel had a God, and Israel's God was the God of the Bible. Israel's God is the God with whom you have to do. Israel's God is the God with whom I have to do. We cannot evade Him. We must have something to do with Israel's God. If you want to know the kind of God that you have to meet, if I want to know the kind of God I have to meet, then let me find out the kind of God that Israel had. If I can find the attributes of Israel's God, then I will know the attributes of the God with whom I must have something to do one of these days.

First, I want you to notice that Israel's God was a God of compassion, a God of love. When the children of Israel groaned and cried under the lash of the Egyptian taskmaster, the great loving heart of God was filled with compassion and He said, "I'll go down and bring them deliverance." He said, "I'll go down and set them free." His great heart was moved with compassion toward His people who were yonder under the lash and taskmasters of the Egyptians. God's love and compassion are extended to every man who will give Him half a chance. If you, in your wandering, would turn your weary footsteps back to God, you would find the great loving heart of a compassionate Heavenly Father ready to take you by the hand, ready to wash away your sin ' ready to blot out the past, ready to give you a brand-new start, ready to give you a clean white page at this very moment.

Second, Israel's God was also a God of faithfulness. God was faithful to all of His people. He never made a promise to anybody that He did not keep. Every promise that God ever made to anybody He either kept or is going to keep before He gets through with it. He is a God of faithfulness. Here is One that you can pin your faith in, One that you can depend upon, One that will not fail you. Israel's God was a God of faithfulness. Our God is a God of faithfulness.

Third, Israel's God was a God of power. Not a weak, "Tom Thumb" sort of God that had to throw up His hands at circumstances, but a God that was able to measure arms with every force and every power in every place wherever He had opportunity. He was a God of power and it seemed that numbers made no difference with God. He could take one and chase a thousand, and He could take two and put ten thousand to flight. Yes, He's a God of power.

Hezekiah, a good king, got an insulting letter from an old king by the name of Sennacherib. Old Sennacherib said in his letter, "I'm coming down across your country. I'm coming with torch and sword." He said, "You'd just as well get ready to fold up before I get there." Hezekiah knew what a tremendous warrior this one Sennacherib was and he went off upstairs to his prayer room. He took that letter and spread it out before the Lord. Friend, that's a good thing for any of us to do. Take your problem, find a place of prayer, and then just spread it out before the Lord. Oh, that's a wonderful thing to do!

That's what Hezekiah did, and he hadn't much more than spread it out before the Lord when the Lord said to him, "Hezekiah, send over and get Isaiah to pray for you." So he sent word to Isaiah. Isaiah met the messenger, and the messenger said, "Hezekiah wants you to pray for him." Isaiah went out and prayed for him, and his knees hadn't any more than touched the ground until heaven opened and the Lord whispered back and said to Isaiah. "I want you to send word back to Hezekiah and tell him that I understand the situation perfectly and that I am going to put a hook in old Sennacherib's nose and I'll lead him back another way. You tell him not to worry about it." Isn't that wonderful! A God of power!

The day came when it looked as if the battle was going to be all set, and poor Hezekiah's army was just a little handful down in the valley. There was Sennacherib's army on the hillside yonder. There was a multitude of them. The next morning they planned to march ('own and crash the poor little army of Hezekiah. But that night the angel of the Lord went to the army of the Assyrians, and when morning came there were 185,000 Assyrian soldiers cold and stiff on the hillside. One angel of God had gone through the army and laid out 185,000 of them. The war was over. God put a hook in Sennacherib's nose and led him back another way, just as He said He would do.

You see, young people and older folk, that God was interested in Hezekiah's day in taking the obedient through; and remember, He doesn't change. He's the same yesterday, today, and forever. And if He would help a fellow out then when he spread the matters out before Him, don't you see that God will help you out if you will spread your troubles out before Him? He's a God of power. How many angels are there? I don't know myself. I remember Jesus said He could call to His assistance more than twelve legions of angels. How many is a legion? Six thousand. How many would twelve legions be? Seventy-two thousand. If one angel could crash an army like

Sennecherib's, what could God do if He turned all of them loose in our behalf? We're on the winning side. We have a God of power. Israel's God was a God of power.

Fourth, He was also a God of justice. He never allowed anybody to sin against Him or sin against somebody else without his bringing the fellow face to face with his sin. Ahab sinned against Naboth and took advantage of him, slew him, took his property, and got away with it as he supposed. But God saw him and God put the bloodhounds of justice on his track. He evaded those bloodhounds quite a little while, but one day God caught up with him and the sin-avenging sword fell upon him. Ahab covered up his armor and went to battle as a civilian. He didn't want anybody to shoot at him, but an Assyrian soldier put an arrow in a bow and shot that arrow, the Book said, "at a venture." He didn't aim at anything, but God directed the course of the arrow and it struck a joint in the armor of King Ahab, and mortally wounded him. He fell down in the chariot and his blood ran out on the floor. He cried to his driver, "Turn aside, for I am seriously wounded."

God has His sharp arrows. He has His bow all strung. He has His archers on different corners and in different positions. And let me say this to you, as sure as can be, God is going to mete out justice to the man who mocks His Church and makes fun of God and the Bible. He's a God of justice. Don't think that some fellow can ride over God's people, ride over some humble saint and just tramp him down and tramp him down, without God finally calling a halt. He has it all set and His archer has the sharp arrow all ready in a high-tensioned bow all set to mete out justice.

Compassionate, faithful, powerful, and just -- that is the kind of God that Israel had to meet, and we too must meet Him.

I want you to notice some facts about meeting God. In the first place, meeting God is inevitable. All of us are going to meet God. You will meet God one of these days. I will meet God one of these days. I can't evade Him.

Back in north Missouri when I was but a boy, God called me, and the thing that filled me with fear was the fact that I was going to meet God someday. I turned away from my sin. Then when I saw I needed a clean heart, that I ought to make a full consecration and get the blessing of full salvation, I hesitated a little while because there were some things that were very dear to me that I did not want to give up. But when I realized anew that I was going to meet God someday, I made a consecration of everything and told God I would do anything He wanted me to do, I'd go anywhere He wanted me to go. Down across the years I have encountered hard, tough things; but right in the midst of that hard, tough something, there has come to me again and again the consciousness that I am going to meet God in the not-too-far-distant future. This fact has helped me to keep a yielded will, and this is imperative if I keep prepared to meet God.

Meeting God is universal. Unmarked graves will give up their dead. The sea will give up its dead. Every son and daughter of Adam's race will be there, both good and bad. Meeting God is going to be an awe-inspiring day. The crowd will be there; the mingled emotions will be evident at that meeting. Some will be there with faces radiant with joy because they are coming to their eternal home. Others will be there with faces blanched with fears as they move slowly but surely into the presence of God, whom they have rejected or neglected. You ask, "Why are we going to meet God?" We are going to meet God for several reasons.

First, we are going to meet God for a heart examination. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart. He is going to examine our hearts. It is unbelievable what some people will do and at the same time profess religion. They smile and carry on until you would think that they were just wonderfully pious. But by and by the truth comes out and you find that, in those pious hours and in those high professions they have made, away down underneath it all has been a heart that is out of line and out of harmony with God. Let me say this to you: We are no better than our hearts. You are no better than your heart.

What kind of heart do you have? What have you got in your heart? Now forget your profession. Forget your church membership. Forget your official position in the church. Forget everything that you have been able to do and able to accomplish. Forget the things that have given you a reputation in the church among your fellows. Just forget that now, and take a good, square, honest, fair look inside. What kind of heart do you have anyway? And when you get through looking it over, I'll say this to you before God, You are no better than your heart. "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he." "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." That's what Jesus says. Out of the heart are the issues of life. You are no better than your heart. I am no better than my heart. God is going to have a day in which He will give us a heart examination.

Second, it is going to be a day when hidden deeds will be uncovered. You have known of crimes that have been committed and those crimes have never been solved.

I read some time ago that there are three hundred and fifty thousand unsolved murder cases in the United States. It staggers one to think of the hidden, covered sins in the human heart. Think of those who have lost articles out of their cars, things from their homes, things from the church. Tills have been rifled, pocketbooks have been stolen, coats have been stolen. Think of the things that have been taken and we couldn't guess who took them. The deed has been covered so far. When we meet God it will be a day of uncovering. You will find out who did it.

Third, on that day the sins that have been covered and hidden for years will be brought to light.

I saw a man who came to the altar again and again. His wife was converted, but he didn't seem to get through. He drove 130 miles to see me after he was eighty years old. I knew he had something on his heart that chained him. I gave him a chance to tell me, but he didn't have the courage. Three months after he had driven that distance to see me he came down to die. He said to the doctor, "I can't die." He inquired of the doctor, "Are you sure I'm going to die?" The doctor replied, "Yes, you are going to die and you don't have more than a couple of days." The man said, "I can't die with my sin unconfessed." He made this confession. He said forty-eight years before he had shot and robbed a postman. That murder was never solved. Nobody ever knew who did it. He said, "I am the man that killed him; I am the man that robbed him." He had carried that sin for forty-eight years. He had been at the altar again and again and had come face to face with that sin. He wouldn't uncover it, he wouldn't confess it, and God couldn't save him until he was willing to confess his sin.

Sometimes God makes men uncover their sin in this life. "Be sure your sin will find you out." If it doesn't find you out here, it will find you out at the judgment. Nine times out of ten it will find you out here. There is going to be a day of uncovering. Who committed a crime? Who stole the article? Who started that lie? Oh, how many lives have been wrecked, how many reputations have been ruined, and how many good people have been crushed by some lie that somebody started!

It is going to be a day of uncovering! It will not only be a day of uncovering of hidden deeds, but also it is going to be a day when we will have to answer for the lives that we lived. Don't think that you can live this life ' then just fold up and die and get out of the world like a dog. You are going to meet God. The Book says, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." We are moving in that direction as fast as the unlocked wheels of time can hurry us on. And we cannot evade it. We are going to meet God and answer for the lives we have lived.

Fourth, meeting God will be a day in which we will have to answer for our attitudes. We will have to answer for our attitudes toward the Holy Spirit, Don't tell me the Holy Spirit has not spoken to your heart. You have heard the truth. You have been told what you should do. You have been warned about the perils of carnality and about the perils of covered sin. The Spirit has warned you about clinging to the world. He has tried to stir you up about your worldly-mindedness, about your indifference, and about your procrastination. We're going to have to answer for our attitudes toward the Holy Spirit, toward the sermons that we have heard, and toward the personal workers that have come and dealt with us. We are going to have to answer! A man comes to you and pleads with you. You shrug your shoulder and look away. Somebody invites you to come to the altar and you sing on loudly and lustily as much as to say, "Leave me alone; I'm not interested in what you plan to say." Don't think for a minute that you can get by with it that way. We are going to have to answer for our attitudes toward those personal workers.

Fifth, we are going to have to answer for the opportunities that have been offered us. Think of the open doors that have come to you. Think of the chances to do good that have been yours. You failed to make the best of those opportunities. For these opportunities you must answer to God. You must also answer for the talents that have been bestowed upon you. God has given you talents and you have been squandering them. You have been burying them; they are buried in the ground. Better dig them up and use them before it is everlastingly too late.

Sixth, think! We are going to have to answer for the influence we have wielded. When I think of influence it sobers me. Oh, my influence! Somebody is being influenced by my life day by day as I walk the streets, when I eat at the table, downtown, when I meet the bellboy, when I am on the elevator, when I am going on the train, when I am in the church. Wherever I go and whomever I meet, there's a silent influence that radiates from my life. Oh, I know it's true! Did I do my best?

Listen, Dad, I want you to see it and I want you to meet it. If you are going to carry on and be worldly, you have a boy who is coming along. He is going to walk in your tracks. You smoke, drink, gallivant, and live like the world; your boy is going to do the same thing. If you don't pray, if you aren't interested and you don't walk with God, you will find your children are going to do the same thing. If they don't do it, it will be because they manage to reject your bad influence and go to heaven in spite of you. "Prepare to meet thy God" with your influence.

Listen, mother, if you are more interested in clubs, card parties, and worldly things than you are interested in God, the church, the Bible, Sunday school, and holy things, don't you know your influence is going out in the wrong direction? That lovely daughter of yours is being affected by your worldly influence. The Holy Spirit swings the red lantern of warning in front of you. Better not pass it by. I must warn you that your influence is going out.

One of the saddest New Testament pictures given is the picture of that rich man who had clothed himself in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day, then came down to die, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, and being in torment there he pleaded for water that was denied him. Then he had one more pitiful request that was wrung from his heart. What was that? He said, "I have five brothers who have been watching the way I've lived. They watched my worldly attitude; they watched my carelessness; they looked at my unbridled appetite; they watched me loll in ease. They watched me, were influenced by me, and now they come pell-mell to this place of torment. Oh, send Lazarus, that he may warn my brethren, lest they come to this place of torment also." What a sad picture of wrong influence!

There is one glorious thought in my text. What's that? He said, "Prepare to meet thy God," and along with that commandment comes the marvelous possibility for us to prepare to meet God. We can make preparation. We can have our sins washed away. We can have our hearts purified. We can have unbroken fellowship with God. We can be ready, so that if the summons comes at midnight or comes at noonday, thank God we can sing out above the storm that we have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. We can make the preparation.

"Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." The possibility of preparation is implied. Haste is implored. Three reasons why individuals should hurry -- Christ may come; death may overtake you; the Holy Spirit may be grieved away. Don't trifle with the Spirit, who may be pulling at your heartstrings. Man, woman, boy, or girl, my message to you is this: "Prepare to meet thy God." He is calling you; He is sounding the ultimatum; He is swinging the red lantern tonight. He is calling to you to make preparation to meet Him.

My heart is filled with sadness. I am fearful that you will rush right on past these swinging lights and go on into eternity. In California a few years ago we had a flood. A dam broke loose and the flood came down across the valleys, flooding the roads and washing out the bridges. The highway patrol flashed word for everybody to stay off the highways. But down on one of these roads near a place where a bridge had been washed out and there was a roaring torrent of water pounding across the highway, there stood within a hundred yards of the washed-out bridge a patrolman. It was raining, the night was dark, but he had a shining lantern.

As he was there standing in the rain he saw the lights of a car coming down the road. He got out in the middle of the road and swung the red lantern; he swung it again and again so that the driver of the car could see it, but the driver drove right on -- thirty miles an hour. As he came closer, the patrolman swung the lantern a little more to turn the fellow back, but instead of slowing down he stepped on the gasoline and the patrolman would have been run over if he had not stepped out of the way as the car went whizzing by. The patrolman said afterward that he heard a crash and the lights went out as the car drove into that torrent of water and was carried on down the stream. He never knew who it was that drove by the swinging lantern and on to his death.

O God, help our young people, help our dads, and help our mothers not to drive past these red lanterns of warning, but rather heed God's ultimatum. "Prepare to meet thy God," and let Him save you!

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05 -- THE UNFRUITFUL FIG TREE

He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down (Luke 13:6-9).

I want to talk to you a little while tonight using this parable as a basis for what I felt I ought to say to you. This parable was given by the Saviour following an exhortation that He gave the people to whom He preached, exhorting them to repent. He said, "Repent," and made it very emphatic that they should repent. He said, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:5). John the Baptist preached repentance; Jesus preached repentance. Repentance is the royal road back to God. There is only one way back to God and that is over the road of repentance, and Jesus emphasized that when He gave this parable of the unfruitful fig tree.

It is a simple parable and doesn't need a lot of explaining. I think, without question, the certain man mentioned in the parable who owned the fig tree represents God. The vineyard in which this certain man planted the fig tree is the world, and the fig tree that this certain man planted in his vineyard is man, while the dresser of the vineyard is none other than Jesus as represented by the Holy Spirit operating upon the hearts and lives of men.

I want you to notice that this fig tree which was planted was a favored tree; favored in that it was a planted tree, not just left to grow on the hillside, or just dropped out there by accident somewhere. We are a favored people. You are a favored individual; I am a favored individual. We have had the privilege of being born in a land of Bibles, in a land of opportunity, in a land of light. We are a favored people planted by the good hand of God.

But we are not only favored in that we have been planted; we are favored in that we have been protected. We are all seated here tonight as monuments of the love of God, monuments of the protection of God and His goodness to us. Others have been cut down, others have slipped away, but we have been spared. We are seated here in a fair degree of health because of the goodness of God. God has favored us in that He has protected us.

The tree mentioned here was protected by walls and protected by guards. And we're protected. We are protected by the favor and the smile of God. We are a favored people in that we are planted, in that we are protected.

Then this tree was favored in that it was visited. The man not only planted it, protected it, but he visited this tree. We have been visited. God has planted us, protected us, and visited us. He's visited every one of us. He's paid a visit not too long ago. How many times He has visited us I don't know, but I know that He has visited every one of us. He has visited us at least once, perhaps twice, and possibly three times.

Speaking of this fig tree, the owner of it planted it, watched over it, protected it, and visited it. Why did he visit this tree? I know that when he came to visit it he was a disappointed owner. And I am thinking this morning about God's being disappointed. I wonder if God is disappointed as He looks in our direction. Is He disappointed in you as one whom He has planted, one whom He has favored, and whom He has visited? That's the question that causes me deep concern. Is God disappointed in me? Is He disappointed in you? The man was disappointed when he came to this fig tree. Why? Because he found it fruitless. It was a barren tree. It wasn't bearing the fruit that he had a right to expect it to bear. And I believe that God visits His people expecting to find fruit. You say, what kind of fruit does He expect to find in a man's life? I don't know exactly what He is seeking to find in your life, but I know the kind of fruit He has sought in the lives of others.

When He visits some people He seeks the fruit of repentance because He knows they are wayward and rebellious. God knows they are walking back of light and He seeks the fruit of repentance. He seeks the fruit of repentance from some who are here tonight He has tried to get you to turn away from the things that you know have displeased and grieved Him. He has tried to get you to turn back to God and walk with Him, travel the royal road of repentance. Yes, He seeks the fruit of repentance in the lives of some.

He visits some individuals seeking the fruit of holiness. He has a right to expect the fruit of holiness in our lives. Jesus suffered outside the gate that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, and since He made such tremendous sacrifice, He has a right to expect fruit from that sacrifice. He has a right to expect returns from that sacrifice. He seeks the fruit of holiness in your life. He knows about your sharp words; He knows about your carnal spells; He knows about your unconsecrated possessions. He has wanted you to do something about that. Move up, move out, and enter into a closer walk, into a life of full commitment to God, so that your life is as an open book; so that He can call upon you and you will answer, like Isaiah of old, "Here am I; send me." He's looking for the fruit of holiness in our lives.

With some others He's seeking the fruit of communion and fellowship. People are too busy. If I were to bring an accusation against our people today -- and I don't know that I am disposed to bring an accusation against anybody, but I know this, people are too busy. The slogan is, "He that judgeth himself with sincerity will judge others with charity." And if I am going to be sincere I will have to put myself in the same list along with many others. We get so busy about everything. We are so anxious about service that the first thing we know, instead of being in there giving God the fellowship and the communion that He wants, He finds our lives fruitless as far as communion is concerned. He seeks the fruit of fellowship. He'd like for you to take time out; He'd like for you to worship Him a little more. He'd like for you to read the Word of God and draw nigh to Him. He'd like for you to be one with whom He could fellowship and commune in the early morning or the late evening or at midnight if He should call for communion and fellowship with you.

I remember hearing the late Dr. R. T. Williams, former general superintendent, now gone to heaven, tell a story that has always touched my heart. It was the story of an elderly man who lived with his daughter. Christmas-time came and the old fellow sat by the fire one evening awhile

Come and sit with me and talk to me." She looked at him and said, "Why, Daddy, don't you know that these are busy days? This is Christmas-time and I am so busy. Daddy, you sit there by the fire and read and you excuse me this time." A night or two later he said, "Daughter, wouldn't you come and sit with me and talk to me tonight?" She said, "Daddy, didn't I tell you that I was very busy? Didn't I tell you that Christmas-time was here and I've got so many things to do? Daddy, I'll sit with you some other time."

By and by when Christmas morning came, the daughter placed in her father's lap a gift that she had prepared for him. When he opened the package he found it was a beautiful sweater. When he looked at it he said, "Oh, isn't this beautiful!" She said, "Now, Daddy, you know what I've been doing. Every night you wanted me to come and sit with you by the fire, I have been knitting this sweater. I have been working to make this pretty sweater for you." He looked at the sweater, rubbed his hand over it, then looked at his daughter and smiled, and said, "Honey, it is beautiful, and it's nice that you have been thoughtful of me; but, honey, I could have bought a sweater, and it would have been so nice if you could have come and sat with me by the fire a little while. It was communion and fellowship that I wanted to enjoy." God seeks the fruit of fellowship in our lives.

With somebody else He is seeking the fruit of service. With some He seeks the fruit of repentance; with others, the fruit of holiness; with others He seeks the fruit of fellowship; and with others He is seeking the fruit of service. God is talking to your heart about service. You have ability to teach, preach, visit, tithe, invest your capital, do something for God. You have ability, and He is seeking the fruit of full-time service in these areas where you can serve. God expects that of us. When the owner came to visit this fig tree, seeking fruit on it, he was disappointed. When God comes seeking fruit in our lives, I wonder if He is disappointed. Has He sought the fruit of repentance, holiness, fellowship, and service in the lives of different individuals here tonight? Is He disappointed? This owner came three times seeking, seeking, seeking. He gave the tree time. He gave it season after season. He gave it opportunity after opportunity, visiting it again and again. How many times has God visited you and how many times has He been disappointed in that He didn't find the fruit of repentance that He had the right to expect? He didn't find the fruit of holiness, communion, or service for which He sought, and He is disappointed. A disappointed God!

Now I want you to notice that as the owner looked at this tree he found it very disappointing, not only that it didn't bear fruit of itself, but it hindered others from bearing fruit. It was not only fruitless, but was a ground-cumberer. Its shade reached out and hindered others. Its roots reached out and took the life and sap and moisture from the soil and hindered others. Instead of being the blessing that it should have been, it was becoming a curse in the vineyard. I think about our influence. What's your influence over others? Is your influence an influence for sincerity, an influence for spirituality, an influence for a disciplined life? As God looks at you, does He find there the right kind of influence radiating from your life?

The man was disappointed in the tree and he said to the dresser of the vineyard, "Cut it down. Why cumbereth it the ground?" But the dresser of the vineyard pleaded with the owner to let it alone this year, to give him a chance to let him fertilize it and dig about it; to give him a chance to see if he could get it to bear fruit. Then if it wouldn't bear fruit, let it be cut down.

God has a plan to secure fruit. Even at a late date! Do you know that God has a plan to get fruit out of your life even yet? He's going to secure that fruit if He can. He's going to extend time. And I believe that we are here tonight with health, home, property, opportunity -- all because God has extended time. I am preaching to people tonight who are living now on extended time. Time has been extended, but how long it will be extended I don't know. I know that He has blessed you. The fact that you are here is proof that you have been blessed. His blessings are purposed to inspire us to bear fruit. The owner of the fig tree said that if it wouldn't produce by way of blessing, he would see what he could do to get it to produce by digging about it. The Book says that the goodness and the severity of God bring men to repentance. If man won't repent through the goodness of God, then the Lord loves that man too much to let him drift on and He'll resort to severity if He has to, to get that man to turn to God.

I believe that God finds men earthbound. I am preaching to people tonight who are earthbound. You are bound by things of time and earth and interests. Earthbound! God has a spade. He wants to cut the roots. He will cut the roots. If you have your interests and your heart set on things in this world, God can cut those roots. God can use His spade to keep you from being earthbound. He said of this fig tree, "I shall dig about it." Men are earthbound.

They tell me that up in the timbers, where great logging companies prepare their logs, they send their loggers through first to determine the trees that are to be cut down. A man goes through these great timbers and will blaze the trees that are to be cut down for logs. He will make a big mark on such a tree. Weeks later when the loggers come through, here's a tree that has a big blazed mark on it and the loggers proceed to cut that tree down. It's marked to be cut down; it is blazed to be cut down. And I believe that God has gone through communities, gone through churches, and there are individuals whom He has visited again and again, yet they have become ground-cumberers and hindrances. After so long a time God blazes that tree, judgment comes, and the man or the woman is cut down rather than allowed to be a ground-cumberer to hinder others. You know it is a tragic thing for a man not to mind God himself; but to throw out an influence that hurts somebody else is worse, and we need to sense that. That's one of the things that disappoints God. Tonight the question comes to me, Shall we yield to God or will we wait for Him to dig about us? I want to yield to Him on easy terms, don't you? I don't want to wait for God to dig about me.

A few years ago I dealt with a man and tried to get him to seek the Lord. I visited him and pleaded with him, but he wouldn't do it. He had a good dad, who loved God -- a wonderful man. This father had a stroke and died without ten minutes of warning. The old fellow slipped across. We all believed he was washed in the blood of the Lamb. I had the man's funeral service, and on the Sunday morning following the old man's funeral service this boy was in church. He sat next to the front seat on Sunday morning. I shook hands with him and said, "Charlie, I'm glad to see you here." He looked up at me and said, "Yes, Brother Vanderpool, I'm here, and I shall be here from now on. But," he said, "it took such a price. Oh, that I could have come and sat down at the side of

Dad here in this pew, but I didn't do it! I'm here, but I'm here at a tremendous price." That man walks with God today. He's happy in the Lord. God had to dig about him. Since God has been digging about him he's been producing fruit.

God seeks fruit in our lives today. I believe He is talking to some of you now. He's seeking the fruit of repentance, the fruit of holiness, the fruit of communion, the fruit of service, but He's disappointed. He has extended time. He said, "Wait, let Me dig about it, let Me fertilize it; and if it won't bring forth fruit, then let it be cut down." Time has been extended. He seeks fruit, but He's disappointed. Will you produce the fruit, or will you wait for God to bring something into your life that will crush you or break you and dig about you? You say, "Oh, that's cruel!" Oh, no, brother! God loves us too much to let us drift on to judgment without Him.

I remember the days when my folks were not Christians. Father and Mother were wayward. They liked to dance and go to the world and play with the world. There were six children in our family. There were no prayers, no God, no religion in our home.

One time when father went away to work, little Nellie, four years old, took sick, got the croup, and was dangerously ill. We sent a man, on a horse, to get my father twenty-four miles away. He came as fast as he could, but when he got home little Nellie had slipped away. When Father came in, she was in the front room, lying there on a board covered with a sheet. She was the idol of his heart. Mother broke into tears as he came in and she said, "Will, Nellie's gone." He sobbed and she cried and for days and days there were no songs about our place. A gloom hung over the place. It finally wore off and they began to walk in the same old tracks.

Then little Harley took sick. He lingered six weeks and they took him out and laid him away. Then sorrow hung over the place for quite some time again, but gradually it wore off and they started on again.

Then little Leo took sick and he lingered about three or four months and slipped away and was gone. When they came back from the funeral Mother said to Father, "Will, that's enough. That's enough. There's three of them on the other side. By the grace of God I'm going to meet them." God had to dig about them.

It was just a few years before my mother slipped away. She said, "It broke my heart for God to take Nellie, then to take Harley, then to take Leo. But," she said, "O Son, it's so much better that way than for us to have gone on without God and without hope." She said, "They're safe and I'm converted, you're converted, Brother's converted, and your father made it through to the skies." Better to do it that way than to let them drift on and be lost in the night.

God is talking to you tonight. I am wondering what you are going to do about it. This service, and this revival, will be over in a few minutes. Are you going to drift on and be a disappointment to God, or are you going to do something about it? I'll tell you what you ought to do now. If you leave your seats and come to God and talk to Him about it, you can get things fixed up on the easy terms of the gospel. You could get things lined up and you could walk out to serve God and have happy homes, victorious lives, and do things that are worthwhile for God and the Kingdom. I can't think of anything else in the world that would do me more good than to hear you

say, "By the grace of God, I'm going to serve Him. I'll make a commitment of my life to be His and His alone from here on out."

And I appeal to you dads and mothers. Listen, for the sake of that boy and that girl that is growing up around your fireside, won't you set them the right example? Won't you be a praying man? Won't you be a praying woman? Won't you walk with God? Won't you save their souls and yours as well? Won't you do it? You dear ones that need to be sanctified, you have talked about it and thought about it and you're not a rebel against it, but you've just put it off and put it off. It isn't that you're bound and determined that you are going to have your own way, but you don't think seriously enough about this business, and I hope tonight you will think seriously about it.

I'm going to ask that we stand and I want our brother to sing a verse of that old song "Just as I Am," and I want everybody here that knows the Lord is disappointed, He's visited and visited you and you know He's disappointed because He hasn't found in your life what He was looking for -- I want you to come, and let's have a good prayer and talk it out with God and get converted or get reclaimed or get sanctified and make a commitment of everything you've got in this world to God and do it this night. Come while we sing.

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06 -- THE PASSING SAVIOUR

SCRIPTURE LESSON: And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging: and hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee. And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God (Luke 18:35-43).

I have a mental picture of conditions back in the days that Jesus went among the people healing them. I see a little home right on the edge of Jericho. There lived a man, his wife, and a twelve-year-old boy. The man was blind and he went out to this Jericho highway to beg for a living. The mother or the boy led him out to a place conveniently located where he thought the travelers would come nearest to him, and he sat on a dirty, worn blanket on the bank by the highway. He had a little cup in which he had a few coins that he shook to make a noise and get attention. The people passing by dropped in small coins to help him make a living. In this way he made his contribution to the caring for his family.

He came in one evening, tired and weary. After he had refreshed himself and was seated, the boy said to him, "Daddy, did you know there is a great healer in the country? I sure wish you could meet him. Everything would be so much different if you weren't blind."

I see the tired wife and mother as she wiped the tears from her eyes, and she said, "Daddy, that would be wonderful if you could get to where you could see."

And he said in a quivering voice, "You know, there isn't anything in this world that I'd rather have than my sight. If only I could be like other men! If I could come and go like other men, if I could see like other men, if I could come out of the darkness and out of the blackness of a night that never ends, if I could only come out of this, I would be a happy man."

The boy added, "I heard them talking about him the other day and they said he healed a leper; also he healed a fellow whose ankle bones were all twisted and who had been crippled all his life. And they told about him healing a woman who had difficulty for eighteen years. Said he just healed her and she's all right now." The boy talked on, and said, "Daddy, do you know, they say he doesn't make any charges!"

The father asked, "Son, did you find out what his name was?"

"Yes," the boy replied, "I heard somebody say that his name is Jesus."

The blind man sat there and said nothing and finally went off to bed.

The next day they took him over to the Jericho highway, where he begged as had been his custom. While sitting there by the wayside along in the afternoon, he heard strange sounds -- something that awakened and aroused him. He inquired of the folk who were going on the road right in front of him. "What means all this tumult? I hear the strange sounds. I can't see anything but I can hear something, and have been hearing it for quite a while. I hear tramping of feet up the highway. What means all the tumult that I hear?" One of the fellows said, "Jesus of Nazareth is coming down the road and will be here in just a few minutes." The blind man inquired, "Who did you say it was?" And the fellow answered, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." The blind man thought, Oh, that's the man we were talking about last night! That's the man that my boy said healed the lepers and made no charges.

This blind man is typical of a sinner. Disease in the Bible is always in one way or another a type of some kind of sin. Leprosy is a type of sin. Haltness or lameness are types of sin. Blindness is a type of sin. This blind man sitting by the wayside begging is almost an exact picture of a sinner. Notice the man. He sat by the wayside. Indications are that he was alone, no friend near him to counsel or guide him. Isn't that a picture of a sinner? Sinners are all alone. They're alone in their sin. Nobody is responsible for your being a sinner. You alone are responsible. You can't blame anybody in the world for being a sinner. You have the power of choice. You can say which way you'll go and you can do it in spite of men, angels or devils. You alone are responsible for being a sinner.

Not only is a sinner alone responsible but a sinner is going to be alone when he comes down to die. There's a lonesomeness about being a sinner, and when that sinner comes to die he enters into a circle into which no loved one can come. Wife or mother or loved one or friend cannot come in that circle. You must die alone. That's the picture of a sinner. You say, "That's also true of the Christian." Oh, no, it isn't. One may get to the place where wife or husband or loved one cannot

come, but there's another One who can come inside the circle. Jesus of Nazareth will come inside that circle. He will comfort, cool the brow, and make you feel that you're not alone. When the boatman comes out, you will get into the shining boat and He will bring you across the river and you'll not cross alone.

The poor old sinner is going to be alone at the judgment. The teeming millions of earth will be there. The sinner will be so concerned about his own plight that he won't see anybody else. Have you ever been in a great crowd and felt that you were alone? There's no lonesomeness to be found anywhere like that which can be found in the midst of a great, moving, teeming mass of people. That's going to be the picture of a sinner at the judgment. He will be there alone.

You may say, "That's the way it is going to be with the Christian." No, it isn't. Jesus said if we would confess Him before this wicked and adulterous generation down here He would confess us before the Father and the holy angels. When the Christian stands over there he will not stand alone. Jesus will stand by his side. But the poor old sinner is alone in his sin, alone when he comes to die. He is alone at the judgment.

The scripture says that "he sat by the way side begging," indicating that he was helpless. He had to be led there and he would have to be led away. There is a sense in which a sinner is helpless. If you are ever saved in this world, sinner friend, you must have some external assistance. You can never make it by yourself. You must have help if you are ever saved. You must have the help of the Spirit because you are lost. You are lost to directions. You have no compass; you have no map; you don't know the way back to God. You have wandered too far and it is too dark for you to find your way to God. The Holy Ghost is in the world to guide if you won't spurn Him, insult Him, hold back from Him, and neglect Him. He will take you by the hand, glory to God! He will lead you out of the darkness and out of the wilderness and bring you to the foot of the Cross, where your burden can fall off and you will realize that at last you have found your way back to God.

I want you to notice that this blind man was not only helpless, but he was poverty-stricken. He didn't have anything; he was just a beggar. What a picture that is of a sinner! He did not have one thing to recommend him to God. What have I got, what do you have to recommend you to God? Not a thing in this world. I haven't anything and you haven't anything. We all like sheep have gone astray. We all have sinned against God. We all have missed the mark and have come short of the glory of God. Not a one of us by our merits has a right to be saved. That's the picture of a sinner. Jesus is our Merit. Jesus is our Hope. Jesus will go our bond. Jesus will pay our bills. That's why we sing, "Jesus paid it all." When we were bankrupt and headed for prison, Jesus came to pay the price to set us free. Aren't you glad?

The very fact that this man was blind makes him a type of a sinner. A sinner is blind. A man without Christ is blind. He's blind to true happiness. A man doesn't know anything about joy until he finds Jesus. I saw a man seventy years old who got converted. Twelve hours after he was converted he stood up and said in a meeting, "I've been converted twelve hours and I want to tell you now I've had more enjoyment -- real, honest enjoyment and contentment -- than I've gotten out of all the rest of my life put together." He meant what he said. I could believe every word of it. He

had come into real contentment. He had met the Man of Galilee. A poor sinner is blind. He is blind to values; he is blind to direction; he is blind to the things that he needs to make him happy.

Did you remember reading about that man whom God called a fool? You say, "Did God ever call a man a fool?" Yes, He called a man a fool. Jesus said: The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully. And the rich man said within himself, What can I do with my goods? Where should I bestow my fruits? "This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Again and again he said, I, I, I. Again and again he said, My, my, my. He didn't think of God, didn't think of others, didn't think of his immortal soul. God said, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" He was smart when it came to hay, corn, oats, cattle, and material values, but he was a fool when it came to spiritual things and worthwhile things. He saw that his crops were valuable. He made bins and barns to house his goods, but he left his poor soul exposed to the blasts and storms of the winter.

How many people are blind to values! This man was blind to real value. He saw the value of a bin of wheat and a crop of hay, but he couldn't get the idea about the value of his soul, which Jesus said was worth more than the world. He looked at the hay and corn and oats but he forgot his soul. Blind! That was what was the matter with him! That's the picture of a sinner.

This blind man sitting by the wayside heard this strange sound coming down the road and he said, "What is that? What does that mean?" They said, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." The approach of Jesus awakened and stirred something in the old blind man. There's a strange something about the moving of the Spirit that awakens, fills the soul with strange unrest. This man sensed that Jesus was coming. I want you to notice that, when Jesus passes by, He brings His blessings right along with Him. His arms are full. If you will call on Him, He will give to you the very thing that you've been needing for so long. He is passing by and your soul is strangely awakened. His arms are loaded with the very blessing that you need. He always stops if He is entreated.

It was late in the afternoon. There was a great crowd; there were hundreds of people coming along, and they were leaping and shouting and rejoicing. This was a happy crowd. Yet, with all that crowd, He was ready to stop if He was entreated. All you have to do to get Jesus to stop and pay attention to you is to entreat. That was true then; that's true now.

I want you to note what this blind man did. Did he sit there with folded hands and do nothing and let Jesus come right on down the road and pass him by and go on into Jericho? No, he didn't. He remembered what they had talked about the night before in his home and he said, This is my golden opportunity. He said, I have never had an opportunity in my life like this. He said, I've been to physicians, I've been to hospitals, I've tried everything in the world to get my eyesight fixed up, but I am just as blind as I was when I started. Jesus of Nazareth is coming down the road and He makes no charges. This is the opportunity of my life. I know what I'm going to do.

When Jesus got right out in front of him, he lifted up his voice like a trumpet and cried, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me." Somebody right close to him said, "Shhhhh. Be

quiet! Don't be making so much noise. Who are you to yell at Him like that?" Did he keep quiet? No, he didn't. I will tell you what he did. He just got ready for a real blast. He said, I know what I need and I know what I want and I'm not going to let up. I'm not going to quit. I'm not going to let this opportunity go by. I'm going to call on Him until I'm sure He hears me. And he lifted up his voice and gave it all he had. He cried out above the tramping of the feet and the shouting of the people, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me."

Then something happened. Something will always happen if you just keep on calling. Oh, if you call once and somebody says to you, "Be quiet," keep on calling. Don't quit. If you don't make it through and don't get what you ask for the first time, keep right on. Stay right in there. Get hold of that bell rope of heaven and never turn it loose. Ring it and ring it until God answers, until God hears you, until God does for you what your poor old heart needs to have done.

Oh, I tell you, when this blind man really called good and loud, Jesus said, "I heard somebody calling My name. Where is he?" I can see Peter and John. They said, "Why, it's this blind fellow up here on the bank." They took hold of him and said, "Come on, Bartimaeus; the Master called for you." They brought him down into the highway and around close to Jesus. The whole crowd now stopped. The blind man turned those white, sightless eyeballs up toward Jesus, and Jesus looked at him in pity and inquired, "What wilt thou have?" Doesn't that sound like plenty? He said, "What wilt thou have?" Just as though to say, I have it right here. It's right here in the package. Just name it. What do you want?

The religion of the Saviour is run on the cafeteria plan. You take your tray, knife, and fork, and go around. Brother, what is it you want? What wilt thou have? Is it pardon you want? Just help yourself. If it's cleansing you want, thank God, you can have it. Is it that you want God to come and bring comfort, carry your load, lift your burden, and set you free? All right, just take your tray around. Liberty and freedom is yours. Oh, yes, He said, "What wilt thou have?"

Now notice what the blind man said. He gave one pitiful cry, but, oh, how much was wrapped up in that cry! He said, "Oh, that I might receive my sight!" He said by his attitude, I've been in this blindness all of my life. I've sought everywhere. I've longed for release. My hopes are on the very bottom. I'm not worthy. I have no money. I'm broke. He said all of that in just those few words, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Then Jesus said to him, "Receive thy sight." And, brother! Those old, white, sightless eyeballs twitched a little bit and right there in their place came a pair of the prettiest brown eyes you have ever looked into. The light broke in and he took off leaping and shouting. He left the old blanket and the old tin cup and joined the march into the city of Jericho. We leave a lot of things when we meet the Saviour. He had met Jesus of Nazareth, who had set him free.

Listen, brother, dare to call on Him. whatever the need of your soul is, whatever the hunger of your heart is, Jesus has it. Call on Him. Call on Him. Don't let Him pass by. Call on Him. "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." A golden opportunity is yours here and now. This man cried in earnest. His heart desire was satisfied and the blessings of God came on others.

What do you think it was that stirred up Zacchaeus? I'll tell you what I think it was. I think he heard the tumult, the shouting just outside the city of Jericho, and when he got there he could see

the blind man leaping. "Why," he said, "I declare. It is old Bartimaeus. I've given that fellow money every time I went along the highway. There he comes and he has his sight restored. I'd like to see who it is that could restore sight to old blind Bartimaeus like that." He sought to see Jesus because Jesus had worked a miracle on old Bartimaeus. The salvation of Bartimaeus was already beginning to affect someone else.

The religion of the Saviour will put a spring in your heel and a shout in your soul and hang the New Jerusalem up in your face. Somebody will want that kind of religion. Of course, no one wants the long-faced kind. I almost lost my soul on account of lukewarm professors of religion. I went to church once in a while, but the professors of religion were without spiritual life. When I was fifteen years old I stole watermelons with the Sunday school superintendent. We stole enough one night to feed a threshing crew. I said to myself, When I get religion I want something that will keep me out of the other fellow's watermelon patch.

There was a fellow who taught a Sunday school class. He lived across the fence from us. I saw him jerk his horses and I heard him talk rough and hard to them. I had no confidence in his religion. Old Bartimaeus got something. He went down that road and everybody said, "He's different. Something happened to him."

I'm asking God to send revivals of religion to our churches, something that will straighten out people, make them quit their lying, quit their stealing, quit their smoking, quit their gambling, quit their worldliness, and go with God and be out and out, red-hot Christians.

Oh, you say, brother, you are giving it to us! I preached about like this some time ago and there was a little boy right down in front, sitting by his mother. He looked up at his mother and said, "Ma, he's a getting mad, ain't he?" Oh, no, I'm not getting mad. I'm just trying to tell you that God has a religion that will work us over and make us brand-new. I have thought, What would it have meant if poor old blind Bartimaeus had sat there by the wayside and let Jesus go by? He would have remained in his blindness. Jesus was the only One that could help him. His only Hope, the only Hope he had in this world came down the road that afternoon, and it would have been such a disappointment to God if the blind man had remained silent. Jesus wants to help everybody. If you would only give Him a little inkling that you're in trouble, He would turn aside to help you. Tell Him that you are shackled and that you must be set free. He will walk right in by your side and take off the shackles and set you at liberty.

Jesus is the soul's Emancipator. He can get behind the iron curtain of your soul and bring a transformation that will make you brand-new. Oh, yes, He wants to do that. The blind man would have died in his darkness, died a disappointment to God. And just think of how his boy and that wife who had worked and toiled would have been disappointed if he had not called on Jesus. In being silent he would have not only sinned against himself and against Christ, but he would have sinned against his wife and his boy. But he didn't keep silent. Brother, he stood right up there in spite of everything and lifted his voice like a trumpet. When they tried to quiet him, he just kept on. He refused to be quieted. The devil will try to hinder you and keep you from getting through to God.

What a momentous event in the blind man's life! Jesus never passed that way again. That was the last trip, if not the only trip, that He ever made down that road. I believe Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. I can hear the footfalls. I can hear strange sounds that tell my spirit that the Master is coming down the road, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. He's moving down the road in our direction now.

In coming to the closing minutes of an evangelistic service I always approach them with a heaviness in my heart. I have a fear that somebody sitting by the wayside of life will let Jesus go by and not call upon Him. Don't let Him pass by without calling upon Him.

I think of a story told about a ship that had been at sea, rocked and tossed in a three-day storm. The masts were broken; the sails were torn; the ship had sprung a leak and was slowly sinking. The captain of the boat put a signal flag of distress on the old, broken stub of a mast. He put it up hoping that some passing ship might see this signal of distress. In the distance there came a ship, a staunch man-of-war. The fellow in the crow's nest sat searching the seas. He saw away in the distance the crippled ship with the signal flag of distress waving on the broken mast. He notified the captain, and the captain gave instruction to the pilot, and the ship pulled toward the crippled vessel.

The captain on the staunch vessel called to the captain of the crippled vessel and said, "What's your trouble?" And the man on the crippled vessel answered back and said, "We've been through a three-day storm. Our sails are torn; our masts are broken; we've sprung a leak; we're slowly sinking; and we want room for our men and our cargo. And the captain on the staunch vessel called back and said, "All right. Let's lash together; let's tie together, and unload." The captain on the crippled vessel called back and said, "We'll hold up till morning. We're slowly sinking but we can ride it out till day. My men are tired. Half of them are asleep and the other half will be asleep in another minute or two. You lay by till morning." The captain of the staunch vessel answered, "No, no, let's lash together and unload now. My men will help you." The captain on the crippled ship said, "No, lay by till morning. I'm going to my bunk and I will be asleep in a few minutes."

The staunch vessel prepared to stand by till daylight, but along about 11:30 that night the wind began to turn and that three-day storm unexpectedly turned back. The waves began to lash, the whitecaps could be seen, the wind picked up its speed, and the first thing anybody knew the crippled vessel was rocking and churning in the deep. They fixed a light on the vessel and watched it. The fury of the storm continued, and by and by along about 2:00 a.m. in the midst of the fury of that awful storm the crippled vessel went out of sight. The staunch vessel searched the sea for it but it could not be found. They waited in that area until the break of day. They saw floating boxes and floating debris, floating pieces of boards that told them the sad story. The crippled vessel had gone down in the storm that they hadn't expected to return. The captain had said, "Lay by till morning. We'll hold up till daylight." But he didn't know that the storm was coming and was only two or three hours away.

God is calling to some of you and you ought to settle it now. I fear you are going to say, "Some other time." Listen, friend, you've been pretty close to the end of your journey. The storm that gave you such a rough time a year ago may turn and come back in your direction. You'd better

call on Him while you can, while the opportunity is yours, and while the staunch vessel is nearby. Thank God, you can unload. There's room for you and your cargo and you can head toward the port of safety. What are you going to do? Are you going to let Him go by? You need to be saved. Some of you need to be sanctified and others of you who once knew the Lord have drifted and lost the joy out of your heart. You ought to come back to God.

You say, "I tried it once, Brother Vanderpool, but it looked as if I couldn't live it." I just say this to you: You're older now and you're wiser now. If it were all to do over again you wouldn't quit now, would you? You wouldn't quit if you had it all to do over. You know you wouldn't quit. I tell you now if you will give God a chance He'll get to you, establish you, and help you to run this race successfully. Oh, I would to God that you had the courage to come and settle with the Lord! "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." He is coming down the road. What are you going to do? Are you going to let Him go by, or are you going to call on Him, have your burden lifted, and go on your way rejoicing?

"Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." He may never pass your way again.

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07 -- THE BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY GHOST

The baptism with the Holy Ghost is a subject that has given inspiration for preaching of sermons by the thousands and the writing of books by the score.

Some controversy has arisen down across the years concerning the baptism with the Holy Ghost. The following questions have found place in the minds of sincere people: Is the experience for people today? Can everyone have the experience or is it just for those called to the ministry? Can unsaved people receive Him? How may an individual receive the experience? What will the experience do for an individual? Is it important that people have the baptism with the Holy Ghost? These questions and perhaps many others may be in the minds of people who read this sermon.

There are four things about the baptism with the Holy Ghost which I wish to consider, and in so doing possibly answer some of the above questions.

First: The baptism with the Holy Ghost promised to this generation.

In the prophecy of Joel, second chapter, verses 28-29, we read: "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy . . . and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit." And please note He will pour His Spirit upon all flesh -- He draws no color lines; He sets no age limit; He does emphasize their relationship -- sons and daughters -- servants and handmaidens. Rebels against God are never in line to receive the Holy Ghost.

About eight hundred years later John the Baptist came from the wilderness unannounced and unadvertised. He had a burning message on repentance, which is the "royal road" back to God.

Many repented and were baptized with water. Others came to be baptized by John but he refused because they had not truly repented.

To his own converts he gave this wonderful message, Matthew 3:11-12 -- "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." This gives new life to an old promise but it is the same promise. Note the promise by John was not made to sinners or rebels but to his own converts.

Only a short time before His crucifixion, the Saviour comforted His disciples by saying, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:16-17). To whom did He make the promise of the Holy Spirit? Not to the world, but to His disciples, who were acquainted with the Spirit.

Just before His ascension into heaven Jesus gave His parting message to His disciples and said (Acts 1:4-5) "But wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Here He renews His declaration that the Father's promise, though 800 years old, is now about to be fulfilled.

On the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit was poured out on nearly a score of different nationalities. There were some who cried out, "What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine." But Peter stood up and removed all doubt when he declared (Acts 2:15-17): "These are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." The 800-year-old promise was fulfilled that day. Before the day ended people came to Peter and inquired, "What shall we do?" Then Peter said (Acts 2:38-39) "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you [that generation] and to your children [the next generation], and to all that are afar off [we are two thousand years off], even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Yes, the Holy Ghost has been promised to this generation. The farther off we are, the more assured I am that the promise is unto us.

Second: The baptism with the Holy Ghost must be sought.

The experience must be sought with a consecration that is complete -- all of self, substance, and service gladly committed to the sweet will of God. It must be sought with a faith that is full of expectancy. We must believe that He will do His part when we have done ours; that He will be as faithful to fill our hearts with himself as we have been faithful to empty our hearts of self. The experience must be sought untiringly. The disciples sought until He came. We must seek -- not once

-- not ten days, but "until." God's promise is to His children. His greatest gift is now offered. We must be in the active mood; the passive will never receive it.

One morning my grandmother promised me a pair of star mittens. Her promise thrilled my boyish heart.

I went over in the afternoon to get my mittens. She said, "They are not ready." That night I went to get them. She said, "No, I do not have them." The next morning I went early. She scolded me for coming so early and said, "Go on back home. I do not have them yet." I went other times during the day but always the same answer, "They are not ready." That afternoon she called my father and told him that he must go to town and get some yarn -- that she had promised me some star mittens and that I would give her no rest until they were knitted. The next morning I went over after the mittens. When I knocked and inquired about them she handed me the mittens and said, "Here they are; I sat up half the night to knit them." If people would be half as interested in the promise of our Heavenly Father as I was in my grandmother's promise, they could be filled with the Holy Ghost before this service closes tonight.

Third: The baptism with the Holy Ghost may be obtained.

Long-extended periods of seeking are unnecessary. Time and place are no factors in receiving the Holy Ghost. Obedience and faith are the only vital factors. A consecration that is complete and a faith that is appropriating can end the seeking in glorious realization.

Once I inquired of a converted man if he had been filled with the Spirit. He said, no, he had not. I inquired if he had ever sought for the experience. Again his answer was, "No." Then I inquired if he had ever felt a need for a deeper experience. His eyes filled with tears and he said, "Oh, yes, I have." My next question was, "Then why have you never sought?" His answer was, "I had such a hard time to get saved -- I went to the altar ten times to get converted and I know it must be three times as hard to get sanctified. I just hate to start in to seek."

The next Sunday morning I saw him start for the altar. In a little while I came to where he was kneeling at the altar, and I put my hand on his shoulder and asked, "What are you seeking, brother?" He answered with tears streaming down his face, "I have started in to get sanctified." By the time he finished the statement, a new light filled his eyes and he leaped to his feet and shouted, "I have it now!" He had settled the question before he started to the altar. His seeking was cut short by the glorious entry of the Holy Spirit.

Fourth: I call attention to the baptism with the Holy Ghost in operation.

The primary purpose for the coming of the sanctifying Spirit is to give a pure heart. He purified the hearts of the disciples on the Day of Pentecost and did the same thing for Cornelius in Caesarea. Peter lifted up this convincing major evidence when he was arguing that the Gentiles had a place in the gospel when in Acts 15:8-9 he said, "And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." The baptism with the Holy Ghost is a chaff-removing,

floor-purging experience, reaming out and cleansing the heart, which is the seat of our moral nature, of every carnal pollution.

The baptism of the Holy Ghost also brings an establishing experience, doing heavy bridge and truss work in the soul; this is the experience that installs inside braces in strategic places. Thus the soul is fitted to bear heavy loads without caving in, and to stand heavy winds of temptation without folding up.

The Church of the Nazarene from its very beginning has been and is now committed to the doctrine of entire sanctification wrought in the heart by the baptism with the Holy Ghost.

We believe that this experience is entered into by faith through the strait gate of entire consecration and self-commitment to God.

Fixed demands are imposed on those hungering to be filled with the Spirit. Those demands must be faithfully sustained if the Divine Presence is to be retained.

God's unchanging requirement for men to be holy, the gospel claims for the unreserved commitment of self, substance, and service to God, together with God's rigid standard of separation from sinful practices, are intolerances which are filled with virtues.

If we round the corners, wink at the rules, and dull the cutting edge of the law, we do so at our own peril. We must be unyielding and intolerant at the point where eternal life is involved.

Since I heard a presiding minister relate the following incident to a large crowd, I pass it on to you, trusting that you will not think me a denominational bigot.

He told of his young friend who had served in a university as a psychology professor in civilian life, but as a captain in the air force his plane was shot down over Germany. He was captured and placed in a large prison camp. To keep from being driven insane himself, he made a study of his fellow prisoners, to see what group best withstood the rigors, disappointments, and suffering of prison life. He set up his study on the basis of age, education, and religion. At the close of several months' study, what group do you think headed the list? Not the formal, not the sophisticated, not the superficial -- but the lowly "Nazarene" who had rugged rules for the outward life and spiritual strength for the inner life. In the light of this story, our slogan could well be, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

The baptism with the Holy Ghost gives the soul an abiding Comforter for life's disappointments, a never-failing Guide for life's pilgrim journey. It assures us of having the Man with the drawn sword, in our lives to plan the strategy and lead the attack in the battle of life.

This wonderful experience gives power for service anywhere in the church. Assign a task to a man possessing this experience and he performs it with care and enthusiasm. The man with this experience will work like the faithful old horse, single or double, on either side of the wagon tongue, going up hill or down.

Foreign elements of the soul have been removed. The life is an open, uncluttered channel through which the power of the Spirit can operate unhindered. I am reminded of "Old Hoodoo," one of the nine great locomotives put out by the Santa Fe Railway years ago. Eight of the engines were perfect, but one -- "Old Hoodoo" -- would not pull. It had a wonderful bell, loud whistle, abundance of brass, but no power. No fireman or engineer wanted to have anything to do with this engine which they called "Old Hoodoo." The engine was used some around the yards at small jobs, but it was a disgrace for such a big engine to do so little. The Santa Fe company sent a specialist to discover the trouble. After examining the engine externally the specialist declared it perfect. He said to his assistants, "It must be internal trouble." He removed a crooked pipe which brought the steam from the boiler dome to the steam chest and discovered a blister which had formed in the elbow of the pipe when it was made and had cut off three-fourths of the steam space. He said, "Give me a new pipe." When the new pipe was installed and the engine was steamed up and ready to go, he coupled the engine to seventy cars, rang the bell, blew the whistle, pulled open the throttle. "Old Hoodoo" came to life and dashed out of the yards like a hot-rod racer on the home stretch. The internal trouble had been removed.

In bringing my message to a close let me say that the baptism with the Holy Ghost insures a life with unmeasured resources. Jesus pictured the Holy-Ghost-filled life as being like a great onflowing river when He said, in John 7: 37-39, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified."

The man with the abiding Spirit has hidden reservoirs of strength and unmeasured resources. Like the river, his possibilities are as great as his resources. The Spirit-filled man can laugh at his handicaps as the Columbia River laughed at the Grand Coulee Dam. I pitied the river as I saw the great handicap which man prepared to place before it. But my pity was foolish. I was there later when this handicap was completed and I saw the Columbia rushing over the dam and dashing on toward the sea. When the river had time to draw on her resources, she climbed over her handicap.

Give the Spirit-filled man time to draw on his resources hidden in the mountains of God, and with a shout of triumph he too will climb over his handicap. I am happy to declare tonight that the Holy Ghost has been promised to this generation, and if we truly seek Him we may have Him. When He comes He will cleanse, comfort, establish, empower, and bring to glorious triumph those who will allow Him as a great river to flow through their lives. Revivals shall be our portion; sinners shall be converted, believers sanctified; old churches shall be revived.

So long as God's standards of right living are carefully observed and the help of the Spirit earnestly sought, just so long will the Church be invincible against the forces of evil-just so long will she be a power in God's hands for tearing down the strongholds of sin

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Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly' the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way' (I Cor. 12:27-31).

The Apostle Paul in discussing matters in this chapter has taken in quite a scope of territory. In this twelfth chapter of I Corinthians he pictured the Church of Jesus Christ as being like a body. With Jesus as the Head of the body, the members in the Church were symbolized by the members of a body -- as though some would serve as a hand, some would serve as an eye, some might serve as a foot. But everyone has a place in the Church, just as every member has a place in our body. Paul also spoke of the offices in the Church, indicating that there were some who were apostles, some who were prophets, and some who were teachers; he named the different offices that one might hold in the Church. Then he proceeded to talk about the gifts of the Spirit, and mentioned all of these different gifts of the Spirit, beginning at the greatest and closing with the most insignificant.

But when he got through talking about a place in the body of Christ -- a hand or a foot or an eye; when he got through talking about offices in the Church as pastor, evangelist, teacher, or apostle, or what he might be; when he got through talking about all of the gifts from the greatest to the least -- when he got through talking about all of these areas in the Church, he said, "And yet shew I unto you a more excellent way," indicating that he had in mind something that was of more importance than a position in the Church, of more importance than any gifts that the Spirit might bestow upon the individual, and he made it clear that there is but one thing that is absolutely essential. He said, "And yet shew I unto you a more excellent way." Then he entered right into this thirteenth chapter of I Corinthians, which is a marvelous chapter on divine love -- indicating that divine love, which he pictured in this thirteenth chapter, was that "more excellent way" that he had in mind.

There is no position in the body that is imperative. There is no office in the Church that is absolutely imperative, and there is no gift of the Spirit that is absolutely imperative. The Spirit bestows His gifts as He will, and He may bestow upon one person one gift, and upon another person another gift. But none of these gifts are absolutely imperative, because they are subject to the sovereign will of the Spirit. As I think of my text, "Yet shew I unto you a more excellent way," it would seem to me that, before there could be what one would call a more excellent way, there must somewhere be what properly would be called an "excellent way". And before there could be what could possibly be called an excellent way by comparison, there must somewhere be a way that is hard -- a hard way, an excellent way, and a more excellent way. And Paul says, "I show you this more excellent way." I believe that the Scripture teaches that there are three ways. There is the way of the sinner. There is the way of the justified man. And there is the way of the sanctified man.

This is taught in symbol in the Old Testament when the way of the sinner is pictured as being like the life in Egypt, under bondage, making bricks, gathering one's own straw, having a taskmaster lash his back until it bled as he was driven in chains of slavery. The way of the justified is pictured in the wilderness, after the children of Israel got out of Egypt, crossed the Red Sea,

escaped from Pharaoh, got over into a new land -- got over under different circumstances, where they had the presence of God though it was in the distance. At night His presence glowed in the sky as a pillar of fire and in the daytime it was like an overshadowing cloud, furnishing them shade and giving them the assurance that He was present.

Then came the crossing of the river of Jordan into the land of Canaan, which symbolizes the way of the sanctified -- a land that flowed with milk and honey; a land where the Man with the drawn sword came nearby and took over the guidance, the direction, and the administration of the things of God. No longer a pillar of fire, no longer a cloud in the distance, but a Man with the drawn sword nearby to give instruction and to give guidance! There were battles to fight, of course, but there were victories to be won.

In the land of Canaan there were thirty-one unsubdued kings. When Joshua moved into the land of Canaan, the war was on, but he was in the promised land. He had the Man with the drawn sword to call the signals and lead him on. It was a land of pomegranates; a land of iron, gold, and silver. It was a land that surpassed the wilderness just as much as the wilderness surpassed Egypt. The land of Canaan became the "more excellent way" in the Old Testament. So I believe that in the New Testament and in our day we have a picture of the unsaved man, the converted man, and the sanctified man.

The Bible says, "The way of transgressors is hard." It is hard, first, because it is an unpleasant road. A hard, unpleasant road -- and it is because a man is out of his element when he is a sinner. Had you ever stopped to think that God never made a man to be a sinner? A fellow once said to me, "O Brother Vanderpool, man was made to mourn anyway." Oh, no, man wasn't made to mourn. Man was made to laugh. Man was made to be happy. And as long as he has fellowship with God he has that happiness. He is in his element. Out of that element, he is unhappy.

Take for illustration a great eagle. Capture him. Bring him down and put him in a gilded cage. Put him over on a busy street corner, and let the people go by and look at him. They say in comment, "Oh, look at his eyes, how they sparkle"; or, "Oh, look at his wings, how strong they are." They brag on him and they feed him the best of meats, but in a few days you will note as you go by that the luster in that bird's eyes has begun to grow dim. Watch him as he walks about the cage. He will beat his wings against the cage. Some morning when you go by you will find him with his feathers all ruffled, lying dead in the corner of the cage, with dried blood on the tip of his wings. He died in his cage because he is out of his element. God never made him to live in a cage like that. God made him to spread those great wings, to soar above the mountains, to live above the clouds, and to live in the sunlight. Out of his element, he was unhappy.

The sinner is out of his element. Don't ever think that he can be happy in this world. Oh, I know one can giggle and laugh and let on as if he were having a good time, but it is only to cover a heart that is full of trouble, sorrow, and disappointment.

Not only is the life of a sinner a hard way because it is unpleasant; it is a hard way because it is unprofitable. What profit is there in being a sinner anyway? What is one going to get out of it? He gets only tears and heartaches. He may chase the fleeting toys of this life, but when he lays hold of some pretty bubble that he thought would make him happy, it breaks in his hands, leaving only

bloodstains. The joy and happiness that the world offers are fleeting and will soon be gone. There is no profit in the life of a sinner. Jesus implied that if a man could gain the whole world, but in the gaining of the world should lose his soul, he would lose more than he gained. What has he made? What has it profited him? The life of the sinner is an unprofitable life.

Not only is it an unpleasant way and an unprofitable way; it is an uncertain way. The way of the sinner is an uncertain path. He has no promise of tomorrow, no assurance of life. Every one of us walks in the shadow of death. Death stalks us every place we go. Just think of the tragic things that are happening all about us. Think of how quickly and suddenly life is snuffed out. How suddenly men reap the harvest for a life of sin and dissipation, rebellion and failure to obey God! Think of what that means. Oh, it is so important that we get the matter about our souls fully settled before it is too late! Did you know that the Book says that the feet of the wicked are in slippery places? A sinner stands on the glassy edge of damnation. Let one foot slip and he will drop through the trapdoor of time, and be damned forever. Life is so uncertain. No promise of tomorrow.

Note what David said: "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace." He said also, "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree." Then he said, "Yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." Today the sinner spreads himself like a green bay tree, but tomorrow he is gone. Life is so uncertain. That's what makes the way of the transgressor hard.

You say, "Brother Vanderpool, I know about that. I know the way of the transgressor is hard. I have had enough sorrow and grief as I've failed to mind God. You don't need to tell me anything about the hard way. I know what that's like." Listen, my friend, I have some good news for you! There's a better way! There's an excellent way when compared to the way of sin. The Bible says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." You can get out of that old, hard way through Christ. That old, unpleasant, uncertain, difficult, unprofitable way can be in the past. You may get over where the guilt and condemnation that hung about your neck like a millstone have been released and you are free. Your burden of sin and your guilt for your waywardness and your folly have been washed away, and you're a free man. You are a free woman. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." This excellent way involves peace with God. It brings you peace with God; not only peace with God, but peace with your fellowmen.

No real, genuine Christian wants to have between himself and anyone else anything that is unkind, unpleasant, or unchristian. He wants everything cleared up until he feels that ill will is removed. Old grudges are removed, guilt is gone, and peace has come into his heart. And that's what happens when a fellow gets converted. He gets over into the excellent way.

I remember years ago a man came to our parsonage and knocked on our door. And as I went to the door, he stood there. I saw a man seventy years old, and tears were running down his weather-beaten face. I invited him to come in. He came in and sat down in the front room. Then he began to weep and said, "O Brother Vanderpool, I've had a burden on my heart. I've carried a load for forty-two years. I've come to ask you if there is any relief for me."

He told me the story of how he was born in the old country and crossed the ocean, crossed the mountains, crossed the prairies, and had changed his name, trying to run away from his sin and run away from his burden. He took on an assumed name, married under an assumed name, reared a family under an assumed name. Forty-two years that something had hounded him. He said, "Is there any relief for me? Can I find any peace?" As he talked I could see that the sins of the past could not be changed. He couldn't undo them; he couldn't change them. I finally got him to look away to the Cross, where the Prince of Glory died. This man cried and prayed as if his heart would break, and finally I got him to lift his tear-stained face to the Man who wore the seamless robe, to the Man who had climbed that lone, gray hill, and died alone on Calvary.

Finally, out of his gloom, out of his darkness, and out of his sin he seemed to get a glimpse of Jesus, the blessed Saviour. His burden fell off. He arose from that davenport where he had been kneeling, stood up, and those poor old dead eyes of his took on a new look. His old face just seemed to smooth out, and smiles came where there had been lines of sorrow and grief, and he was made a brand-new man. Within minutes he was changed from a sinner to a believer. He trusted Christ. His sins were gone, and he was a free man.

This is what we call the new birth. That's what we mean when we talk about people being converted. We get people to come to the altar who have sins on their garments and carry heavy burdens on their souls. We urge them to confess their sins to God. The Bible says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." That is a wonderful promise, isn't it? You say, "But can I rely upon that?" Why, certainly! That is God's Word. If that isn't true, then how do you know that other parts of the Bible may not be untrue? I ask you, Do you believe the Bible where Jesus said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish"? Do you believe that if a person doesn't repent and go out of this sin business he will perish? You say, "Well, yes, Brother Vanderpool. That's what the Bible says, and I believe it." You ought to believe it! And you had better believe it!

The same Bible that says, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," also says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." One can rely upon both scriptures as being unalterably true. If we don't repent, we will perish. But "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." We can come out of that old, hard way over into this beautiful Christian way, where the burden of sin is lifted, and the peace with God comes, and we sense that we have passed from death to life. We sense that we have been translated from the kingdom of the devil over into the kingdom of God's dear Son. The Bible says, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." That means the burdens are gone, the bondage is gone, guilt is gone. It means that we have a new life, new kinfolk, new aims, new attitudes, a new life; we are new creatures. What a change!

When I was thinking about getting religion, the old devil said to me, "Now look here, boy, if you go ahead and get religion as you're thinking about, you will never smile again. It's going to make an old grandpa out of you, and you will just have one miserable, awful life, if you start in to be a Christian now." And you know, the devil drew my picture, and I saw myself with thin whiskers I could almost tuck under my belt -- an old man leaning on a cane -- no more smiling --

no more happiness, no more joy -- just eking out an existence. The devil made me think if I got religion, that's the way it would be with me.

You say, "Well, Brother Vanderpool, why did you ever get religion if that's what you thought about it?" I'll tell you why I got religion. I was afraid that I would die and go to hell before morning. That's what I was afraid of. I knew that if I died as I was I would be lost in the night and lost forever. I wasn't as bad as some people. I never robbed a bank. I didn't get drunk, get down in the gutter and roll in drunken filth. I might take a little social drink, or I might pick up something over at the country store when they weren't watching, but to rob a bank, not me. I thought I was a pretty good boy. I felt pretty good. I was slim in those days, and I could pat myself on the back thinking I was a pretty nice fellow.

But one night I heard a preacher. He began to talk about what it meant to be a sinner, what it meant to be without God and die in the dark. I became so afraid that a trapdoor would open and I would drop into the pit before daylight, I was glad to give up everything. I promised God I'd do anything. I'd rather be a grandpa and go to heaven than to be a smart aleck, godless young sport and die and go to hell. Oh, yes, I made my choice on that basis.

I hadn't been converted a minute until I knew the devil was lying to me all of the time. I hadn't been converted a minute until a new joy came. My burden fell off and I became a new boy. I supposed I would always want to dance or want to drink a little. I thought I would always want to do this or that. But the night God saved me I was so completely changed that I know now what Paul meant when he said, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Now it's a little difficult to explain that -- isn't it? how a fellow could be born again and become a new creature. That was hard for Nicodemus, and he was a teacher, a brilliant man. But he inquired of Jesus, "How can that be that a man can be born again?" He couldn't understand it. Jesus explained it to him this way. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8).

I've been trying now for fifty-five years to explain how I got converted. But I declare I can't tell how for the life of me. I just know! I remember the time! I remember the place, and I remember that it made such an indelible impression on my mind and heart that I haven't gotten over it to this night. Praise the Lord! I got out of the hard way and over into the excellent way.

But Paul speaks of a more excellent way and gives us the thirteenth chapter of I Corinthians in which he reveals the high value of divine love, teaching us to see that divine love in the heart is the "more excellent way" which he had in mind.

Divine love in the heart surpasses the justified life, just as the Canaan experience surpassed the wilderness experience. Israel had what was known as wilderness weaknesses. They complained, found fault, murmured, and at times seemed to long for the fleshpots of Egypt.

Soon after one is converted, he discovers a doubleminded condition which causes a warring in his nature, and he senses that he needs to have the love of God shed abroad in his heart. He will be tempted and Satan will enlarge on things, misrepresent things, and get people to say

sharp, cutting things to a fellow to make him feel that he has made a fool of himself because he has become a Christian. I remember how he tried to make me feel that I had made one big fool of myself when I got old-time religion.

Three boys who were my old pals came across the stubbled field where I was tending threshing machines. I was a separator man. They climbed upon this threshing machine and said, "Vandy, if you had to get religion, why didn't you get a decent kind? Why didn't you go up here to one of the high-steepled, nice places and get a decent religion?" I said, "Boys, it was down at that little church that I found peace. They helped me find my way to God; and as far as the old life is concerned, it's good-bye from here on out." They said, "Aren't you going to smoke any more?" I said, "No more smoking. I'm through." They said, "Aren't you going to play any more cards?" "No more cards! Burned them today! Quit! Turned away from the old life. Turned away from the old walks. Going to be brand-new by the grace of God." They said, "How can you do it?" They couldn't understand that I had a change of heart.

When I got converted, I thought I wouldn't know where to put any more religion, I was so happy in Jesus. But a rude awakening was soon coming. I had been converted about two weeks when one morning a man drove into the barn lot. I had had trouble with this man. It had rained the night before and there was mud on his buggy wheels. He came up within about twenty-five feet of me, stopped his team, reached down and took a chunk of mud off the buggy wheel, balled it up to about the size of a hen egg, leaned out of his buggy, threw the chunk of mud at me, and hit me roughly, "Good morning" in the chest, and said I never dreamed I had that something inside. I had been converted. Life was different, but I declare if there wasn't something inside that said, "Take him out of that buggy and give him what's coming to him." But another little voice said, "No, no, no, you're a Christian. No, no, you're a Christian. No, you're a Christian." I never said a word. I just had to take myself by the back of the neck and make myself walk around behind the barn. As I went around the barn I said, "Good morning, August." Nobody knew how I was feeling inside. I was so surprised. I never dreamed I had that thing inside.

A few days later a woman said to me at prayer meeting, "You got converted the other night. How are you getting along?" "Oh," I said, "I'm getting along good." She said, "Is everything fine?" I said, "Well, I'll tell you, I've got a temper that is hard for me to control." I said, "If I know my troubles are coming and I can get hold of myself, then I'm all right. But if they just slip up on me unaware, then I'm in trouble." And the woman said to me, "O Son, you don't have all the Lord has for you." I said, "What do you mean?" "Oh," she said, "the Lord wants to sanctify you." I said, "What's that?" She said, "He wants to fix you up inside until you have a deep, settled peace. You won't have that warring in there. You'll have a deep, final, settled peace -- a heart full of love, the love of God shed abroad in your heart." I said, "How do you get it?" She said, "You just dedicate your life and pray; seek and pray and He will do the work."

I became a seeker. I sought the Lord to sanctify me. I sought by my bedside. I sought in the field. I became a constant seeker for God to sanctify me and cleanse my heart. I wanted Him to take that contemptible something out of my heart. I longed for God to do that for me.

I worked for a Catholic man at this time, and ordinarily when we came to the table, he would cross himself, the little girl would cross herself, and I would just bow my head and offer

thanks. He said to his little girl, "Vandy prays to his plate." But one day they were gone and I offered thanks out loud. While I offered thanks out loud God blessed my soul. Oh, what joy filled my heart! I laughed and shouted until that old Catholic home got one initiation anyway. Oh, how happy I was! I had been asking the Lord to sanctify me, and when that great blessing came I thought, Now I am sanctified! When I go to prayer meeting I'm going to tell them I got sanctified.

That evening I came in with my team, and went down to the watering trough. I had four horses. One of them was a great big old awkward colt -- old Bill. While Bill was drinking, I was standing there thinking, O brother, how wonderful it is to be sanctified! When I get to prayer meeting I will testify that God has sanctified me. I never thought to keep an eye on old Bill while he was drinking. He got his mouth full of water and, for no reason that I can explain, old Bill just lifted his head and swung it right around over my neck and decided to wash out his mouth. He let out about a quart of water down over my head, down my shirt collar, and all over me. Anybody knows a horse should have more sense than that. I just seized old Bill by the bridle and I jerked him and I kicked him, and I kicked him again. About the third time I kicked him, a little voice seemed to say, "Oh, no, no, that's no way for a Christian to act." Then I thought, No, I didn't get sanctified. Of that I was certain.

But I had gotten so angry at old Bill that I knew I had lost the joy out of my heart. I'd sinned against God. I had a fit of anger -- carnal, sinful anger. The only way for me to find peace was to ask God to forgive me. I did ask God to forgive me; I prayed earnestly for God to forgive me. I prayed for hours. I prayed until twelve o'clock at ... everybody was asleep. I got up, came down the stairway, went out to the barn, went into the stall where old Bill was. I put my arm up around old Bill's neck and I told him that I was sorry that I kicked him, and that I wouldn't do it anymore. You say, "Oh, that was silly." No, brother, if you have a feeling of guilt and a burden on your soul, you'd be glad to do anything to get rid of it. God spoke peace to my heart and I stroked old Bill's neck, went back to the house, and went to bed and went to sleep. God forgave me.

My first thought in the morning was, I must get sanctified. I've got to get rid of that something. I must have God to do something for me. And it dawned on me that since I had gotten converted at the altar, maybe I could get sanctified at the altar. As I worked in the field near the road that morning I saw a neighbor lady going into town and I hailed her and asked, "Are you going past the pastor's parsonage?" She said, "Yes." I said, "When you go past, would you mind stopping and telling the pastor that Tuesday night at the cottage prayer meeting I'm coming in, and tell him I want to get sanctified." She said, "I'll tell him." I didn't know that the pastor didn't believe in sanctification. The lady that came by told the wife of the pastor. The pastor was not at home at the time, but when he returned his wife said, "You know that boy that got converted four or five weeks ago? He wants to come in Tuesday night and get sanctified." She said, "Now I know you say you don't believe in it, but you know I do, and you'd better make it possible for that boy to get sanctified. You'd better open the altar for that boy to get sanctified Tuesday night. If you don't do it, and he goes off and backslides, God will require his blood at your hands."

Well, Tuesday night I headed for cottage prayer meeting and my soul was rejoicing. I found myself saying, "God is going to sanctify me tonight." Oh, how happy I was! When I arrived at prayer meeting, we had a little testimony meeting. One man stood up and testified that he had been converted twenty-seven years. I had been converted about six weeks. Finally the pastor said,

"Now there is someone here who wants to be sanctified." There were five chairs. I knelt at the middle chair. This old man knelt beside me. Three others came that night. God sanctified my heart, and He sanctified this man that had been converted twenty-seven years. He got up and testified, saying, "Oh, if I had known twenty-seven years ago what I know tonight, it would have saved me an up-and-down life. It would have saved me such a checkered life." He said, "Oh, if only I had known this twenty-seven years ago!"

I went out and met the call to preach. Twelve years later, while holding a revival meeting, I preached and I was having a good time preaching. There was an older man in the audience who shouted me on. When I got through preaching, I was shaking hands as I came down the aisle and I looked at this elderly man. As I shook hands with him, I said to him, "How long have you been converted?" He said, "Thirty-nine years." I said, "How long have you been sanctified?" He said, "Twelve years." I said, "I'll tell you where you got the blessing." He said, "Where's that?" I said, "You got the blessing in Chillicothe, Missouri, in Sister Abbott's home, down near the Wabash tracks one Tuesday about 10:00 p.m." The old man went into the air like a rocket. He said, "That's where I got sanctified, but how in the world do you know anything about it?" I said, "You remember that boy that knelt by your side that night and got sanctified?" He said, "You're not that boy." I said, "I'm that boy." He said, "Glory to God! I'm class leader in the Methodist church. Let's take this town for God. What do you say?" And I tell you we just about did too. We saw many converted and sanctified in that meeting.

This sanctified experience which we both received was the "more excellent way" for us. As an older man with many burdens, problems, and disappointments, he had found strength, comfort, and overcoming grace for his day. As a young man with voices calling from every side, I found the "more excellent way" one of victory and triumph. I met the call to preach and received courage to face every foe, and to this day the abiding Spirit has never failed me.

There is "a more excellent way" for all of God's children. None should be content until they have found this glorious way of perfect love.

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09 -- RUNNING THE CHRISTIAN RACE

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:1-2).

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain (I Cor. 9:24).

TEXT: So run, that ye may obtain.

The Apostle Paul drew a number of analogies, giving to us a plain, clear picture of the Christian religion. He put things clearly in the analogies that he gave and set forth a lot of things about the Christian religion. In one place he drew an analogy between a Christian and a soldier, and he pictured the Christian life as being like that of a soldier in a war. That certainly is a fair picture of a Christian. We are in a war. The fight is on. The Christian life is not just a battle; it's a series of battles -- it's a war. It's a battle today, and a victory; a battle tomorrow, and a victory -- a battle the next day, and we think it's a kind of draw. We are not certain whether we won in that particular battle. But the next day the fight is on and we win in that battle. It's a war. The Christian life is like that. Paul pictured it thus and talked about a captain, about the warfare ' about an armor, about all those things in connection with being a soldier.

In another place he pictured the Christian life as being like that of a sailor on a voyage and he talked about harbors, anchors, and dangers of shipwrecks. He gave us a fair picture of the Christian life as being like that of a sailor on a voyage, headed toward a port; headed toward a harbor yonder where the storms will break no more.

Then he pictured the Christian life as being like that of a pilgrim on a journey, with staff in hand and a faraway look in his eyes -- on the march, seeking "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." And he drew these beautiful analogies until when we study them and think about them we get a picture of the Christian religion.

But in this particular case he drew an analogy between the Christian life and that of a runner in a race, indicating that life is like a race. He drew several thoughts from it, but he lifted up one very important thing when he said, "So run, that ye may obtain." Now I think by that statement we can conclude that a fellow might run and not obtain. He said, "So run, that ye may obtain." I think that a fellow might run and not make it. There are certain rules and regulations that enter into a man's winning the prize at the end of this race. There are certain requirements, and I want to draw a few lessons from this analogy that Paul gives between the Christian and that of a runner in a race.

There are rules governing a race. When a number of high schools get together and bring in their runners for a tournament, there are rules governing such a track meet. This is also true in colleges; it's true in the great Olympic Games. Men take part in preliminary races, and win, until they are qualified and have a right to run in the final race, with the understanding that if they win that race they will win a prize.

The first thing a runner who hopes to win a prize must do is to qualify for entrance. A fellow couldn't just come in from anywhere and get in and run and win a prize. He might run ever so fast and he might run ever so gracefully; he might outrun anyone else in the field; but if he hadn't qualified for entrance, he couldn't win the prize. It's important that a man qualify for entrance. He has to be properly enrolled, get a number, and be assigned certain white lines between which he is to run.

Then, too, there are rules governing a race. A fellow must not only qualify for entrance and be properly enrolled, but he has to observe the rules. The officials set up certain rules, and if a

runner violates one of those rules, that disqualifies him. He can't win a prize if he violates the rules.

Some time ago I heard the story of a runner from the United States who was running in a relay race in the Olympic Games. Our team was all set to win, but when the baton was passed from one of the runners to the next, one of the men dropped it. Instead of passing it gracefully from one hand to another he dropped the baton on the ground. This broke the rules. The baton had to be handed directly. The runner who dropped it -- this great big runner, running in the Olympic Games -- sat down in the field and cried like a child. He had disqualified himself. There was no hope to win the prize, no hope to win the race. He had broken the rules. Not intentionally, certainly, but the rules were broken; he was disqualified and couldn't run. There are strict rules governing any race that is run. And if you break a rule you can't go back and fix it up. If you break the rules you can be ever so sorry and do ever so much to fix it up, but you can't go back and change it. You're out of the proposition.

In a race run in this world, only one can win the prize. Just one fellow is going to win it; just one fellow is going to get the medal. But in the Christian race, of course, it's a little different. Paul said, "So run, that ye may obtain." It is our privilege for every one of us to so deport himself and so run that he can have the prize. Praise the Lord!

Now what are some of the rules that enter into running this Christian race if we are going to win the prize? Similar to the rules of running a race between schools, in the first place, we will have to qualify for entrance. You say, What is the first qualification for entrance in running this race? I'll tell you what it is. You must be born again. Except ye be born again ye cannot have life eternal. The new birth is absolutely imperative. Church joining, hand shaking, water baptism, outward forms and ceremonies of religion, all of those fade away into insignificance and amount to absolutely nothing if you are not born again. You must be born again! Outside of this there's no hope. You might be a member of the church, and might be in there for years; you might have a good daddy, a good mother, and you might have been reared in the church; you might go to church, Sunday school, prayer meeting, and pay your tithe -- but you will have to be born again. That's the qualification for entrance.

Then you'll have to be properly enrolled. I believe that everybody who is born again gets his name enrolled. You know, the disciples came to Jesus and just celebrated. They said, "O Saviour, we are having a wonderful time. Even the devils are subject unto us, as we go out to preach." Jesus said, "Rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." And I believe it's our privilege to be born again, have our names written down in the Lamb's book of life. It's altogether essential that that be true.

Just as in other races, there are rules to observe in this Christian's race. In the first place, take this twelfth chapter of Hebrews. It follows the eleventh chapter, which we call the Westminster Abbey of the Bible. If you want to find the notables, the outstanding, and the great of the Bible, you'll find their names written down in that eleventh chapter of Hebrews. The author tells about what those fellows did, and the wonderful feats they performed, the wonderful miracles that took place in connection with their lives, and how by faith they did so many wonderful things. I don't remember of having counted them, but I suppose he named twenty-five names. Then he

finally just ran out of names and said, "What shall I more say? for the time would fail me" to name all of them.

In the twelfth chapter he comes right out and says, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses." The witnesses he is talking about are those who make up that eleventh chapter of Hebrews, who by faith triumphed, quenched the violence of fire, stopped the mouths of lions, out of weakness were made strong, and accomplished so many feats through faith. He says, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses." Then he starts in to tell us what to do if we are going to obey the rules and really get somewhere in running this Christian race.

In the first place I think it is a good thing for us to think about how others have won in this race. Brother, you may think you have it a little tough; you may think you have a hard assignment. But I just want to tell you that there are some other fellows that have been over this trail ahead of you; there are some others that have been in there that have given it all they had and have won. Others have sailed through bloody seas; others have gone over stony ground; others have been pricked and scratched by the thorns of life -- but they made it. And if they made it, you can make it too. If they made it, I can make it. Glory be to God! If they can make it through, I can make it through. Listen, brother, you can make it! Sister, you can make it!

You say, "It's pretty rough." Oh, I know, but did you know that it just came to pass? It didn't come to stay. It will be gone in a little while and you'll be on top of it in a little while. Rang on a little longer; you're going to make it yet. If you could just see that around the corner God is marshaling His forces, around the corner the soldiers of God are marching in your direction! The siege will be lifted, the fight will be over, the devil will be whipped, and you'll be a conqueror if you've just got the stamina to stay in there and be faithful and true. Others have made it; brother, you can make it too. Sister, you can make it too. You say, "O Brother Vanderpool, but the fight's been long and hard." I know that. But you haven't "resisted unto blood, striving against sin." You still have a little strength left. You can make it. We need to see that others are trying.

I think of those with whom I have labored who are on the other side. I'm seventy-two years old and I look back along the line and I think of men with whom I've labored. I think of Dr. Williams, Dr. Goodwin, Dr. Miller Dr. Chapman -- these great and good men. I have been on camp meeting platforms with them and have preached turn about with them and always felt that I was like a boy in knee trousers, trying to get along with a group of men. I always felt that I was short and that I was a failure. These men, great and good men, have outridden the storms of life and are on the other side.

That cloud of witnesses is swelling; it's getting larger and larger. They are coming from the east and the west, and from the north and the south. They are gathering there. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses." Brother, that ought to do something for you. Sister, that ought to do something for you. Mother is over there; Dad's over there; loved ones are over there. And they're all beckoning to you to go on and stay with it and don't quit. Keep at it. Old hands are beckoning, hands that are wrinkled; they are beckoning to you to be true and faithful. There are little hands, baby fingers, beckoning to you to carry on, be true and faithful, and

outride the storms of life. You can make it. Don't you think you can make it? Why, brother, I'm going to make it or die trying. And if I die trying, I know I'll make it. Praise God!

And then he said, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, . . . and . . . run with patience the race that is set before us." Now we are going to have to lay aside the weights. If we are going to run a race, brother, we are going to have to strip for the race. Anything that hinders us, anything that makes us stagger or stumble, we are going to have to lay aside. You say, "Brother Vanderpool, what is a weight?" Well, I'll say this to you, a weight is not a sin. You had to lay aside your sins to get in on the track. Everything that you recognize as a sin you have to lay aside to get in. "Well," you say, "then what is a weight?" A weight is anything that hinders you, hinders your speed, slows you down, makes you wobble and get over into the other fellow's trail and make it tough and hard for the other fellow. You have to lay aside every weight. Lay it aside. Now I'll tell you this. When it is revealed to you that it is a weight, and you don't lay it aside, it finally can become a sin. At first it's a weight. If you lay it aside, you will be all right. By continuing to keep the weight you sin against God. You will have to lay aside the weights.

"Lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us . . ." Now, what is that sin? What is the besetting sin of the race? You say, "Brother Vanderpool, my besetting sin is pride." Somebody else says his besetting sin is anger. Somebody else says his besetting sin is covetousness. Different people have what they call their besetting sins. Actually different people have different ways in which the carnal mind exerts and exposes itself. With one, the carnal mind shows up in covetousness; with another, in pride; and with another the carnal mind shows up in envy or jealousy. It shows up in different ways, but it is the same thing. It is the "root of bitterness"; it is the seed of sin; it's the body of sin. The carnal mind is the besetting sin that affects everybody. You couldn't say pride is the besetting sin of the race, or that covetousness is the besetting sin of the race, or that lust is the besetting sin of the race. It's a racial virus that's in the racial stream. We're born into the world with it. Children are born into the world with it. They battle and struggle with it.

Pardon won't take it away; confession won't take it away. There's only one way to get hold of that virus of sin and that's through cleansing. The cleansing Blood purchased for us the fiery baptism of the Holy Ghost, which will burn out and cleanse and purge, sanctify and purify the heart. Praise the Lord! I get blessed when I get to thinking about this wonderful grace of God that can fix us up until we can lay aside the besetting sin. He said, "Lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

Now no two people have the same race before them. You say, "O Brother Vanderpool, I wish you could see what I have to go through." Yes, brother, but I wish you could see what somebody else has to go through. If you could see what somebody else has to go through, you would think you were near heaven. No two people have the same problems or the same battles. All of us have the little white lines right out there. Here's your trail; here's where you run. There are hurdles and handicaps in your way; there are hills, there are valleys in your way -- but you are to run with patience the race that is set before you. Take your assignment; lift up your head; pick up your feet. Come on, hallelujah! You're going to make it. Just as sure as you are here, you are going to make it. You're going to make it if you "run with patience the race that is set before you."

I think sometimes when a fellow is doing his best to make the grade it wouldn't be bad if somebody else could boost a little for him. I think there is just about as much in boosting and cheering for a runner as there is in running. Here's a fellow that is doing his best. He could do a little better, he could stay at it a little longer, if he could just have a cheering section not too far away, giving him a little shout of encouragement and a word of cheer as he runs on. Why don't you pass out more of these encouraging things? When you see a fellow just giving it all he's got, wouldn't it be all right just to say, "Boy, you're doing all right"? You can't imagine how that would make a fellow feel.

I remember one time when I was bowed down and pretty low. Dr. Reynolds put his hand on my shoulder and said, "God bless you, Son. You're going to make it yet." You don't know how much good that did me. And there are fellows out there that need just a word of encouragement. They're fighting a pretty hard battle and a little cheering wouldn't hurt them.

I remember back in our part of the country when I was a boy, we had a fellow in our school that we thought could run. We thought that Cotton Adams was one of the best runners in the whole state. So we made arrangements to send Cotton Adams over to a certain town where they were going to have a tournament. We thought our school ought to be represented over there. So we got together some money, about three or four dollars, to buy him a ticket and we sent him over there to run and represent our school. Then we got to thinking, Wouldn't it be too bad for Cotton to go over there to run and be the only one over there to represent our school?

We had a fellow that was a one-man cheering section. Jonesy could make more noise and could whoop louder and cheer more than a half-dozen average fellows. So we got together a few more dollars and sent Jonesy over to the race too. Cotton was all set to go; Jonesy was in the cheering section. The signal was given and the runners were off. Cotton came running around past that big cheering section with nobody in it but Jonesy. Jonesy had a red sweater, and as Cotton went by Jonesy stood up in that cheering section, swung his red sweater, and yelled, "Go to it, Cotton!" And Cotton went to it. As he came by on the last round, he was nearly exhausted but giving it all he had. As he went past he glanced at that cheering section and Jonesy swung that red sweater around his head and yelled like a wild boy, "Go to it, Cotton!" An extra surge and burst of speed and Cotton won the race.

When they came back home we carried Cotton all around. We whooped, yelled, and celebrated. But when he got a chance Cotton said, "Wait a minute, boys. Wait a minute! I never would have made it if it hadn't been for Jonesy. Jonesy in the cheering section, swinging that red sweater, did something for me."

I want the Lord to help me to stand up now and then in the cheering section and swing the red sweater and do my best to give a little encouragement to the fellow that's in there giving it all he has.

"So run, that ye may obtain." We will have to follow the rules if we are to win this prize. We will have to run with patience the race that is set before us. We can't sit down and win the prize. We can't quit and win the prize. You've got to observe the rules.

Paul reached a climax when he said, "... looking unto Jesus." There are three outstanding words in this lesson: seeing, running, looking. "Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." Keep your eyes on Jesus. Let me say to you, Christian, keep your eyes on Jesus. If you look at the past you are going to get discouraged. Looking at the past causes discouragement; looking at others causes doubt. You can't afford to look at somebody else. Every man and woman in this world is harassed and troubled by some human weakness, and if you don't understand the motive and understand the heart, you are going to get hurt as you watch others do some things. If you could understand the motive and the heart, things wouldn't hurt you so badly. But you don't know what others are up against. And when they don't behave like you think they ought to behave, then that gets you in trouble. Looking at others causes doubt. When you look at yourself and look at the past, and you think about what you have accomplished in the past, you get discouraged. You look at the future, and if you aren't careful it will fill you with dread. When you get to analyzing yourself, that will fill you with despair. There is only one safe way to look and that's to Jesus.

In this race if a fellow makes a mistake he can go back and fix it up. When I heard the story about that runner who sat down and cried because he had committed an error that forever kept him from winning the prize, I thought how tragic it was. It's a tragic thing for a fellow in the Christian life to stumble and fall and make an error, but he can go back and fix it up. I am talking to people tonight who started; you tried; you tried to be a victorious Christian, but you stumbled and you staggered and you haven't succeeded so well and you feel badly about it. I have good news for you! If you want to get it fixed up, you know you can come back and tell the Lord that you're sorry that you missed it, that you're sorry that you got the thing all messed up, and that you're going to do better -- and God will forgive you. He'll put you back in between the white lines and give you hope that one of these days you can finish the race with honor, and win the prize at the end of the Christian race. You have to keep your eyes on Jesus.

Listen, I want us to keep our eyes on the Saviour. What difference does it make anyway what others think? If when I can close my eyes and look toward His beautiful face I see that there is a smile on His countenance, that He's satisfied, that He is pleased with the heroic effort I am making, I'll make it. I think He sees how tired I am; I think He sees the scars that are on me from battles fought in other days. I think He sees that, and I think He cares, and I think He smiles back. And, brother, if you can keep Him smiling, what's the difference? If I can keep Jesus smiling back at me, I'm going to make it.

One cold December morning an old man walked down the street in a large city. As he walked he saw a lad sitting on the curbstone. The boy was bareheaded, bare-handed, and barefooted. He was sitting there shivering in the cold, clutching in his little, dirty, red hands the head of an old, broken violin. The old man passed him by, went ten or fifteen steps down the street, but he hadn't gone far when he came back and put his hand on the tousled head of the little fellow sitting there shivering in the cold.

"Son," he said, "why don't you go home? Don't sit here shivering in the cold."

The boy looked up at him and said, "I have no home to go to."

The man said, "You mean you don't have any place to go? No home to go to?"

"No," answered the boy.

The man questioned, "Where is your father?" The lad replied, "I never met him."

"Where is your mother?" the man continued.

"She died about two weeks ago," answered the lad.

"You mean you are all alone in the world?"

"Yes."

"Where did you sleep last night?"

"Over there in that box," said the lad pointing to a big packing box. "There is some excelsior and papers in there. I slept in there and I did pretty well last night. It wasn't too cold."

"Have you had any breakfast?"

"Yes, I got a pretty good breakfast."

"Where did you get your breakfast?"

"I got it out of that can over there back of the Boston Restaurant. I didn't do too badly this morning. I got a pretty good breakfast."

The old man said, "If I take you out of here, would you promise me that you would stay out of this slum area?"

The boy looked up at the old man and said, "Yes, sir, I will."

"Come with me." The man took the boy with him and went to a nearby barbershop and said to the barber, "See that this boy has a good bath and a haircut. I'll be back pretty soon."

Soon the old man came back with his arms filled with clothes for the boy: socks, underwear, shoes, shirt, tie, mittens, everything to outfit him from head to foot. The little fellow put on the new clothes and turned and walked out of the barbershop door. As they walked along, the child put his hand up into the old man's hand and said to the old fellow, "I never felt this way before."

Soon they turned in at a nice home and knocked on the door. The door opened and an elderly woman looked out and said, "Well, well, Daddy, what have you got here?"

"Oh," he said, "Mother, this is a boy that is coming to live with us." She just pushed open the door, put her motherly arms around the little fellow, pulled him up close, and brought him into the house. He waded through the thick rugs. He had never seen such rugs in all his life. They gave him a room. He came to the table and ate. Such food he'd never had; such a bed he'd never slept in; such kindness he'd never had before. By and by the old man said to him, "Son, how would you like for me to adopt you as my boy?"

The lad said, "Then you'd be my sure enough daddy?"

"Yes."

"Oh," he answered, "that would be wonderful."

"All right, if we can get the papers fixed up, I'm going to adopt you."

So they got the papers fixed up and he adopted the little boy. Weeks after that the old man went by the boy's bedroom and in on the dresser he saw the head of that old, broken violin that the boy had been clutching the first morning he saw him. He said to the boy, "Why did you bring this old, broken violin?"

The boy said, "Shouldn't I have done that? Wasn't it all right to bring it?"

"Well," he said, "yes, it was all right to bring it, but why did you want it?"

"Oh," he said, "I heard a violin played one time and it was the most beautiful music I ever heard in my life."

The old man said, "Would you like to learn to play a violin?"

The boy answered, "Oh, nothing would make me happier than that."

The old man said, "All right, I'll teach you. I am a master on the violin and I'll teach you."

Years rolled by and one day the newspapers announced that a young violinist was going to give a recital at the city auditorium. The people came by the hundreds and filled the entire building. The boy came out all set to play. He took his violin, got all set, lifted his gaze, and began to play. He played the violin, continuing to look yonder. Some people laughed for joy, some wept, he drew such wonderful strains of music from his violin. And some people said, "Oh, I don't know that that's so great. I've heard just as good as that. I don't know that that's anything to go wild about." The boy paid no attention to the praise they gave him nor the scolding they gave him. And some people actually got out of their seats and came and threw money down at his feet. But still he paid no attention to what the crowd was saying or doing. He just looked yonder and played on.

One man decided he would see at what the boy was looking. He went up to the first balcony and saw the boy's gaze was higher than that. He went on up to a higher place, and finally

when he got to a certain place he saw, standing by a post, an old, gray-haired man. All the old, gray-haired man was doing was just nodding. It seemed that all that boy cared for was to keep the old man nodding. The old man had found him when he was sitting on a curbstone; found him when he was naked, cold, hungry, and friendless; and everything that was good, beautiful, and worthwhile the old man had brought him. Naturally the only thing the boy could think about was to keep the old, gray-haired man happy.

I remember when Jesus found me sitting on the curbstone, friendless, homeless, without God, and without hope, feeding on the husks of sin. And He adopted me. He gathered up the broken, bleeding ends of my poor heart, poured in oil, healed my heart. I thought I would never sing or be happy again, but I testify to you that He healed my heart, gave me a new song, changed my whole outlook on life, and gave me a desire to just keep Jesus nodding. Let me urge you to look to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith. Don't quit. "So run, that ye may obtain."

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10 -- OCCUPY TILL I COME

SCRIPTURE: And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy TILL I COME. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant; because thou has been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from every one which hath shall be given; and from him that should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me (Luke 19:11-27).

TEXT: ... Occupy till I come (v.13).

According to verse 11, Jesus gave the parable for two reasons. First, because He was "nigh to Jerusalem" and He wanted to rebuke Jerusalem for her attitude toward Him. Second, He wanted to correct the error that was in the minds of His disciples. His disciples thought that the

kingdom of God should immediately appear. But Jesus knew that, before the kingdom of God could appear as they were expecting, there must be the investment of service, time, and tears on their part.

The nobleman of the parable is without question Jesus. The servants represent followers of Christ in any age. The pound given the servants represents talents, gifts, and opportunities God has given His followers. The far country of the parable is that country which holds Jesus today.

Jesus is a Nobleman in every sense of the word "nobleman." When I think of a nobleman, I think of an individual with outstanding characteristics -- wise, kind, powerful, faithful. Jesus measures up to the highest standard for a "nobleman." He was wise. No one was ever able to ask Him a question which He could not answer with a finality that left no room for argument. When He came to His own country and taught in the synagogue, they were astonished and exclaimed, "Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?" Jesus was wisdom personified.

Jesus was kind. No one ever came to Jesus in sincerity who did not receive attention from the Saviour. Rich, poor, old, young, trained, unlearned, good, bad, Jew, or Gentile -- all received kindness at His hand. To the leper who said, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," Jesus replied, "I will; be thou clean." To the ruler and teacher Nicodemus, who inquired the way of life, Jesus spoke as plainly and kindly, saying, "Ye must be born again." Little children sat on His knee and stroked His noble face with dimpled fingers. He smiled and blessed them in return.

Jesus was powerful. He never met any problem that He could not handle and yet have power in reserve. whether it was a fever of short duration or a stubborn crippling disease of many years' standing, only a word' was needed in either case. Changing water into wine or bringing a great calm out of a mighty tempest was only pastime for our Nobleman. It made no difference whether the person had just expired or had been dead for four days, Jesus had power to speak the life-giving word. His power was unlimited when casting 7 devils out of Mary Magdalene or 2,000 devils out of the man of the tombs. Jesus was a Master in any realm.

Jesus was faithful. He has kept every promise He ever made or He has plans laid to keep them in due time. He arose from the grave after three days, as He said He would. He sent the Comforter back, as He said He would. Jerusalem was left without one stone upon another, as He said would come to pass. He has plans laid to return to this world and fulfill the promise, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3). If He has made a promise to you which has not been fulfilled, have courage. Jesus is a Nobleman who is faithful in fulfilling all of His promises.

Before the nobleman of the parable went away, he called his servants about him and gave them a commission saying, "Occupy till I come." This nobleman had many interests, reaching across the plains from the city to the mountains, and from the city to the sea. When he said, "Occupy till I come," he was saying, "I have timber in the mountains -- see that no one steals it. I have herds of cattle -- see that they are cared for and that no one else places his brand upon them. I have flocks of sheep -- see that they do not stray or fall prey to the wolves or perish in a storm. I have vineyards -- keep out the wild herds that would destroy them. I have properties in the cities -- keep out the vandals. Keep the lights burning and the gates closed. Look after my interests."

Jesus is commissioning His Church today, saying, "Occupy till I come." He has interests everywhere. There are cities, towns, and villages which our church has not touched. In them are boys and girls by the thousands for whom Jesus died. They will never be reached unless we catch the meaning of the commission, "Occupy till I come," and go after the lost. Wherever Jesus has an interest, as Christians we have a responsibility. Millions have never heard the story of redemption. Millions have never heard the name of Jesus. There are other millions of people hoodwinked and deceived by a form of Christianity which is a pagan religion with a dead Christ. Our Christ is a vibrant, living Nobleman who is away for a while but who assures us of His return and indicates the need for faithfulness to the commission.

This nobleman of the parable gave each servant a pound with which to trade. Jesus gives to His servants a commission, "Occupy till I come." But He also bestows capital upon each one by giving something with which to trade. Everyone has something that could be used in building the kingdom for Christ, if Christ could only get possession of it. Moses had only a dry rod in his hand until he cast it down at the bidding of God. When he turned it loose, it became a thing of life. When he took it up again at the bidding of God, it became a thing of power that released God on every occasion that Moses used it at the bidding of God. The lad in the New Testament who had only a lunch that his mother had prepared for him (only five barley loaves and two small fish) is proof that little is much if Christ can possess it. With the lad's consecrated lunch Jesus fed 5,000 men and afterward gathered up 12 baskets of fragments which were left over. Getting full possession of a God-given talent which to us may seem small is God's great problem.

A lady said to me, as her pastor, about two months after her conversion, "Brother Vanderpool, give me something to do, but first let me tell you what I can't do. I can't play the piano nor sing special songs. I'm no good at public prayer. I can't teach. I'm a failure as a personal worker, and I don't have much money to give, but I want something to do." I turned to the Sunday school superintendent and said, "She wants something to do," but in turn he said, "You know all the jobs and offices are taken, Brother Vanderpool. There is nothing for her to do. Just tell her to pray." I said, "I know, but she wants something to do."

Then I inquired, "How about making her visiting secretary for the Sunday school?" He answered, "Brother Vanderpool, we have no such office as that." I replied, "Yes, I know, but we could make such an office in about a minute." Then he said, "Go ahead if you wish." I told her to take the job and told her what would be expected of her. First, check the absentees and find why they did not come to Sunday school. Second, contact visitors and new people who lived in our town. Third, watch for any prospective Sunday school members and report them to me.

Within a few days I received a phone call from the lady saying she had found some people who would like to come to our Sunday school but it was too far to walk. Could someone with a car pick them up? I promised and sent someone after them Sunday morning. About the middle of the week I received another phone call from the lady telling of another family who would come if someone could stop and pick them up. I promised again and sent another car to pick up this family. This kind of procedure continued until ten of our men were picking up extra loads of Sunday school people. Then a bus was rented to pick up the ten or more families, and everybody was happy. Toward the end of the week the phone rang and a timid voice inquired if I could send

someone to pick up a family away off the bus route. I promised again, but within six months we needed to rent the second bus to care for the people who wanted to come to Sunday school.

The closing Sunday of our pastorate in that church I stood at the back door of the church and watched 3 buses and 5 cars unload over 150 boys and girls who scampered across the churchyard to find their places in the different Sunday school departments. I saw a pale-faced woman with bright eyes watching that group; for she who could not play the piano nor sing special songs, was no good at public prayer, who said she could not do personal work or teach a class and had little money to give, was responsible for 150 new people in the Sunday school. She, as the handmaiden of the Lord, had received capital from the Nobleman and dedicated it back to God. She was trying to "occupy" till the Nobleman's return.

For us to occupy till He comes will call for a sterling Christian character, with the individual having a fathomless consecration to the assigned commission. All that we are and have, all that we ever hope to be or have, must be gladly placed at His disposal. Cherished possessions and fondest ambitions must be lost in His will.

I was pastor of a little home mission church which worshipped in a portable tabernacle made of corrugated iron; the people of the town called it "the old cow barn." The need for a better place of worship was great. I earnestly prayed for guidance. One day I discovered a wonderful piece of property just suited to our purpose which could be purchased for only \$1,000 down, the balance in annual payments at low interest. I walked around the lot and claimed it for the Church of the Nazarene. We had no money in the treasury. I prayed earnestly and waited.

Two or three mornings afterwards a man knocked on the parsonage door. He came in and told me the story of how his wife and children had been saving money to buy a new Buick automobile. But he said that while he was at prayer that morning God seemed to inquire which he would rather do -- drive the old Ford up to a decent place of worship or drive a shining new Buick up to "the old cow barn." The brother informed me that after a family conference they had decided to give the money to secure a new place of worship, and that if I could find a satisfactory place, he would give a thousand dollars in cash. I told him of the property I had discovered and had been praying about. He knew the property location and value. With face all aglow he said, "God is in it." You never saw a man give a thousand dollars to the work of God with greater flourish than this fellow did; and I doubt if ever anyone saw a preacher take a thousand dollars for the work of God with greater flourish than I took that check. The property was purchased and God's cause began to prosper.

I saw this man many times afterward. Never once did he or his family regret the sacrifice they had made. A few years later he moved to one of our colleges to give the children a Christian education. While at this college he made investments that brought returns which gave him financial security for the rest of his life. His gift to the work of God called for a full consecration, but obedience to God's will paid off in every way -- for the church and for the man and his family.

To fulfill the commission also calls for an unchanging love and loyalty to Christ. Love for Christ warms the heart for the coldest ordeal. Love for Christ strengthens the arm for the toughest conflict. Love for Christ will quicken the step for the last mile of the way.

I heard Uncle Bud Robinson tell of three navy men who were left clinging to a broken raft after the sinking of their ship. They were in ice water that soon chilled them to the bone. Two of the fellows were single; the other one had a wife and a little four-year-old daughter. After clinging to the raft for about an hour, one of the single boys turned loose and went down. The other single boy held on for another half hour; then he turned loose, leaving the married man clinging to the raft. Hours afterward he was picked up by rescuers. Everyone marveled that the man could live so long in the water filled with floating chunks of ice. When the man recovered so he could talk, he told his story.

He said he saw the other two fellows turn loose and go down, and that many times he was almost ready to let his numb fingers turn loose, but always the faces of his wife and little daughter came before him. The sight of their faces drove warm blood to his very fingertips, and his whole body seemed to warm, though he remained in the ice water. Paul said, "The love of Christ constraineth us."

The third thing I notice which is essential in our character if we would occupy till He comes is ability to cooperate. We are workers together with Christ. As members of a body we must cooperate with each other to get satisfactory results. The strength of union is lost when a church or a man goes independent. There are so many different types of service to be rendered in occupying till He comes that we should find the work that we are best equipped to do and then do our job well, helping each other as opportunity comes.

We are brethren in a great family. The success or failure of each of us affects every other member of the family. What difference will it make when He returns? Whether I have been a gatekeeper, lamplighter, shepherd, or a front-rank representative for my Nobleman, faithfulness to my assigned task will be the basis upon which I shall stand or fall.

There are four words that come to mind when I think of the parable of the returning nobleman -- the commission assigned, the capital bestowed, the character required, and the coronation assured.

Jesus said, "I will come again." Yes, He will come back again. He will inquire how we got along trading with the capital which He bestowed upon us. He plans to gather all of the faithful unto himself. On that day honor will be bestowed and rewards will be given. How tragic when buried talents will be uncovered, unfaithfulness revealed, and divine wrath outpoured!

History tells of the siege of Lucknow, the capital of the kingdom of Oudh in India, in 1857, when 1,700 men withstood for 12 weeks the siege of 10,000 men. During this siege suffering within the city was indescribable. The men holding the city had the promise that Havelock and his Highlanders would come to their assistance. Out of that siege comes the story of a little blind girl who, on the morning of one day of the siege, was sitting in front of her humble home and began a joyful cry for her mother to come quickly, saying, "Don't you hear them? Don't you hear them?" The mother rebuked her, saying, "Hear what? I hear nothing that should make you rejoice when our beloved city is so besieged." The little blind girl who had developed acute hearing said, "I hear

the bagpipes. I hear the bagpipes. Havelock and his Highlanders are coming." In a little while others heard the bagpipes. Soon the siege was lifted and the suffering was past.

Those with spiritual ears can hear the sound of bagpipes. Our Havelock and His Highlanders are coming -- the faithful will soon come into their own. "Occupy till I come."

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THE END