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"AND PETER"

And Other Sermons

By J. Wilbur Chapman

Author of:
The Lost Crown
Another Mile
Revival Sermons
Etc.

The Moody Press
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PREFACE

Ordinarily a book like this should take its name from the first chapter of its contents. But Peter is such a favorite of mine that I take the liberty of writing his name at the top of the page.

Next to the Lord Jesus, of all whose names are mentioned in the New Testament, I long to see Peter.

The sermons are sent forth with the great desire that they may be for His glory, "whom having not seen," I have loved.

They have been kindly spoken of in many cities. That they may in some little way comfort the comfortless, strengthen the weak, and "by all means save some," is my earnest prayer.

J. Wilbur Chapman

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01 -- THE PRODIGAL'S FATHER

"But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him.. and had compassion, and ran.. and kissed him.. and said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it" (Luke 15:20-23).

Of making many sermons on the prodigal son, there seems to have been no end. Yet I was in the ministry fifteen years before I preached from any part of the parable. There may be many reasons why, as a rule, we turn away from it. It may be that the picture is too realistic.

I was standing in the prison chapel at Joliet, Illinois, when a request was made that I should conduct a service for the convicts. Just as I was leaving the building the officer said to me, "By the way, if you should come, do not preach upon any part of the prodigal. We have had twenty-four ministers here by actual count, and every one of them gave us the prodigal son, and these poor fellows have had about as much prodigal as they can stand."

It may also be that we have turned away from it because it is such familiar ground that it has lost its charm for us. I was sweeping through the magnificent Rocky Mountain scenery some time ago, and when we had plunged into the Royal Gorge, and later swung into the Grand Canon, it seemed to me that scenery more sublime could not be found in all the world, and if I had never been impressed before with the existence of God, I should have cried out unto Him in

the midst of those mountain peaks. I noticed that every one in the car, with one single exception, was gazing in rapt admiration. This one woman was intently reading a book, and to my certain knowledge, she did not lift her eyes once from the printed page while we were in that wonderful scenery. When we had swung out into the great table land, I overheard her say to a friend, "This is the thirteenth time I have crossed the mountains. The first time I could not keep the tears from rolling down my cheeks, so impressed was I, but now," she said, "I know it so well that I frequently go through the whole range with scarcely a glance cast out the window." It is thus, alas! that we read God's Word, and that which fills Heaven with wonder, and furnishes the angels a theme for never-ending praise, we read with indifference or fail to read at all. And yet my own confession is that I never have had, until recently, the best of this story of the prodigal.

I thought it was to give us a vision of the younger son, and as such it would be a message to backsliders; and while this is one part of the interpretation it is not by any means the best part. Then it occurred to me the story might have been given us that we should take warning from the selfishness of the elder brother; but I conceived such a dislike for this character that I never cared to consider him even for a moment. But it has in these later days become to me one of the sweetest portions of all the New Testament because I believe the parable was written that we might fasten our eyes upon the father of the parable and in that father get a glimpse of God.

It may be interesting to know how this sermon was born. I was sitting in my room in the Dennison Hotel, in Indianapolis, in November, 1894, looking into the face of my friend, E. P. Brown, the editor of the "Ram's Horn." I had known him in the days of his infidelity and had feared him because of his bitterness. I had heard him in some of his violent outbreaks against God and the truth, and this was the first privilege I had had of any extended conversation with him since his remarkable conversion, under Mr. Moody's preaching in his own church in Chicago, when the theme was the father of this prodigal. I had heard repeated accounts of the conversion, and so I said to him, "Tell me, if you will, how you found Christ." To my amazement he said, "I think I was born again when I was eighteen years of age." This to me was startling; for a more violent infidel I had never known than this man in the days that were past. But said he, "I do not mean that I was born into the kingdom of God, but rather into the conception that my father loved me. To this thought I had always been a stranger, and that," said he, "was the beginning of a remarkable series of events all of which culminated in my conversion." Then he told me this story.

A Father's Love

"I was a wayward boy, and did many things that caused my father much anguish of heart, because I did not know that he was my friend. We never were near together. There was no communion of love between us, and the thought that I was anything to him never entered my mind; and so, when only a boy, I took my destiny into my own hands and ran away. Just as I was coming into manhood I was taken sick, and out of sheer necessity I was obliged to turn my face toward father's house, for I had been prodigal with my earnings, and had saved nothing for the time of need. There was no other friendly roof to which I could look for shelter, and so I had to go back home. I was given a friendly welcome, but in a few days I repented to the bottom of my soul that I had come. My father was very poor, and was himself just convalescing from a long illness. Every dollar that he earned cost him the most laborious effort and continual pain. I found

that there was not bread for all, and to spare, but only a few crumbs for each. There was famine and want and hardship of which I had not dreamed, and the bread I took from my poor father's table almost choked me, for it seemed to have the taste of blood upon it. It was agony to stay there and be a burden upon my parents, and I could not endure it. It would be better, I thought, to go out and die in the highway rather than live by eating bread which cost so much. And so after I had gained some strength I told father I would have to go. He begged me to stay, and said that times would surely brighten up soon, but I couldn't do it; I had to go.

"When he saw that I was determined not to stay, his face took on the saddest look I had ever seen him have, as he took his hat and cane to walk a short distance with me. We walked on slowly and almost silently together for perhaps a half a mile, when my father grew so weary he said he would have to go back. My parting with him at that time is one of the sad scenes in my life I never can forget. As he took me by the hand he said, with a voice trembling with emotion,

"I never wanted to be rich before, my boy, as I do today. God knows it almost kills me to see you leaving home because your father is so poor. Don't go, my son; don't go. Come back with me, and help will surely come from somewhere. I can't bear to see you go in this way while you are still almost sick. You may die from want. Come back! As long as we have a crust there is a part of it for you, and while we have a roof over us there is no need for you to be without a home.'

"But when he saw that my mind was fixed, and that nothing he could say would induce me to change my decision, he said, oh, how sadly --

"Good-by! good-by! God bless you. If we never meet in this life again, I hope we'll meet in Heaven.'

"And then as he softly and reluctantly let go of my hand, he turned and started to go home, but he only took a step or two and then stopped and spoke my name, and as he did so I turned, and as my father also turned toward me I saw a tear leave his eye and wind down his cheek. It was the first tear I had ever seen my father shed for me. As he stepped forward he put his hand into his pocket and took out something. The next instant he pressed a fifty-cent piece into my hand and then turned, without another word, and walked away.

"I watched him as far as I could see him, with something in my heart that had never been there before, and then went on my way happier than I had ever been in all my life, for now I knew that father loved me, and the moment I knew it I also loved him. When he gave me that fifty-cent piece, I knew what it meant. I knew that it was every cent he had on earth, and I knew what great pain and labor it had cost. It was all that he could do for me, and in the gift I saw my father's heart. I knew that he would have given me a fortune just as gladly, had it been his to give, and as I realized this, I repented that I had ever caused him a single anxious thought. I would have given anything just then to have blotted out the past. I resolved that from that day I would be a different son to him, and thank God I was. I went out into the cold and snow that morning better and stronger and braver than I had ever been before, because I knew at last that my father loved me. It was cold and cheerless outside, but warm and bright within. All day long something seemed to be singing in my heart -- "Father loves me! Father loves me!" All my life I

had been hungering for just such a moment as this. It was a great turning point in my life. From that hour father was first in all my thoughts and all my plans. I determined that day that I would live for him, that I would live to help him in the hard battle he had to fight with the world. My first aim in life would be to make life easier for him, and from that hour I never consciously caused him another pang. One of the things for which I am most grateful to God today is, that He put it in my power to place father and mother in their own home, and during several of the last years of their lives relieve them from all temporal care.

"The change in my life as a son was caused by the change in my belief in regard to my father. There was no change in him. He had always loved me just as much as he did on the morning when I discovered the state of his heart, but I had not believed that he did, and so I had behaved accordingly. When my belief changed my conduct changed. I suppose that father had always been anxious that I should know that he loved me, and had no doubt been trying in hundreds of ways to make the fact known to me, just as God has always been trying to make known His love to sinful man; but until the moment came when he could make the sacrifice for me, there was no way under heaven by which he could show me his heart. My extremity was his opportunity.

"And so," he said, "when I heard Mr. Moody preach his wonderful sermon on the father in this story I said to myself, 'If God is like that, I want to know Him.'" This in brief was the story of his conversion.

Did it ever occur to you that in the pictures of the fathers of the Bible you were always given a vision of one part of the nature of God? Jacob crying out, "Me ye have bereft of my children: Joseph is not, Simeon is not, and now you will take Benjamin from me," is an illustration of God crying out in His great tenderness over the lost. David exclaiming, "Oh, Absalom, my son, my son I would God I had died for thee," is just a hint as to the way God feels over His own lost ones for whom His Son has really died. And yet better than any picture of a father as the revelation of God is the life of the Son of God from whose lips we have heard these words, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." But putting all these things together, and in the light of them reading the story of the prodigal, our hearts burn within us as we see God.

"But When He Was Yet A Great Way Off"

These words must have a wonderful meaning, for the measurement is from God's standpoint. It would be an awful thing to be a great way off according to man's conception, but when it is the computation of One who is infinite we are startled; and yet our amazement gives way instantly to adoration, for we are told that even if we are so great a distance from Him we are not to be discouraged. In Acts 2:39, we read that the promise is unto "all that are afar off," and in Ephesians 2:13, 17, we are told that "Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ," and that Jesus Christ "came and preached peace to you which were afar off," as well as to them that were nigh. It never is any question with God as to how deeply one has sinned. It is a remarkable thing that throughout the whole Bible He has ever chosen the most conspicuous sins and the most flagrant sinners that He might present to us His willingness to forgive.

God requires but three things if we would know Him in this way.

First, there must be a willing mind. In Isaiah 1:19, we read, "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land." In another place we read, "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted for what a man hath and not for what he hath not." In still another place we are told, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." God Himself, infinite though He may be, will not save us against our wills.

Second, there must be a desire to know the truth that we may do it. Mere knowledge of the truth may be our condemnation, and it is the saddest thing in the world that so many people know and yet are unwilling to do. It will be an awful judgment which must finally fall upon the rank and file of men because all their lives they lived under the shadow of the church and heard the preaching of the Word, all of which condemns them.

The third requirement is an honest confession of one's intentions. God never gives to one more light than he uses, but if there is in the heart a single desire, however faint, to know Him, and that desire is confessed before men and unto God, He enlarges our vision, sheds upon us more abundant light, and it is always by the way of confession that we enter into the fullness of joy.

"His Father Saw Him"

Mr. Moody says that that father was looking through the telescope of his love. I have always felt that he was looking through his tears. It is said that when astronomers want to increase the scope of their vision they add to the number of lenses, and sometimes our falling tears are like the lenses in the telescope. They bring objects far removed nigh unto us.

But what a comfort it is to know that the Great Father of us all looks after us with a pity that is infinite, and with a sympathy that is beyond conception. The vision of the father of the prodigal was limited, but God's eye sweeps through all space, and He sees us wherever we are. He can even behold our thoughts, and when you bowed your head and said, "I ought to come," and partly lifted your hand as an expression of your intention, or started to rise that you might make public your confession, He saw you and was ready to run to meet you. This is all that he requires on your part. He is ready to do all the rest.

It is said that Dr. Rainsford, of England, in one of the Northfield conferences at one time related the story of an old friend of his, a German professor, who was an agnostic; and as you know the creed of the agnostic is simply, "I do not know." This old professor came to visit Dr. Rainsford and went with him to all the services of his church. When the day was ended the rector said to him, "Professor, tell me what you think of it all." His answer was, "It is beautiful, but that is all I can say." Then Dr. Rainsford put to him these questions:

First, "Do you not think that it is possible that there may be a God?" and the old professor said, "Yes, possible."

Second, "Then do you not think that it is probable that God has made a revelation of Himself to His creatures?" and his friend answered, "Yes, probable."

Third, "Well, do you not think," said he, "that He would make that revelation plain if we were to ask Him?" and the old professor answered, "I should think He would be obliged to."

"Well," said Dr. Rainsford, "have you ever asked Him?" and the old man answered, "No."

"For my sake," said he, "will you ask Him now?" and they fell upon their knees in the study, and the old minister said, "Lord God, reveal Thyself unto my dear friend." When his prayer was ended he said, "Now, Professor, you pray," and the old man lifted his eyes and said, "O, God," and then as if he felt he had gone too far, he changed his petition, and said, "O, God, if there be a God, show me the light and I will" and he was just going on to say, "I will walk in it," when suddenly he sprang to his feet with his face radiant and shouted, "Why, I see it, I see it, and it is glorious!" His agnosticism took wings and departed from him. Faith filled his heart and joy thrilled in his soul. He has from that time to this been a good disciple of Jesus Christ. In the light of all this I make the plea; only encourage your least desire, and you shall come to know Him whom to know is life eternal.

"He Had Compassion And Ran"

I never knew until recently what that word "compassion" meant. I know now that it indicates one's suffering with another. It is this that makes the story of a man's transgression so pathetic. Other hearts are made to ache and almost break. Other eyes are filled with tears and other lives made desolate. I can see this old father going up to the outlook from his home gazing off in the direction which his boy had taken, coming down the steps again like David of old crying out, "Oh, my son, my son, would God I had died for you!" He had compassion.

We had in our city a young man who was more than ordinarily prosperous in his business, and his prosperity seemed to be the cause of his downfall. It became so marked that his partners called him into their office to say that he must either mend his ways or dispose of his interests in the concern. His promises were good, and all went well for a little season, and then when the failure was worse than ever they insisted that he should dispose of his interests to them, and with a great sum of money he began to sink rapidly. He had gone from bad to worse until not long ago they found him floating in the river, for he had taken his own life. The story is sad in the extreme, but the saddest portion of it is found in the fact that there is an old man today going about the streets of the city mourning for his son. He scarcely lifts his eyes from the ground as he walks. Sometimes you behold him with the tears rolling down his cheeks. He has compassion. And it is a fact that one never sins, breaking even the least of God's commandments, that the heart of the great and loving Father does not yearn over him and long for his return.

What Did He Do?

We all know this story so thoroughly well that it would seem almost unnecessary to emphasize things the father did when the meeting between himself and his son occurred, but for the sake of the story let me say:

First, "he kissed him." You will notice that he did not wait until the boy's garments had been changed, or the signs of his wanderings removed. There would have been no grace in this. But clad in all his rags, he threw his arms about him and drew him close against his heart, and gave him the kiss which was the sign of complete reconciliation. This is what Jesus Christ waits to give to every wandering soul. The old hymn says, "My God is reconciled," and this is the teaching of the Scriptures. It is not necessary that I should work myself up into a fever of excitement, nor weep and wail in the depths of my despair, but it is necessary only that I should receive what God offers me in Jesus Christ. The first step in the Christian life is an acceptance of that which comes from above.

We had in Philadelphia a young man belonging to one of the better families, so-called, who by his wayward actions disgraced his father and finally broke his heart. After a little he left his home, went to Baltimore, from there to Washington, and after months of wandering determined to return. He was ashamed to meet the members of his family, but he knew that if he made a peculiar sound at the door at the midnight hour, there was one who would hear and understand; and when he stood before that door it was swung open and without a word of reproach his mother bade him welcome. The next morning he did not come down from his room, the second morning he was ashamed to come, but the third morning as he descended the stairway, his brother, a physician, met him and said, "Edward, mother is dying." She had been suddenly stricken down and was anxious to see him. He made his way into her room, knelt beside her bed and sobbed out, "Oh, mother, I beseech you forgive me!" and with her last departing strength she drew close to him, placed her lips close to his ear, and said, "My dear boy, I would have forgiven you long ago if you had only accepted it." This is a picture of God. With a love that is infinite, and a pity beyond description, He waits to save every one who will but simply receive His gift of life.

Second, I have always imagined that when the father started out from the house running to meet his boy, that the servants must have noticed him, and possibly they ran after him. When the father saw the condition of the son, I can hear him as he turned to the approaching servants to say, "Run, bring the best robe and put it on him"; and it is a beautiful thing to me to know that when they brought the robe the father wrapped it round about him, thus covering over all the signs of his wanderings. This is what God does for me and for you. The moment we believe, the robe of Christ's righteousness is placed about us, and God looks upon us as without spot or blemish, for we are at once accepted in the beloved.

I remember that when Jonathan was dead and David wanted to do something for some one that belonged to him, the only one he could find upon whom he might lavish his affection was poor, little, lame Mephibosheth. He was lame on both his feet, you will remember, (his nurse had dropped him as she was fleeing away from the enemy), but when David found him he placed him at the king's table and in such a position that his lameness was hidden; and if you had been on the opposite side from him you never would have known that he had a mark of deformity about him. This is what God does for every poor, wandering, lost one that comes to

Him. "I, even I, am He that blotteth out all thy transgressions, and I will remember them against you no more forever."

Third, he put the ring on his hand. The ring is always the emblem for completeness. And this was a beautiful illustration of the fact that the father's love was perfect, and that this love had not been affected by the wanderings of the boy. This is certainly true of God, and I know no better figure to give a thought of His love than that of the ring.

"For the love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind,
And the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind."

Fourth, he put shoes on his feet. I can see the poor boy as he hobbles on to meet his father, his feet bleeding at every step, for the shoes were worn and he walked with difficulty; but when he was well shod with shoes from the king's house, I can see him taking the hand of the old father and running back to his home. One of the commonest excuses presented by men for not yielding to Christ is the fear that they may not hold out, but to me it is comforting to know that the moment we are saved He puts shoes on our feet and that we are shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace.

Mr. Sankey tells the story of his boy who was with him, when a little fellow, in Scotland, and for the first time he possessed what in that country is known as a top coat. They were walking out one cold day, and the way was slippery. The little fellow's hands were deep down in his pockets. His father said to him, "My son, you had better let me take your hand," but he said you never could persuade a boy with a new top coat to take his hands from his pockets. They reached a slippery place and the boy had a hard fall. Then his pride began to depart and he said, "I will take your hand," and he reached up and clasped his father's hand the best he could. When a second slippery place was reached, the clasp was broken and the second fall was harder than the first. Then all his pride was gone, and raising his little hand he said, "You may take it now"; and his father said, "I clasped it round about with my great hand and we continued our walk; and when we reached the slippery places," said he, "the little feet would start to go and I would hold him up." This is a picture for the Christian. I am saved not so much because I have hold of God as because God has hold of me, and He not only gives me shoes with which I may walk and which never wear out, but Christ holds my hand in His, and I shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck me out of His hand; and His Father is greater, and no man shall ever pluck me out of His Father's hand; and so between the hand of God and the hand of Christ I am secure.

"And They Killed For Him The Fatted Calf"

I can see the old father as he runs from home to home exclaiming, "Come in and rejoice with me, for my boy was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found," and they begin to be merry. One can never have the fatted calf killed for him but once, but one of the delightful things about the Christian life is that we may repeatedly sit down to enjoy the feast for others, and it is thrilling to know that we never have a time of feasting here that they do not have a time of rejoicing in Heaven, "For there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

At the close of a meeting in Joliet, Illinois, I sat down beside an honored evangelist, Rev. H. W. Brown, and among other things in his career, he told me this story.

A number of years before he had a remarkable work of grace in the lake region of Wisconsin in that town of the strange name, Oconomowoc. After his work of grace he returned one day for a little visit, and as he stepped off from the cars he saw at the station an old man named James Stewart. Knowing him well, he asked him why he was there. The old man replied that his boy had gone away from home, and had said to him, "Father, I will return some day, but I can not tell when," and said he, "I am waiting for him to come back." Strange as it may seem, thirteen years afterward he revisited that old town, and the first man he saw when getting off from the cars was this old father. He had forgotten his story, but he met him, saying, "Mr. Brown, he hasn't come yet, but he will come, and I am waiting." "Just then," said my friend, "I lifted up my eyes and saw one walking down the aisle of the car, and said to myself, If I was not sure that the boy was dead, I would say that that was the son." But other eyes had seen him too, and with a great bound the old father sprang to the steps of the car, and when the boy reached the platform, in less time than I can tell it, he was in his father's arms. The old father sobbed out, "Oh, my son, thank God, you've come, you've come"; and then, turning to my friend, he said, "Mr. Brown, I should have waited until I died." Thus God waits, and looks and yearns and loves. Thus Jesus Christ entreats us to look unto Him, and be saved, and in His name I bid you come.

"Thy sins I bore on Calvary's tree,
The stripes, thy due, were laid on Me,
That peace and pardon might be free,
Oh, weary sinner, come!

Go leave thy burden at the cross,
Count all thy gains but empty dross,
My grace repays all earthly loss,
Oh, needy sinner, come!"

* * * * *

02 -- NO DIFFERENCE

"For there is no difference" (Romans 3:22).

This is one of the most difficult statements to receive in all the Bible, and I can well understand how the unregenerate man would resent its application. I can hear him say, "What! no difference between the man who has fallen to the very lowest depths of sin and wretchedness, and the man who, boasting of his morality, has swerved only a little from the path of duty and the law of God?" And the answer to this question is both "yes" and "no."

There is a difference in heinousness and degradation wide as the poles; but "no difference" so far as guilt is concerned, for both have rejected the Son of God, and this is the sin of sins.

If two men were before the court, one charged with a great offense and the other with one of less degree, it would profit the latter man but little to say, "But, your Honor, I am not so great an offender as my companion in misery." The judge might well reply "You are both guilty; in that 'there is no difference,'" and this is the teaching of my text.

God's Word declares -- "He that offends in one point is guilty of all"; not meaning, of course, that he has of necessity broken every law, but he has broken away from God by his transgression. If I am held a prisoner by a chain, it is not necessary that I should break every link in the chain that I might go free, but only one and that the very weakest; and so he that offends in one point is guilty of all and nothing less, while he that offends in all points is guilty of all and nothing more.

"All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Three important questions grow out of this text as I have considered it. First, I do not ask if you are a sinner, for as we ordinarily use this word, we think of one who is lawless, wild and profane. But I ask:

Have You Offended In One Single Point?

If so, "There is no difference." Man would not say it, I know; but God says it, and it is written in the Book, and by the Book we shall be judged.

Look at the prodigal. He was as truly a prodigal when he had taken the first step over the threshold of his father's house, as when afterward you see him sitting in the midst of the swine, and trying to fill his belly with husks which the swine did eat.

He is more degraded in the second picture, but not more guilty.

Look at the leper. He is just as truly dead when the first sign of the dread disease appears, small though it may be, as when afterward you behold him, a loathsome object, sitting outside the city gates, with bandaged mouth, crying "Unclean! Unclean!" He was a leper, however, from the first, and by the law dead. This is the teaching of the text. If you have rejected the Son of God, whatever your position, "There is no difference" -- all are alike lost.

It is not even a question of great sin. Many a man might plead "not guilty" if such a charge were made; but first of all

Secret Sins.

1. There is a text which declares "our secret sins in the light of His countenance," and another reads that "All things are naked and open before Him with whom we have to do." In the light of this, who can stand?

Not long ago in one of the school buildings of Chicago a picture of an eye was placed upon the blackboard as an illustration, and in a little time by order of the school board it was

painted out, for it had been so perfectly painted that whatever position a child might be in, in the room, that eye was upon it. The effect was disastrous. But there is one eye which never slumbers and can never be painted out. "Thou God seest me." The sin was at midnight. He saw it. It was in New York or London or Paris. He saw it. Thus to the charge of "secret sin" you must plead guilty, and "there is no difference."

Sinful Thoughts

2. But the charge is even closer. We are responsible for the sinful thought which tarries in the mind by the consent of our will. Who can stand in the light of this?

A distinguished scientist has made the statement, which wise men receive, that if a man stands out in the sunlight and acts, his act, good or bad, flashes away to the sun and a picture which is never lost is made. And if he speaks, the sound bounds away, up and up, far beyond his reach, and makes its record forever. And if he refuses to step into the light, or in the darkness speak a word, this scientist declares that by the very thoughts of his mind certain physical disturbances occur which make a record lasting as time.

I remember sending a telegram in a western city, and shortly after realizing that my message had been wrong, I made my way to the office to recall it. "Why," said the operator, with a smile, "it is gone, and is flashing over the wires now, beyond my recall." So with your sinful thoughts. They bound away, and no man can recall them when once they go. The answer to this charge must be -- "guilty."

Beginning In Sin

3. Some are beginning Now. Held by the fascination of the evil one, and lured on by his charms, they are rushing on to hell. On one of the busiest streets of the gay city of Paris stands a building famous for its beauty. Over the magnificent doorway you may read these words, "Nothing to pay." The admission is free, the entertainment within is fascinating, and hundreds of young men pass through the portals, the rank and file of them taking their first or last step to hell.

All sin is dearly bought, for it has hell back of it. It blights the life, wrecks the character, and blasts the fondest hopes of the soul. And when that awful day comes, and situation is gone, and character lost, and the hearts of loved ones broken, and you are cast a stranded wreck on the shores of time, you will cry out in terror, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me" -- and there will be no deliverance. You will be more degraded than but not more guilty than now, for the chiefest of sins is the sin of unbelief, and that was the cause of your downfall. "There is no difference." God pity you.

Do you know the Bible description of the end of a career of sin from the world-standpoint? "Weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth." "Without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whore-mongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." God save us from such a company. A minister could never lead a man to serious thought until he quoted the text: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."

Great sin, humanly speaking, is not necessary, but only forget Him and "There is no difference."

If you have read that remarkable book, "Robert Falconer," written by George MacDonald, you will remember the dream of the wife of Andrew Falconer. He was a drunkard and after her death, the dream being told him, resulted in his conversion. She said in her letter, which she had written him:

"I thought, Andrew, that the resurrection morn had come, and I was looking everywhere for you. Finally in my wanderings, I came to a great abyss. It was not so very wide, but it was very deep and was filled with blue, like the blue of the sky. On the other side I saw you, Andrew, and I gave a shriek which all the universe must have heard. Something made me look around. Then I saw One coming toward me. He had a face -- Oh, such a face! fairer than all the sons of men; He had on a garment which came down to His feet; and as He walked toward me, I saw in His feet the print of the nails. Then I knew who He was. I fell at His feet and cried, 'O Lord, Andrew, Andrew.' 'Daughter, would you go to him?' I said, 'Yes, Lord.' And, Andrew, He took me by the hand, and led out over the abyss, and we came nearer and nearer, until at last we were united, and then He led us back to be with Him forever." Oh, my friends, not in the next world, if not in this, but here and now we may be made one in Him, one for time and eternity; but failing here, all hope is gone and there is before us only the blackness of darkness of despair. "For there is no difference."

The second question is of the greatest importance:

Do You Come Up To God's Standard?

It is not enough to be simply a member of the church. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils? and I will profess unto them, I never knew you."

We have such a way of measuring ourselves by ourselves that we may feel well satisfied with the result. But how about God's standard? Upon my return home at one time, my wife placed in my hands a piece of paper, written all over, but only two words were intelligible. At the top of the page was the word 'carriage' plainly written, the next word was the same, only not so well written.

It was my little daughter's first copy-book. The teacher had written the word at the top of the line, and she had done fairly well so long as she had looked at the copy. But she had fallen into the serious error of cowering the line just above her work, and the word at the bottom of the page as nearly spelled "man" as "carriage." Thus people measure themselves by those around them, forgetting that He said -- "Look unto me and be ye saved."

You may be better than the members of the church; but what doth it profit? You may be the best man in your community, but that does not save. How about God's standard?

Her Majesty, the Queen, issues frequently, I am told, an order for soldiers to compose her guard. Every man must be at least six feet tall. I can imagine some young Englishmen measuring

themselves by themselves, until at last one man in great delight exclaims, "I will surely get in for I am the tallest man in town." And so he is; but when he stands before her Majesty's officer, he is rejected, for he is three-quarters of an inch under the mark.

His being taller than his friends profited nothing; they had all fallen short; some more, some less. But "there was no difference."

And if you turn my question in upon myself, I confess that I do fully come up to the high standard of God; not in myself in any way, far from it -- but in Christ; for "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," and wherein I fail, He makes up.

It is no point as to whether Adam or Eve were the more sinful; they were both guilty, and "there is no difference."

The chiefest of all sins is not drunkenness, although that is horrible; it is not licentiousness, although that is vile; it is the rejection of God's mercy -- or the sin of unbelief. "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John 3:18. And whosoever he be among you -- sinner, either great or small, if he fail here, he stands with the condemned, and "there is no difference."

The third and last important question is this:

What Is The Remedy?

There is another "no difference" which answers the question. "For there is no difference... for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him, for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Romans 10:12-13.

1. It is useless to try by any amount of exertion, or feeling, or even prayer, to bring about faith. I have had my own experience in this. God says in His Word, "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God."

This is a sure way. A college student was greatly troubled spiritually, and was in conference with one of the professors until midnight. Just as he was leaving the house, going out into the darkness, the professor placed in his hands a lantern, saying: "Take it, George, it will light you home a step at a time." And this is what the Bible does.

That lantern did not light up the forests, nor make luminous the landscape; it was not meant that it should; but it made every step bright.

Man was lost by hearing Satan. He can only be saved by hearing God. Plant your feet firmly by faith on one single promise, and God will begin at once to make clear the way if you will only believe Him.

2. To the Philippian jailer's question, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul's answer was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." And there is no respecting of persons, for "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

A friend of mine told me that when he climbed the Matterhorn, he was besieged by men, waiting at the base of the mountain, ready to guide him up the difficult way; but the most of them would have never brought him down in safety, for they were simply men out of employment. He very easily, however, secured a safe guide when he said, "Show me your papers." Then the men who were without them stepped back, while the real guides stepped forward and holding out their papers he read something like this:

"We, the undersigned, have climbed the Matterhorn under the care of such a guide, (giving his name), and we commend him to our friends" -- and then followed the names of people of great renown at home and abroad, a member of Parliament, a member of Congress, and your personal friend; and my friend at once felt secure because others had made the trip in safety.

It is like that when under condemnation you ask, "What must I do?"

Infidelity attempts an answer; Philosophy makes a vain effort to reply; and Jesus Christ the Son of God comes with the rest. Let me suggest to you the real test. Ask them each, "What have you done?" Demand of each that their papers be shown. Then will He come whose garments are dyed red, whose hands were pierced, and whose heart was broken, who died and rose again that He might become the justifier of all them that believe; and on the very palms of His hands you read the names, John Bunyan, John Newton, Jerry McAuley, and brighter than them all-Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

"He hath saved us, and kept us, and in His presence we rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory."

And this is enough -- I for one will say, "Blessed Lord, if Thou canst save others, and I know that Thou canst, Thou canst save me; and I will let Thee do it now." Will you join me in this now?

3. To sum it all up, if you would escape condemnation you need simply to

Have A Willing Mind About Salvation.

Then by faith accept what He in grace offers you. I have heard Christian workers say to earnest inquirers, "Give your heart to God, and you may be saved." But this is unscriptural at least the order is wrong. Accept first the gift of eternal life, then give yourself, out of gratitude for His goodness.

The first saves you; the second is the first-fruit of your salvation.

When William Dawson, the celebrated street preacher, was conducting a street meeting in London, he was told of a young man who in a neighboring house was dying. He climbed the rickety stairway, and stood by the bedside of a young man, a victim of consumption, and just nearing eternity. He found that he was the son of wealthy parents, but that his father had cast him off because of his sin. When William Dawson said he would intercede with the father in behalf of the son, the boy said it would be useless, for the father had long ago cast him off. And it almost seemed that he was right, for when Mr. Dawson entered the spacious mansion, and mentioned the boy's name, the father said, "If you have come, sir, to talk of that scapegrace, I shall ask you to leave. He is no son of mine." "Well, sir," said the preacher, "he will not be here long to trouble you, for I left him dying."

In a moment the man's whole attitude had changed. "Is he sick?" he said "Is Joseph ill? then take me to him."

And soon he was on his knees by the side of the dying boy, his arms about him, and his head pillowed on his breast. All the boy could say was, "Father, can you forgive me?" and the strong man could only sob, "O Joseph, my son, my son; I would have forgiven you months ago if you would only have received it."

My friends, I bring you good news indeed, glad tidings of great joy; "God hath for Christ's sake forgiven you," and if you would be saved, you need only to accept His gracious gift. The first "no difference" is discouraging, but the second one is sweeter than honey in the honey comb.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

* * * * *

03 -- "AND PETER"

"And Peter" (Mark 16:7).

There is something about the very name of this impulsive, wayward, child-hearted man that awakens our interest at once. We know ourselves better when we know Peter thoroughly well. We study him in his failures and we grow discouraged, for we say, "If a man who could be so near Jesus Christ as Peter, with Him in the home of Jairus, on the transfiguration mountain and in Gethsemane, if he could deny Him, then it is not strange that we should fail in the midst of this sinful and adulterous generation. How carefully, therefore, we ought to walk." We study him in his successes and rejoice, for we say, "If a man like Peter, unlettered, uncultured fisherman as he was, if he could become the preacher at Pentecost and the writer of the epistles, then there is hope for every one of us."

There are many reasons why I like him, and I am sure that next to the Lord Jesus, of all the men whose names are mentioned in the New Testament I long to see Peter. I like him because of his enthusiasm. He had an ardor about him that radiated through everything he did. If he was right, he was enthusiastically right; if he was wrong, he was enthusiastically wrong; and I

like such a man. Some will say that is what caused Peter much of his trouble, but I would say that the world does not owe much to its over-cautious people. If Luther had been such a man, we would have had no Reformation. It is generally true that it is a bad thing for one to be possessed of zeal without knowledge, but if we study the life of Peter we agree with Mr. Moody when he says, "If I had to choose between knowledge without zeal and zeal without knowledge, I would take the latter." I am sure that God can take a man's zeal, if he be honest and sincere, and make it redound to His honor and glory.

Peter was a brave man. I am sure some will say, "What, a brave man? Did he not deny the Lord in the presence of a little girl when he said, 'I know Him not,' and then the old habit of profanity came back upon him and 'he denied Him with an oath?'" Alas! this is all true, but then, you must remember that Peter had courage enough to follow Jesus down into the presence of His enemies, and Peter was the only One of the disciples who was near his Master in the court-room. There are so many reasons why I like him, and why I have longed to see him face to face.

"And Peter." These words, which form an angel's message to the broken-hearted disciples, present one of the sweetest pictures in the Old Testament scriptures or in the New. The crucifixion scene is over, the rocks have ceased their throbbing, and the crosses on the hillside are still, and the text is in the angel's message to the disciples who have gathered themselves together after the dark, dark day, and are seeking to comfort each the other. They had always imagined that the Master whom they had followed was to be the King of a temporal kingdom, that they were to have positions of power; but now He had been crucified and their hearts are well-nigh breaking within them. I can see them as they sit in that little upper room in Jerusalem. They say one to the other, "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel; and besides all this, today is the third day since these things were done." But I am very sure that in this company of disciples, gathered together in that upper room in Jerusalem, there was one who was not of their number. That man's name was Peter. He must have felt that he was no longer a disciple, and that he no longer had a right to the communion and fellowship of the saints. I can see him out on the edge of the city of Jerusalem in some dark, lonely place, far away from any eye to look upon him. Poor, broken-hearted man! But if Peter was not of the company of the disciples, I am sure of one thing, and that is that the disciples must have been talking about him. Human nature has always been the same. We have a great way of remembering all about a person's failings and forgetting the strong points of their character; remembering only their weak places and forgetting entirely their virtues. And so I imagine these disciples were talking about Peter. I can hear one of them say, "Where's Peter?" And then another man with a smile upon his face, would say, "Peter? Why, you wouldn't expect him to be here, would you? Did you ever know Peter to be faithful to the end?" And they begin to point out the places of weakness, and one says, "Do you mind the time Peter stepped out on the water? How he began to walk toward Jesus; how he took a few steps very well, and then began to sink?" And another man would say, "That was just like Peter, always making a miserable failure in the end." And another would say, "Do you remember how the Master was bathing the disciples' feet and Peter sprang to his feet and said: 'Master, you shall never wash my feet?'" And another would say, "He was always grieving the Master." But just as we recall these words, I would call your attention to this fact -- Peter was the best loved disciple. Jesus seemed to love him with the very tenderest affection.

But if they were gathered in the upper room and talking about Peter, there is another thing of which I am certain; he was the most utterly disconsolate man in all the city of the King, for, mark you this one thing, when once a man has been at the King's table and tasted of the King's meat, you can no more expect him to find pleasure in the world than you can expect the prodigal to go back and try to live on husks and satisfy himself with the company of the swine the second time.

And so I can see him in the outskirts of Jerusalem.

Poor Peter! If there is one in the world I pity, it is the one that stands like Peter of old, out of all communion with his blessed Lord. But I hear him say, "Well, I will go to the company of disciples; possibly they might have a word of encouragement for me."

So he turns and goes along the streets and through the city and comes to the little room and sees the place in the distance. Some one has pointed it out to him. Then all his courage fails him, and turning back again he hurries along to his old retreat, and as he goes he says, "They wouldn't receive me. I am afraid to go to them." Just as he reaches the place of darkness the despair again comes back and he says, "If I stay here I will die, and so I will seek out the disciples." So he turns back again and reaches the stairway leading up to the room, and, as he ascends, he drags his feet after him wearily. Poor Peter! Finally he reaches the landing of the stairway and just as he puts out his hand to take hold of the latch, he hears his name and his heart gives a great bound. He hears them talking about him. Poor man! he doesn't realize they are speaking harsh words of criticism, but emboldened because of the sound of his name we find him pushing the door open and stepping across the threshold and standing in the little room. The disciples lift their heads to see who the new comer may be, but never a word is spoken. He stands looking and longing that there may be a word spoken to him and then he turns away to one of the couches in the room. Poor Peter! I have always imagined that when he entered that room, if some one of the disciples had gone toward him and taken his hand in his and said, "Poor Peter, we have heard all about your denial, but we know you too well to think you meant it, and we give you our sympathy and help," I have always imagined that Peter would have fallen upon his face in the little room, and there would have been given to us one of the tenderest pictures in all the New Testament scriptures. If there is ever a time when a man needs the word of sympathy, when he needs the warm clasp of the hand, it is when he has stepped the first time out of communion with his Lord. Speak the word to him then and many a Peter might be brought back into the fellowship of our God. But they did not speak to Peter, and so he turns away weary and almost brokenhearted. Poor man! But suddenly they hear a crowd of people approaching, and then some one with a great bound springs up the stairway, -- not like Peter a moment ago, dragging the feet wearily, but hardly seeming to touch the steps; and then the door is swung open, and it seems as if the sunlight has centered in the little room, for Mary is there. She has been over at His tomb, she has been talking with the angels, she has received the greatest message of all time, and as she springs into the company of the disciples she calls out, "He is risen, risen as He said, and He has gone over into Galilee and has sent word to His disciples to meet Him." Just the moment she speaks the words the disciples spring to their feet, rush toward the doors and out through the city toward Galilee. They want to see the Master; all save Peter. Poor broken-hearted man! He must have felt, "Oh, wretched man that I am; I am not included in the invitation; I am no longer a disciple."

Just as Mary reaches the door, she turns her face back over her shoulder to see if all the disciples are gone; and she sees Peter. And then for the first time she gives the invitation just as the angels had given it to her and as the Lord gave it to the angels. He is risen as He said, and He has gone over into Galilee, and He wants His disciples to meet Him; "go tell His disciples -- and Peter." "And Peter." The only man's name that was mentioned was the name of the man who felt that he was no longer a disciple. The only one who had the special invitation was the poor fellow that felt himself out of communion and out of fellowship.

I wish to say to you that the Lord Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever, and He sends an invitation to every one of His children, but if there is one to receive a special message, it is the man or woman out of communion, or out of fellowship, with Jesus Christ, and so I speak the words "And Peter; and Peter."

Down in one of the southern churches a minister had been preaching with great power a sermon on the plan of redemption in Jesus Christ. When the people were passing out, an old colored woman was walking side by side with one of the elders of the church, when he turned to her and said, "Auntie, don't you think it is a wonderful thing that Jesus Christ should die for such poor sinners as you and me?" She listened a moment and then said, "No, Massa; it doesn't seem a wonderful thing at all to me, because it is just like Him." And so it is "just like Him." Just like the Lord Jesus Christ to love us all; but I am sure it is just like Him to love with a tender love, nay, with the tenderest love, the man or woman out of communion, out of fellowship with Him.

Out Of Communion

We have different names in different denominations to express or describe such a condition. Some call it "backsliding." That is a good name if you can't get a better. Sometimes we call it "falling from grace," and I am very sure there is a better expression than that. Sometimes we say they are "apostate," but that is unscriptural. To my mind the best expression is this -- "out of communion." You know it takes the look of joy from your face; it takes the peace from your heart; it takes the power from your life. In the "abiding chapter" of John, there is only one condition for fruit-bearing -- you must "abide in Him." There can be no real joy, or peace, or power, until the child of God is in close communion and sweet fellowship with the blessed Christ, and so, having the different words to describe the position, I would like to suggest some things that lead us to stand in the position of Peter.

Temperament

It is sometimes due to one's natural temperament. There are people in the world with whom it is just as natural to be joyful as it is for the lark to sing as it mounts up into the sky. Mr. Moody tells about a man who was a member of his church, and you never could get him to say anything but "Praise the Lord." He might have darkness about him, but he would praise the Lord for darkness. Mr. Moody says that one day he came into the meeting and he had cut his thumb, almost cut it off, and so they wondered what he could have to say with such an affliction as that. He just stood on his feet and said, "I cut my thumb this morning, but praise the Lord, I didn't cut it off." It is just as natural for such people to be joyful as it is for the birds to sing.

There are other people in the world with whom it is just as natural to look on the dark side of things. They are always complaining and thinking everything in the world is wrong, and the fact is, they are wrong themselves. It is their natural temperament. If there is a sunbeam in the sky, they will take great pleasure in seeing the cloud, if it is not larger than a man's hand. Like the old college professor out west. He was a man who could see nothing right; no matter how sweetly the birds would sing, they might sing better. One morning one of the professors passed him on the campus and said, "Now, Professor, what is the matter with this day? You have never heard the birds sing sweeter, you have never seen the sky so bright, and just look at the sun, isn't it shining wonderfully?" The old professor looked round hoping he could find a fault somewhere, and when he had failed utterly, he turned and said with a sigh, "Young man," he said, "this weather can't last always, you know." Such people as that are always groaning, sighing and complaining. They say the ministers are wrong, the church people are wrong, and the world is going to destruction; and the fact is, they are wrong themselves. As Dr. Talmage says, they are looking at the world through the wrong kind of eye-glasses; they are looking through blue glasses, when they should be looking through clear white. It is just their temperament. If that is your position, you will get out of communion immediately; you will lose your grip on God and your power with men.

Disease

Then, again, sometimes we find people getting out of communion with Jesus Christ because of disease. The connection between the spiritual and physical is very close and intimate. Sometimes it is because the body is weak that we find the faith growing weak; yet, thanks be to God, it is possible to have a body very weak and have a faith triumphant. I am sure you know such people as that. But, my friend, if your body is weak, I am sure you will have to fight if you are going to win the victory. That was a beautiful myth given to us, that when God first made the birds He made them without wings. They were beautiful but they had no wings and they could not sing. And then the old myth tells us that God made them wings and bade them fly, and the little birds over all Paradise began to move their wings and mount up from the earth; and just as they mounted they began to sing, and the higher they rose the sweeter they sang, and they have been flying and singing ever since. Thanks be unto God, all Christian men and women have wings, wings of hope and wings of faith; and we are not obliged to live in this world, we may dwell in the heavenlies with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

One of my friends told me he stood one morning on one of the highest peaks of the Rocky Mountains, bathed in the perfect sunlight of a perfect day. He looked down at his feet and a storm was raging in the valley. He felt almost as if he could step out and walk from peak to peak, so heavy were the clouds, and he could almost hear the roar of the thunder and see the flash of lightning, for there was a tremendous storm raging in the valley. As he was looking down, suddenly up from the dark clouds came a black body. He looked again, and still a third time, and the great black object was a Rocky Mountain eagle, measuring seven feet from tip to tip of its wings. "As I looked," he said, "the eagle mounted higher and higher, clear above the clouds, and fighting its way through the storm soared high above my head, every feather wet with the raindrops, and every raindrop sparkling like a jewel in the sunlight; and I stood watching it until it was lost in the very face of the sun." This is a picture of the Christian rising above the things of the world. I will give you a verse of scripture to prove it: "They that wait

upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, run and not be weary, walk and not faint." You may have a temperament ever so miserable, and you may have a body ever so weak, but you may dwell in the secret place and never get out of communion and fellowship.

Trial

And yet again I imagine there are more people out of communion with Christ because of trial than for any other cause. I never could understand how Christians could step out of fellowship with Christ because of their afflictions. Listen, friends: "Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth." I am very sure we were never in our lives nearer heaven than one evening just as we reached our new home in Philadelphia, when we were in one of the hotels and my wife held in her arms our first-born boy, and he was dead. Just a little fellow, not yet a year old, and yet, without an hour's warning, he had left us. We thought him perfectly well, but God took him. I remember how we stood there before his little lifeless form, and we thought our hearts were breaking; but as the tears fell down our cheeks, they became like telescopes and heaven was never nearer, or God nearer, than with His hand upon us in the weight of affliction. How could you stay out of fellowship with God when He has just put His hand upon you in love? I ask you if that is the reason, step back again into the light.

I had the pleasure of laboring with Mr. Moody in the campaign in Chicago, and one of the greatest pleasures besides the fellowship with him was the meeting of such great leaders as John McNeill and Dr. A. C. Dixon. Dr. Wharton especially made his way into my heart. He is one of the great evangelists of the Baptist church, and one of the most successful pastors as well. He was telling me about a friend of his in Baltimore, Todd Hall. He is a detective. For years he was a very sinful man. Once, when Mr. Moody was conducting meetings, Todd Hall was detailed to arrest a certain man, and as he was looking for him some one said, "Todd, the man's gone down into the Moody meeting." So Mr. Hall went to where the meetings were held, and as he entered, the usher said, "Yes, he is in the building, but he is 'way down near the front." So they ushered Todd Hall down the center aisle, and just as he walked down the aisle something the preacher said went like an arrow to his heart. He sat down and listened. When the service was over the people passed out, the man whom he was to arrest went with them, but Todd Hall never saw him. He had been arrested by the power of God, and as he sat in the hall one of the ushers came up to him and said, "What do you think of Moody?" "Oh," he said, "I wish I could be a Christian." The usher said, "Kneel down, and I will pray with you"; and they prayed right there in the great building when it was almost deserted. And he became a Christian. He went home and told his wife, and she said, "Todd, I will go with you into the church," and their little daughter said she would go, too, and the three went into the church, and Todd became a preacher as well as being a detective. "When I went back to Baltimore some time ago," said Dr. Wharton, "one of the first friends to meet me said, 'Todd Hall's little girl is dead.' And I said, 'Has it hurt Todd any, has it affected his power?' And he said, 'Oh, you ought to see him and hear him now! When the doctor said, 'Mr. Hall, your little girl is dying,' he just knelt down and said this, 'Dear, blessed God, you gave her to me, and you have loved her, and you have saved her, now I give her back to Thee.' And the doctor said, 'Mr. Hall, she is dying,' and he, holding her hand and looking up, began to sing, 'Bear her away on your snowy wings to her eternal home,' and she was gone; and Todd Hall never knew what it was to preach before, he never knew what it

was to work before." He just rose from his knees and came out from his affliction transfigured by the power of God, and I wish to say to any who are out of communion with God because of trials, you don't know God, that is all. He is speaking in the tenderest words, "And Peter, and Peter."

Two Men

There are two men I would like to present to you as giving perfect illustration of the text. The first man is Elijah. You know he was one time up on a mountain top, and he prayed to God, and God sent the fire from heaven; and another time he locked up the heavens, and held the key, and when he got ready to unlock them, they came down in great showers of blessing; and another picture is Elijah under the juniper tree when he said, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; let me die." Suppose God had said, "Well, Elijah, you can die if you want to." They would have buried him in the desert, and the moaning winds would have been his only requiem. You know God had something better for Elijah. You have been saying sometimes, "My prayer has not been answered." Yes, it has. God said, "No," and "no" was better. What was Elijah's difficulty? The first thing was that he had had a mountain-top experience and now he has come to the valley, and some say, "I am so glad to have you say that." A woman wrote me a letter from Lafayette the other day and said: "Nothing ever gave me more encouragement than to have you say that Elijah was up and down," and, some say, "That is the way I live." You needn't live that way.

There was a man that went up on the mountain-top; He was transfigured; His face shone as the sun; His garments were bright with light; and He came down into the valley and brought the mountain-top experience with Him. This is what you may do; just bring the mountain-top experience down with you and you may rejoice, even though it be darkness about you.

The second trouble with Elijah was that he looked away from God to his surroundings, and that is fatal. You hear a great deal about the world getting better. I would like to have you travel about the country a little bit and see if the world is getting better. Study your own city, if you please, and I imagine that you will find that there are things going on today that your fathers twenty-five years ago would not have permitted.

There isn't a man in the world who could preach and keep his faith if he looked down. There is only one thing to do, and that is to keep your eyes turned upward. Like the man who was teaching his little boy to climb up the mast of a ship for the first time. He was half way up when he looked down and was losing his balance, and in a moment would have fallen, but the father took his speaking trumpet and shouted, "Keep your eyes upward," and he climbed to the top of the mast and came down in safety. We have to keep our eyes turned upward. Oh, that we might center our eyes and faith on Him who is our only hope! Keep your eyes up, and you won't get out of communion.

The other man's name was Peter. There were several reasons why he got out of communion. He became self-confident. I can just imagine Peter as he stepped out of the boat, trying to walk along. He thinks, "Don't you wish you could walk on the water?" And then, just as he took his eyes away from Jesus Christ and began to think he was some body, he went down.

Only just get your mind made up that you are somebody, and God will prove to you that you don't amount to very much. In my experience I have found that to be so. I never made up my mind over any effort of mine and said, "Wasn't that splendid?" that God didn't bring me down with a dreadful thud. Paul had it right when he said, "When I am weak, then I am strong." Why? Because when he was weak, he just leaned hard on God; and I believe there is nothing today that God could not do with you and me, if we just realized we were nothing and then let Him use us.

The second trouble with Peter was that he followed Jesus Christ afar off"; and that is often the trouble with us too.

You never had much trouble when you were faithful to the church, when you were going twice on Sunday and to the prayer meeting; then you didn't get out of communion. It was when you began to stay away from the mid-week service, when one service on Sunday would do you, and when you stayed at home and read the Sunday newspaper and sometimes worse, then you got out of communion, and you said, "The minister isn't as interesting as he used to be, and somehow we need another evangelist." The trouble isn't with the minister, and you don't need another evangelist; you need your own heart right and you need to get back where you were five years ago. John McNeill says we never ought to sing this hymn except in a grave yard, in a kind of mournful tune,

"Where is the joy that once I knew
When first I loved the Lord"

and McNeill says, "It's right where you left it, and if you want it again, go back where you left it and pick it up." Live right and live as near to Jesus Christ as when you first knew him, and you will have no trouble in getting in close communion with Him, and you won't care whether the minister is right or wrong, you will be right. You won't be bothered about the church; you are all right yourself because you are in Christ. God help you to live there.

And then there is another thing, too, Peter got into bad company.

That is the reason I am opposed to the church being mixed up with the world. We have not only the name but the reputation of Jesus Christ at stake. We have no business to be with bad company. An old Scotch woman had it about right when she said, "Peter had nae business among the 'flunkies.'" And we haven't; if we are, we will find ourselves denying Jesus Christ. You didn't mean to do it, you just struck a level with your company. God help us to keep in close touch with Jesus Christ.

Just a word in closing. If you look the Bible through, you will not find a harsh word for the backslider. You turn over to the prophets and the Lamentations of Jeremiah, it is "Return, return, return." You turn over to the New Testament and read the story of the prodigal son; you may use it as an illustration for the unsaved man, but I have an idea the story of the prodigal son was written in part for the man who has once known God and has once been in the Father's house and then gone off to live with swine, and the father of the prodigal is God, looking through the telescope of His love, waiting for his boy to come home.

There are just two words in all the Bible for a man who is a backslider, and the two words are these, "Come back, come back." One of the last Sundays I spent at the Bethany Sunday School in Philadelphia, an Englishman was there and spoke to the scholars. He sat down and told me this story: A young girl had run away from home and was living a life of sin, and her mother wanted my friend to help, her find her daughter. And he said, "Go home and bring me every picture you have, and I will find her." She brought them to him, and he just dipped his pen in the ink and wrote down beneath the sweet face these words, "Come back." Then he took those pictures down into the haunts of sin, and the mission stations, and left them there. Not long after, this daughter was going into a place of sin and there she saw the face of her mother. The tears ran down her face so that at first she could not see the words beneath, but she brushed away the tears and looked and there they were, "Come back," She went out to her old home at the edge of London and when she put her hand on the latch the door was open, and when she stepped in her mother, with her arms about her, said, "My dear child, the door has never been fastened since you went away." And that is true for you with God; the door has never been closed since you went away, it is wide open.

I lift up before you this morning a face sweeter than any mother's face. The prophets tried to tell you about it and they said, "Fairer than the sons of men and altogether lovely," and just below that face I write the words, "Come back." "Go tell his disciples, and Peter." Will you come? God grant it.

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04 -- STONING JESUS

"Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him" (John 10:31).

The shining of the sun produces two effects in the world, one exactly the opposite of the other. In one place it enlivens, beautifies and strengthens; in the other it deadens, mars and decays. So is it with the Gospel of Christ. It is unto some a "savor of life unto life"; unto others it is "a savor of death unto death." So it was with the coming of Christ into the world. He brought to light the truest affection and the deepest hatred. Men loved darkness rather than light, so Christ's coming into the world could only disturb them.

If you go into the woods on a summer's day, and if it be possible, turn over one of the logs which may be near to you, you will find underneath hundreds of little insects; the moment the light strikes them they run in every direction. Darkness is their life; they hate the light. But if you could journey a little further and lift a stone, which for a little time has been covering the grass or the little flowers, the moment you would lift the obstruction these things would begin to grow. The light is their life; they die in the darkness.

Christ's coming into the world provoked the bitterest prejudice and called forth the deepest devotion. Simeon, a devout man, was in the temple when the young child Jesus was brought in, and he took him up in his hands and blessed God, and said, "Lord, lettest now thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for now my eyes have seen thy salvation." It was just the opposite with Herod. When the king heard concerning Jesus he sent the wise men that he

might find out through them where He was, and when they did not return, he was exceeding wrath, and sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem and in all the coast thereof two years and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men. These are the two extremes.

John's gospel is the gospel of love, but in it we find the same great differences. Where can you find such sweetness as is contained in these words -- "For God, so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"? Where is there such tenderness as in this expression -- "Jesus wept"? Only two words, and yet on them the sorrowing world rests, taking comfort and consolation! But where can you find such hatred as expressed in John 8:59, "Then took they up stones to cast at Him"? and again in the text, "Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him"? When you remember whom they were stoning, the Son of Man and the Son of God, the One who was going about doing good, the sin is something awful to think about. This text and the verse that follows is a beautiful illustration of hate and love, brutality and tenderness. He had just said, "I and my Father are one," words which should have made the hearts of the people leap for joy; that He was one with Jehovah, who had led their forefathers from Egypt to Canaan; who had spoken the worlds into existence; had held the winds in His fists; in whose hands the seas washed to and fro. You would have thought at these expressions of the Master every knee would have been bowed in loving devotion; but not so. The Jews took up the stones again with which to stone Him, and he gave them one of the tenderest answers His heart could dictate -- "Many good works have I shown you from my Father, for which of these do you stone me?"

The text is an illustration of the fact that those who were models in fairness of their treatment of men are most unfair in their treatment of Jesus Christ. If you are familiar with the mode of stoning offenders in the early days, you will be able to see how true this was of the Jews. The crier marched before the man who was to die, proclaiming the man's sins and the name of the witnesses appearing against him. This was for the humane purpose of enabling anyone who was acquainted with the circumstances in the case to go forward and speak for him, and the prisoner was held until the new evidence was given. But the Jews were not so considerate of Jesus; when He said, "I and my Father are one," immediately they began to stone Him.

All that is asked for our religion, for Christ and for the Bible is just a fair consideration of their claims. The Bible, we claim, is the word of God, not because it is old only, but because it is both old and true. It seems as if it were written for us as individuals; it is my present answer to my present need. We simply present the Book in evidence. Suppose you try to find its equal; suppose you try to produce its simplest parable; failure would be the result. Our religion is the same; we only ask for it a fair consideration. For Christ it is just the same. In England not long ago a woman was lecturing against our religion, and after she had closed, one of the mill-hands said, "I would like to ask the lecturer this one question: Thirty years ago I was the curse of this town and everybody in it. I tried to do better and failed. The teetotaler got hold of me, and I signed the pledge and broke it. The police took me and sent me to prison, and the wardens tried to make me better, and I began to drink as soon as I left my cell. When all had failed, I took Christ as my Saviour, and He made a new man of me. I am a member of the church, a

class-leader and superintendent of the Sunday School. If Christ is a myth and religion is untrue, how could I be so helped by them?"

Men are still stoning Jesus Christ. Perhaps you shrink from the conduct of the Jews and cry, "For shame!" but there is a worse way to stone Him than that. Men can hurt you far more than by striking you in the face or beating you with stripes. Do you imagine that Christ's worst suffering was when they cast stones at Him, or scourged Him, or put nails through His hands? I am sure not; but it was rather when He came unto His own, and His own received Him not; when they called Him "this fellow"; when He was in Gethsemane in an agony; when He was on the cross and He felt so forsaken that His heart broke.

If He were here today in the flesh as He is in the Spirit, I am sure there are ways we could hurt Him more than by taking up stones from the very streets and casting them in His blessed face until His eyes were blinded by the blood drops falling down.

Inconsistency

I. Have you ever noticed the sadness which throbbed in the words of our Saviour at the Last Supper, "One of you shall betray me"? or when He was walking with them toward the garden, "All of you shall be offended this night because of me"? or when He was in the garden and we hear Him saying: "What, could you not watch with me one hour?" The stone that hurts Christ most is not the one that is cast by the unbelieving world; He expects that; it is the one that is cast by His own people, and there is only one stone that they can cast at Him, and that is the one of inconsistency to talk one way and live another, confessing with the lips and denying in the walk. You never took a step in the wrong direction but it was a stone cast at Christ. I have heard of a young lady who was engaged in the greatest amount of pleasure and frivolity, nearly forgetful of her loyalty to Christ. One day being asked by her companions to go to a certain place, she refused on the ground that it was Communion Sunday in the church, in amazement her friends asked her, "Are you a communicant?" If the world does not know it, if our friends do not know it; we are taking up stones with which to stone Him.

Hatred

II. On the part of those who are not His followers, with some it is absolute hatred; certainly it was so with the Jews. You read in the text that they took up stones again. The first time we read of their stoning Christ is in the eighth chapter of John, and it is supposed that they were near a place where stones abounded, and it was very easy to pick them up. The second time they were near Solomon's porch; and it is a question if there were any stones there to be found. So it is thought that they carried them all the way, perhaps only dropping them as they listened to His speech, by which they were so enraged that they stooped and picked them up and hurled them at Him. Are you casting these stones at Christ? Remember that He said, "He that is not with me is against me."

Indifference

III. With many it is the stone of indifference. It was one of the first cast at Him in the world. It began at the manger, going to the cross, and it is still being thrown. With curling lips and insolent contempt men said, "Is this not the carpenter's son?" When He was on the cross, they said in derision, "He saved others; now let Him save Himself." It is now the ninth hour and darkness is settled about the place. Listen! His lips are moving: "Eloi! Eloi!" Surely this will move them; but some one says, "He is calling for Elias; let us see if he will come to Him." This is all like the gathering of a storm to me: first the cloud was the size of a man's hand, that is, at Bethlehem; it is larger at Egypt; heavier at Nazareth; darker in Jerusalem; then He comes up to the Mount of Olives, and the cloud seems to break as He cries out, "Oh! Jerusalem, Jerusalem!"

Have you been indifferent to Christ? Anything is better than that; better outspoken opposition to Him. than to be theoretically a believer and to be practically denying Him. How can you be indifferent to Him?

A man working on one of the railroads in the State of Indiana discovered, one morning, that the bridge had fallen, and he remembered that the train was due. He started down the track to meet her, saw her coming, and, raising his hands, pointed to the bridge; but on she came, having no time to lose. He threw himself across the track, and the engineer, thinking him a madman, stopped the train. The man arose and told his story, and saved the lives of hundreds. Christ did this for you; He purchased your redemption by the giving of Himself whether you have accepted this salvation or not. Will you stone Him for that?

Unbelief

IV. When He said: "I and my Father are one, they cast another stone at Him. That was unbelief. Indifference was hard to bear; hatred cut like a knife; but unbelief was the crowning sin of the Jews. Many are hurling it at Him today. He has promised to save us if we only believe, and we need only to trust Him to be saved. A little girl in Glasgow who had just found peace was heard counseling one of her playmates in this way: "I say, lassie, do as I did, grip a promise and hold on to it, and you will be saved," and there is salvation in the child's words.

Now read the verse that immediately follows the text: "Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?" It is supposed that some of the Jews had actually struck Him with a stone, and this drew forth from Him words tender enough, pathetic enough to turn aside the hatred of one who had a heart of stone.

Do Not Stone Him

1. Because of what He was, they called Him the bright and morning star; the fairest of all the children of men; the chiefest among ten thousand. Oh, that we might have our eyes open to behold Him!

2. Fifty years ago there was a war in India with England. On one occasion several English officers were taken prisoners; among them was one man named Baird. One of the Indian officers brought fetters to put on them all. Baird had been sorely wounded, and was suffering from his weakness. A gray-haired officer said, "You will not put chains on that man, surely?"

The answer was, "I have just as many fetters as prisoners, and they must all be worn." Then said the old hero, "Put two pairs on me." Baird lived to gain his freedom; but the other man went down to his death doubly chained. But what if he had worn the fetters of all in the prison, and what if voluntarily he had left a palace to wear chains, to suffer the stripes and endure the agony? That would be a poor illustration of all that Christ has done for you and for me. Will you stone Him for that?

3. Because of what He is today. In 1517 there was a great riot in London, in which houses were sacked and a general insurrection reigned; guns in the tower were thundering against the insurgents, and armed bands were assailing them on every side. Three hundred were arrested, tried and hanged; five hundred were cast into prison, and were to be tried before the king, Henry VIII. As he sat in state on the throne, the door opened, and in they came, every man with a rope about his neck. Before sentence could be passed on them, three queens entered, Catherine of Aragon, wife of the king; Margaret of Scotland, sister of the king; and Mary of France. They approached the throne, knelt at the feet of his majesty and there remained pleading until the king forgave the five hundred trembling men.

But there is a better intercession than that going on for you and for me at this moment. Will you stone Him for that? Looking out from the windows of Heaven, the Son of God beheld people heavily burdened, bearing the weight of their sins, groping about in their blindness, crying, "Peace! peace!" and there was no peace. And He said, "I will go down and become bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh; I will open their eyes and bear their burdens, forgive their sins and give them peace." Between man and the Father's house was a great gulf, wider than the distance from east to west, deeper than the distance from north to south; but Christ's coming bridged the gulf over. Across the chasm He cast His cross, and on the other side I see Him standing, His arms outspread, His attitude one of pleading. Listen! you will hear Him saying, "Come unto me, come unto me, whosoever will, let him come." Will you stone Him for that?

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05 -- THE UPPER AND THE NETHER SPRINGS

"And he gave her the upper springs and the nether springs" (Joshua 15:19).

Half-way between Hebron and Beersheba there once stood the ancient city of Debir. It was the city of brains and books, and the center of intellectual culture of the olden days. At the same point now may be seen a rude assemblage of stone hovels, many of which are half standing, but the others are entirely broken down.

One of the names given to this city, being translated, means the City of Books, or of learning -- what Athens was to Greece, the city of Debir was to Southern Palestine. It was supposed that all the records of antiquity of the nation were stored there. It was, indeed, a famous place.

Caleb, the son of Hezron, of the tribe of Judah, was very anxious to secure possession of the city. It is this fact which gives rise to the text. His name is very familiar to us. He was one of

the twelve spies sent by Moses over into Canaan, and he and Joshua were the only two born in Egypt who were given the privilege of entering Canaan, with the possible exception of the Levites, and that, not only because they had brought a truthful report of the land they had explored, but were also willing to take God at His word; and put all their trust in Him.

Forty-five years after, when the wanderings were over, Caleb applied to Joshua for the share of the land which had been promised him, and among other portions there was granted to him Debir the city of learning. It was still, however, the stronghold of the giants of Canaan, and must be captured to be possessed.

Caleb then made the proposition that he would give his daughter Achsah in marriage to any one who was able to take the city, and one Othniel, who had been much of a warrior, for he had delivered the children of Israel from the King of Mesopotamia, marched against Debir. After a great struggle the gates were broken down, the giants were captured or driven away, and the City of Books lay at the feet of the conqueror. When the victory was won, Caleb was as good as his word, and his daughter was given in marriage to the soldier. With her he also gave as an inheritance, a peculiar piece of property, known as "The South Land," valuable for some reasons, but it was mountainous and sloped southward toward the deserts of Arabia, the hot winds of which again and again swept across it. Before Achsah left her father's house, she besought him for his blessing. The south land was not enough, she would also have springs of water; and Caleb responded at once, and gave her more than she had asked: for we read in the text: "He gave her the upper springs and the nether springs." From an exceedingly fertile territory the land was chosen. It contained no less than fourteen springs. The valley was beautiful, for look which way you would, you could see them gushing forth. Their presence in the field meant not only a blessing for the field in which they were found, but for all the country around them.

I find in this beautiful story a good illustration of all that we receive from our Father.

All that has been bestowed upon us is associated with victory, and that was won by Him whose name was called in the prophets the Conqueror. It was for Him a fierce struggle, but He came off more than conqueror. Then, after that, He was called the bridegroom of the church, which is to be His bride, and with Him we have received not only the gift of salvation, but in Him we are also blessed with all spiritual blessings. Paul gives us this when he writes to the Ephesians, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

I. God starts His children in this world as Caleb started his daughter, with an inheritance. No one is so poor but God has given him something.

Some have taken the inheritance and treated it as the man with the five talents, they have gained other five also; others like the man with the one talent, have wrapped it in a napkin, and so they leave the world as poor as when they entered it. God has been very good to us. He has given us this world with all its beauty, its green pastures, its still waters, its rivers and its seas, its starry canopy stretching out above. The world is filled with forces of all kinds, but man has seemed to gain control over them, until today he stands himself like a conqueror in the midst of them all.

But the inheritance is better than that. He has given us all the faculties of mind and all the powers of body. The mind, the heart, the hands, the feet -- no one is sent into the world a pauper. God has thus placed a fortune in the grasp of every child of His. It is such a great thing to have a mind, for with it man is able to search the deep things of God and really take hold of the thought of the Eternal. The science of geometry was worked out from a few simple principles by Euclid and Archimedes, by pure reasoning out of their minds; and on the sands of the floor of the room where they were studying Archimedes traced the curves in which, according to science, the heavenly bodies must move. And long after, when the telescope was invented, the Galileos and the Newtons beheld with reverent wonder that the heavenly bodies were sweeping along in the same curves described so long ago by the great Mathematician. It is indeed a wonderful thing to have a mind.

But if these things which I have mentioned as our natural inheritance are all what we possess, then, with the success that may be gained by means of them, we may still be of all men the most miserable. For they are like the south land of Achsah, they stretch off toward the deserts of sorrow and care and darkness, and the hot winds of despair come sweeping past us again and again. The most miserable people in the world, sooner or later, are those who have just the world and nothing else. Men are born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward, and this south land of the world is a poor portion. It is beautiful; it is the handiwork of God. But we must have more than that if the soul be satisfied. "The stars are beautiful, but they pour no light into the midnight of a troubled soul. The flowers are sweet, but they pour no balm into the wounded heart." There are times when the hungry, thirsty, fevered soul must have what the natural inheritance can not give, and God has made provision for that.

Man sighs with groanings which can not be uttered, for the Infinite. If you put a seashell to your ear, you will find in it reminiscences of its original home, the roar of the sea, the wail of the wind, the groan of the dying wave, all discernible therein. It has the witness in itself that it belongs to the mighty deep. And if you listen attentively to your own heart, you will find constant proofs of its destined abode. The sighs, the yearnings, the dreams, the tears, the sadness, the music, all testify that we are made for God, and that only God can satisfy our wants. And God knew this, and so, as well as giving us the south land, He has also given us the springs of water from which we may drink and be satisfied. God pity the marl who has failed to accept the proffered gift.

II. The springs of water were given to Achsah because of her marriage with Othniel, and they are a perfect illustration of that which comes to us because of our union with the Son of God. The springs were a free gift, and so is the nether spring of the gospel, which has come to us. "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."

And never a spring bursting from the plains of Gerar, or from the mountains of Lebanon, or from the valleys of Canaan, perform such a mission as this nether spring of the gospel which is the gift of our God.

We have seen the fields in the time of a drought looking parched and apparently dead and worthless, and then suddenly, almost in the night, the meadows were clothed with green, and the

grain lifted up its head rejoicing, all because the rain had fallen. But in this nether spring of the gospel there is a more marvelous power than that he who comes to drink of its waters goes away with new life, and his whole nature is changed. The ancients believed in the existence of a spring in which, if a person bathed, he would renew his youth and live forever. We have found that spring today in the text, for "The gift of God is eternal life." "The Bible is all a-sparkle with wells and springs, rivers and seas. They toss up their brightness from almost every chapter. And water is many times the type or figure of that which enlivens, beautifies, and gives new life." Solomon, refreshed by the story of heaven, exclaims, "As cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." Isaiah, speaking of the blessedness of the children of God, writes, "They shall spring as willows from the watercourses." The prophet, glowing with the thought of the millennium, says, "Streams shall break forth from the desert."

The mission of water in this world is to bless and satisfy, refresh and help. "But all the waters that ever leaped in the torrents, or foamed in the cascade, or fell in the summer shower, or hung in the morning dew, have given no such comfort to the troubled heart, no such rest and refreshment to the sin-sick soul, as that which may be drawn by you and by me from the nether spring of the gospel."

It is a good type or illustration of the gospel because of its brightness. Yet here it fails of giving us perfect description or idea, for where can you find such brightness as gleams in this nether spring?

"David, unable to put it into words, plays it on his harp. Christopher Wren, unable to put it into language, springs it in the arches of St. Paul's. Bunyan, failing to present it in ordinary story, put it in the form of allegory, which lives on today with constantly increasing power. Handel, with ordinary music unable to reach the height and sound the depth of the theme, thrills us with his oratorio." O, the gladness, the brightness, the joy unutterable in that life which is hid with Christ in God! And this I may drink in as I come to the nether springs.

There is no life on earth so happy as the Christian's. Take the humblest child of God you know, and why shouldn't he be happy? According to the Bible, he is all the time under the shadow of God's wings. If he walks, the angels bear him up; if he sleeps they let down ladders from the skies, up and down which the angels go to and fro, bringing down blessings of God, and bearing away his heavy burdens. Why, to get within the door of the kingdom, to have a place, not the nearest, but on the very outer circle, to bear the lowest title of all the redeemed, to be the weakest child of all the family of God, to be the dimmest jewel in His crown of rejoicing, to be the least, yea, less than least of all the saints is a hope which sets the heart a-singing. All this I find and more, a thousand times more, as I stoop and drink at the nether springs.

Water is also like the gospel in its power to refresh. I remember the River Jordan the day when Naaman came to its banks with his leprosy. I see him going down into its waters, once, twice, three times, and then on until he had, according to the instructions of the servant of God, bathed seven times, and then, marvelous change! his flesh became as it were the flesh of a little child.

But here is a greater change for the sinful soul who will come to the nether spring. Here came Newton, and left behind him his sins which were as scarlet. Here came Bunyan, cursing with every step until lewd people rebuked him, and he went away, so changed that he gave to the world the book that stands in the estimation of some, next to the Bible for sweetness and power. Here came Magdalen and the Philippian jailor, Zacchaeus, and the poor trembling thief on the cross, and they drank of the waters and stand today in the company of the redeemed.

I stand by the side of the waters today, and with all the tenderness of a saved sinner, with all the assurance of a pardoned child of God, with all the alarm of a friend who sees his friends and neighbors going down to death, away from the Living Waters, I bid you come, come, come; "Whosoever will, let him come."

It is a marvelous spring of which I speak. I recall the fact that when the Master met the man who was blind from his birth, He anointed his eyes with clay and spittle and then told him to go wash in the pool of Siloam; and when he had washed, he came seeing. I imagine that first of all he saw the face of the Master Himself. This is the power of the nether spring of the gospel. The touch of its waters will cause the scales to drop from our eyes, and we shall be able to see the wondrous things written in the Book of God, and not only so, but we shall have given unto us the vision of the face of the Master Himself. It is not strange that we are unable, in our sinful condition, to see things as they are in the kingdom of God, for we are blind. But if you will only come with your blindness to the nether spring, you shall go away rejoicing. It is like the pool of Bethesda. it has healing power, and we are not only saved from the guilt of sin, but we may likewise be saved from its power.

The only difference is that in the pool the sick people must wait until the waters are troubled before they may step in and be healed, while in this nether spring the waters are always ready. This is no new idea so to represent the gospel of Christ, for I read in the gospel of John these words: "But whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst. But the water I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." And in the Apocalypse, these words are found: "I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst, of the fountain, of the Water of Life freely." O thirsty souls, come and drink!

I know what springs of water have done for the world. Found in Gerar by Isaac, they make the field fruitful in abundance. Bursting forth in Lebanon, they send their waters down the mountain side, and as they go through the valley, they make it the very synonym of fruitfulness. Closely akin to that is what the nether spring of the gospel does for us. No one knows the fullness of his own being until he is filled with the influence and power of the gospel. You walk, in the month of January, over the most fertile place in a field or through the forest, and you will see the illustration of what man is in his natural state. The earth is full of roots and the trees are full of buds, all of which are closely bandaged so that they can not expand; but when the springtime comes, the roots in the earth commence to push upward and the buds on the trees begin to unfold, and in a very little time all nature is rejoicing. What a marvelous change, simply because the roots have been warmed by the sun and kissed by the light! and yet it is not worthy to be compared with a change which might be wrought in you, if you will but come to the nether

spring and drink of its life-giving waters, for there you will meet Him who has said: "I am come that you might have life, and that you might have it more abundantly."

III. I wish I might be able to make plain to you all, that there is so much more to the Christian life than simply being saved. That is only the beginning. The whole experience stretches away from that point, and gets brighter and brighter as the days go by. With the hope that we might learn the lesson together today, I have brought before you these two springs. Whether the strict exegesis of the text will allow the interpretation or not, I am very sure that all will agree that it is a perfect illustration. To drink at the nether spring is salvation, but to drink at the upper spring is a high privilege that is offered to every child of God. I could bring so many passages of Scripture to you which would serve as an illustration of what I mean. Take Ephesians 1:3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus." Or, Colossians 11:12: "Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead."

Or, take Colossians 3:1-3: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Or, take Philippians 3:20: "For our conversation is in Heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."

I would that we might all drink at the upper spring. What peace would then fill our hearts! When we drink at the lower spring, we come to be at peace with God, but when we learn to drink also at the upper spring, we have the peace of God; and there is a great difference between the two. It is something like the difference between a microscope and a telescope. With the first we can see things near, and in a bulk not larger than a grain of sand, I can find a thousand million animalcule; but with the latter I can see things afar off. I can actually study the Milky Way, which is removed from me thousands and thousands of miles. At the nether spring, first of all, I see myself and all my sinfulness; then I see Christ in all His righteousness; then I hear Him say that though my sins be like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; and there at the nether spring I am made whole: but with the upper spring it is different. Like the telescope, it is all about the things which are above, and as I drink at its waters I find myself being lifted above this world, and my conversation, not only, but my very life, may be in the Heavenlies.

What an influence for good such a power might have over us! On the English seacoast there is a certain fountain which is within the tide mark. Twice each day the tide spreads over it, and the pure sweet waters are defiled and spoiled by the bitter wave. But the tide goes down and the fountain washes itself clear from the defilement. This is the emblem of a life that is in daily contact with the world and its defilement. Again and again it is touched by the evil one, but I bring you the cure today. Live close to the upper spring and in the midst of trials most perplexing, great peace shall fill your soul. What an influence we might have over others if we were thus taking advantage of our privileges! I think one might be a Christian, that is, just simply be saved, and not have much of a positive influence over the world about him; but it would not be possible to live in close communion with Christ (which is only another way of speaking of the

upper spring), without having the greatest possible influence for good over all with whom he might come into contact.

Travelers tell us about the rain tree. It grows to be about sixty feet high, with a diameter of about three feet at the root. It has a singular quality. It imbibes and condenses moisture from the atmosphere as no other tree does, and so it is called the rain tree. Generally its bark is dripping wet, and this is not only in the damp season but in the midst of summer, when the rivers run low and the brooks roundabout run nearly dry. Then it imbibes the moisture. This is a picture for us all. I am very sure that if we did but know the lesson of the upper spring, we might live in the very midst of desolation and despair, and say with Paul, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

And the way to this upper spring is pointed out very plainly to us. I remember the dream of Jacob as he was going from Beersheba to Haran. It was of the ladder which was set upon earth, the top of which reached up to heaven.

This ladder is set for us. It reaches to the very brink of the upper spring. The ladder is Christ; His feet rest upon the earth. His brow is bound with the glory of heaven. The events of His earthly life are the earthward end of the ladder; His divinity, His finished Messiahship, His perpetual priesthood the topmost end. In a distant city a fire was raging. It was thought that all the inmates had been saved, when, to the horror of the bystanders, two children were seen standing at a third-story window. It was before the days of the almost perfect appliances for the saving of lives. Two ladders were hurriedly spliced together and lifted to the side of the building. There was a shout of terror when it was found that the ladder lacked six feet of reaching the children. In a moment a brave fireman was mounting the ladder; he reached the topmost round, and then stood for moment balancing himself, until he had caught the window-sill with his hand, and then over his body, which supplied the gap between the ladder and window, the children came slowly down until outstretched hands reached them in safety. And this is what the Lord Jesus Christ did for you and for me! There was no way for us back to heaven. We were estranged from God. And then He came in His incarnation, and on the platform erected by the patriarchal, legal and prophetic dispensation, He stood, as it were, in His own body, reaching up His hands, He took hold of God, and the way was made complete. And so it has come to pass that not only in Christ we are saved, but it is also true that we mount by Him into the very secret place of the Most High. And this is drinking at the upper spring.

Thus the secret of this great blessing is to be found by abiding in Christ. Dr. Gordon used to tell a little circumstance which came beneath his eyes in New England, which presents to us a figure of it all. Two little saplings grew side by side. Through the action of the wind they crossed each other. By and by the bark of each became wounded and the sap began to mingle, until in some still day they became united to each other. This process went on more and more until they were firmly compacted. Then the stronger began to absorb the life from the weaker; it grew stronger while the other grew weaker and weaker, until finally it dropped away and then disappeared. And now there are two trunks at the bottom and only one at the top. Death has taken away the one, life has triumphed in the other.

There was a time when you and Jesus Christ met. The wounds of your penitent heart began to knit up with the wounds of His broken heart, and you were thus united to Christ. How is it now? Has the old life been growing less and less? Has he been increasing and have you been decreasing? If so, you have learned the lesson of the upper spring, and blessed are you. This is what Paul had learned when he said: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live not of myself, but by faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." And as you stoop to drink at the upper spring, you see in the water a reflection of a face. At first it seems not to be your own; you took again and find it is, but changed, so wondrously changed. Do you know the secret? It is the Christ that is in you shining forth, and so for you to live, has become, not only to act like Christ, and to speak like Christ, but actually to look like Him.

And this is not strange, for nothing is more common than to remark the influence which a person of commanding talent or position exerts upon others. Alexander the Great always had a copy of Homer under his pillow. Caesar, meeting with a statue of Alexander, was fired with an ambition he had never known before. If these things are true, what must be the transforming power of the constant contemplation of the life of the Son of God? The very clod beneath the rosebush imbibes a perfume. You can not walk through an orange grove without carrying away with you some of the fragrance. And so you could not think much of Christ without living above this world and its many trials.

A number of travelers were making their way across the desert. The last drop of water had been exhausted, and they were pushing on with the hope that more might be found. They were growing weaker and weaker. As a last resort they divided their men into companies and sent them on, one in advance of the other, in this way securing a rest they so much needed. If they who were in the advance guard were able to find the springs, they were to shout the good tidings to the men who were the nearest to them, and so they were to send the message along.

The long line reached far across the desert. They were fainting by the way when suddenly, every one was cheered by the good news. The leader of the first company had found the springs of water. He stood at the head of his men shouting until the farthest man had heard his cry: "Water! water!" The word went from mouth to mouth, until the whole company of men heard the sound, quickened their pace, and soon were drinking to their hearts' content. I have found the Water of Life; it is flowing fully, it is flowing freely; and so I stand and cry: "Water! water!" Take up the cry, every one, until every thirsty soul shall drink and live. But I have found another blessing, too. It is that of sweet communion with the Lord. It is that of the closest fellowship with Him. It is at the brink of the upper spring.

Will you not come? The head of the springs, both of them, the upper and the nether, is found at the throne of God. For that reason I call you all to come and take of the waters freely. The Spirit and the bride say "Come": let him that heareth say "'Come": let him that is athirst come!

And on the principle that water always seeks its own level, coming from the throne it will go back again, and it will bear us too into His very presence, whom to know is life everlasting, and whom to see is a joy without end.

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06 -- LIVE IN THE SUNSHINE

"Keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jude 21).

Jude's is one of the briefest of all the letters in the New Testament, containing only twenty-five verses. It is, perhaps, the last of the epistles. Though the date is not definitely settled, it was probably written after the destruction of Jerusalem, when most of the Apostles had finished their work. There is a most delightful spirit of humility in the letter. The writer called himself a servant, and the bondsman of Jesus Christ, and the brother of James; and that is a beautiful modesty, for, in fact, it is generally believed that he was the Lord's own brother and the son of Joseph and Mary.

To no particular church or people was the letter written, but the accounts make it especially applicable to us. It is very practical. The heart of Jude was stirred because certain men were denying God and the Lord Jesus Christ. He said, because of this, "I exhort you that you should contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." That expression in the Greek, however, reads for the faith delivered "once and for all" to the saints. So the doctrine is the same today as in the days of Jude and before then. Reading on to the twentieth and twenty-fifth verses, they indicate that we are expected to contend as did the early disciples.

It has always seemed to me that faith produced men, and their living in the world was a contending for the faith. We have the pattern of the life of the Apostolic Christian given to us. If you study the Acts of the Apostles, the letters of Paul, Peter, John, and, better still, the wonderful prayer of Christ in the seventeenth chapter of John, you will see that there were three great elements in their character. They were in the world, but not of it; they were constantly looking for the coming of Christ; and they were filled with missionary fire and zeal. These three Characteristics must predominate now if the church is to have power. When one is in the world and not of it, he realizes he is a pilgrim and a stranger here, and he endures trials and temptations, because he knows that they are but for a little while. The second characteristic has just as great an influence. The disciples were constantly expecting the return of our Lord; they remembered the testimony of the men who had heard the angels on the slopes of Olivet, and again and again they opened their eyes, expecting to behold Him face to face. It was this hope in their hearts which inspired their lives, transfigured the cross and its shame, and kept them pure in the midst of all temptation and sin.

The third characteristic is equally important. How much we need to long for the salvation of others! Nothing so touches the hidden, springs of the Christian heart as to feel in some measure that he is responsible for those about him. Some one has said, when God would draw out all the fathomless love of a woman's heart, He lays a helpless babe upon her bosom; and it is true that the church will awake to power when she awakes to responsibility.

There is something which I have in mind which will give us all the things I have spoken about. It is described in the text. If there could be any subject growing out of the text to describe

it, I should say that it would be "Live in the sunshine." I know what the sunshine does for the clouds; it gives them a silver lining. I know what it does for the grass and the trees and the flowers; it warms and nourishes until they blossom into beauty and fruitfulness. Take the plant away from the light, and it will droop and die; place it where the sun will kiss it, and every leaf rejoices. This is the very poorest illustration as to what the love of God will do for us; so let us keep ourselves in the love of God.

I. That word "keep" is the key word of Jude's epistle. In it we are told that God will keep us, but we are also told to keep ourselves. We are told to persevere, but it is also said we will be preserved. This is God and man working together, and it is singular, to say the least, that the word "preserve" and the word "persevere" are composed of exactly the same letters. The literal rendering of the expression that God will keep us is "as in a garrison." How secure, then, we must be!

How May We Keep Ourselves In The Love Of God?

1. No way so efficient as by prayer. There are different kinds of prayer. Jacob prayed when he met the angel of Jabbok, and his name changed from Jacob to Israel. Moses prayed when he plead with God to look with favor again upon His chosen people. Christ prayed in the garden, for it is said: "Being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly." But this is not the kind of prayer I have in mind; it is rather the kind that Christ offered when He was alone on the mountain with God. I imagine the Father talked with Him more than He with the Father. It is the kind that David describes when he says. "My meditation of Him shall be sweet." Faith is the eye with which we can see God, and meditation the wing with which we fly to Him. It is the kind of prayer offered when the suppliant feels that he is the only one in all the universe; it is the kind of prayer which if our mother could hear, or the dearest friend we had on earth, we should feel that it had been diverted and had not reached God. It is the kind of prayer we offer when we let God talk to us as well as talk to Him. This will keep us in the love of God.

2. Few things will so help us as this old book, the Bible. Two gentlemen were riding together, and when they were about to separate, one asked the other, "Do you ever read your Bible?" "Yes," said his friend; "I do, but I receive no benefit because I feel that I do not love God." "Neither did I," replied the other; "but God loved me," and that answer fairly lifted the man into the skies, for it gave him a new thought. The question is not at all as to how much I love God, but rather as to how much God loves me. Read the Bible in that way, and it will help you to live in the text.

Love dictated every word, love selected every sentence, love presented every Providence, love sent Christ to die upon the cross, and you can not read it in this way without keeping yourself in the love of God.

3. All the means of grace will keep us, but if there is one above another it would be the Lord's Supper. The very coming to the table and taking that which represents His body and His blood really lifts the soul into such a condition that it is one with Christ. He that hath seen Christ hath seen the Father, and he that is in Christ is in the Father. What better way, could there be of entering into His love?

II. There must be emphasis upon the preposition "in." The Greek signifies the closest connection, the most intimate association and the most perfect communion. All these things are possible. The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and there may be just as close a fellowship between Christ and His followers. Now and then in this world we find persons whose lives are so blended that they almost look alike. This is oftentimes true of the husband and wife. Tennyson had it in his mind when he said: "In the long years liker must they grow." This communion of the believer with Christ is suggested by the stones in a building, which take hold upon the foundation; by the branches which take hold upon the vine; by the different members of the body all knit together; by the union of the husband and wife; by the union of the Father and the Son; so that in this union there is a stability, vitality, consciousness, affection and perfect harmony. If one is in Christ, he will live above the world and the storm's effect. The earth may be covered with storms, but a little way up the atmosphere is clear and the sun is shining. If we wait upon the Lord, we shall renew our strength; we shall mount with wings as eagles.

The Love Of God

III. Would that we might understand the meaning of the expression "the love of God." It is hinted at in this world. Passing along the streets, one hears the words of a song or catches the strains of a piece of music being played, and he says, "That is from Beethoven or Mozart, I recognize the movement." So in this life, we catch strains of the love of God. We behold it in the mother's disinterested, self-denying love; we see it in the lover's glow, and in the little child's innocent affection; but these things are only hints. The Bible gives us the best revelation. Beginning with Genesis the scroll is constantly unfolding. Patriarchs and prophets, judges and kings, each tell their story. So, little by little, we get flashes out of His great heart until they all come together as the rays of the sun are converged in the sun-glass; then we begin to understand. It was not, however, until the Sun of Righteousness arose at the advent that there came the morning light which gives us the thought, not of the administration of God, but of His heart. What is infinite love? The purest, sweetest, tenderest thing known on earth is the over-hanging heart of a mother over the cradle that contains her babe that can give nothing back; receiving everything and returning nothing -- yet the love of the mother is but a drop in the ocean when compared with the love of God. It is infinite, infinite!

There's a wideness in God's mercy
Like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in His justice,
Which is more than liberty.

For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind,
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

Over in England an archdeacon, having reached almost the end of his life, had his home so constructed that he could spend his closing days in sunshine. In the morning they placed his chair so that he could turn his face toward the east and see the rising sun; at noontime they

wheeled his chair into the south window, where he could behold the sun in his meridian; but in the evening hours they would place him in the west window, where he could behold the king of day sinking behind the distant hills. So let me ask you in the morning of your life to keep your faces toward the east window, and at noontide live in the south window, but when evening time comes, turn your face toward the west window, so that all your journey through you may live in the sunshine, and thus keep yourselves in the love of God.

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07 -- THE SECRET OF HIS PRESENCE

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Psalm 91:1).

To me this is one of the most beautiful expressions in all the Bible; beautiful because it is poetic, but more than that for the reason that it holds up before us one of the greatest privileges that can come to the children of God.

There is a difference of opinion as to who the author of the Psalms may be. We get into the way of thinking that David wrote everything in the Psalter, but Moses is the author here. The Talmud ascribes not only this one to him but the nine preceding as well. The rule is that all the Psalms without a name in the title are to be ascribed to the poet whose name is given in the nearest preceding title; but this rule will not always hold good. This is the Psalm quoted by the devil when he was tempting Christ upon the mountain, and it has ever been throbbing with comfort for every troubled soul. Whoever wrote it, it is beautiful, and all will agree that the lesson taught is one touching our communion with God and our fellowship with Jesus Christ.

It is very true that all Christians do not occupy the same position in this world. All are saved, and it is by the same "precious blood of Christ." But there is so much more to the Christian life than simply being saved; that is only the beginning. The blessings here offered are given in a very general way. God is no respecter of persons, and so it is as if He had said, any one who will fulfill the conditions may have the blessing; and as there is only the one condition, namely, that we shall dwell in the "secret place of the Most High," you would think that all would accept, for the promise is that we "shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." The blessings here promised are not for all believers, but only for those who live in close fellowship with God. Every child of God looks toward the inner sanctuary and the mercy seat, but all do not dwell there. They run to it at times and enjoy occasional glimpses of the face of Him who is there to be seen; but they do not continually abide in the mysterious presence, and this is possible for every one.

It is with the desire that I might learn the lesson myself as well as bring it to you, and with the almost unutterable longing that we might know how to abide in the "secret of His presence" that I have brought you the subject. May the Lord help us every one! I have been on the mountain tops of Christian experience, when I have seemed to see the face of Him who loved me and gave Himself for me, and I am sure that you can say the same; but the text says that we

may abide there in our thoughts while we may be all the time in the very thickest of the fight for God.

I like the verse. Every word is sweeter than honey in the honeycomb. It is so restful to know that there is any place in the world where we may abide. There is also something very winning to me in the fact that it is a secret place, for that surely means that God has something that is just intended for me, and for me alone. When I am there, I am away from the world. It is the place Mrs. Brown discovered when she wrote the beautiful hymn,

"I love in solitude to shed
The penitential tear;
And all His promises to plead
When none but God earl hear."

There is something about the word "shadow" that always interests, for there never has been a shadow without the light; thus the "secret place" must be a place of brightness. It is a place where God is, for the nearest of all things to me as I journey in the sunlight is my shadow, and he who walks in nay shadow or rests in it must be very near to me; so that when I am in the shadow of God, I can reach forth my hand and touch Him; I can lift up mine eyes and see Him face to face. I know there is a sense in which God is always near us. He is in all things, and He is everywhere. But there is something about the "secret of His presence" to which every one is a stranger until he has dwelt there.

In the 119th Psalm the psalmist seems in the first part to be writing of the presence of God in a general sort of way. As another has said, "He had been beating out the golden ore of thought through successive paragraphs of marvelous power and beauty, when suddenly in the fifty-first verse he seems to have become conscious that He of whom he had been speaking had drawn near and was bending over him. The sense of the presence of God was borne in upon his inner consciousness, and lifting up a face on which reverence and ecstasy met and mingled, he cried: 'Thou art near, O Lord!'" If we could only attain unto this how strong, how happy, how useful we should be. It is possible as well for those of us who are in the very midst of perplexing cares as for the priest or the saint; for since the Master bids us all to abide in Him, and does not limit either His meaning or the number of people who may obey, I am absolutely certain that it rests with me and with you to determine whether we shall take advantage of our high privilege.

I

The typical reference must be to the holy place of the tabernacle, which the priests were privileged to enter; but Peter assures us that we have become in this new dispensation "a holy priesthood," so that it is possible for us to enter on that ground. If this interpretation is allowed, then it is something, too wonderful almost to describe, to which we are bidden, for in the tabernacle just beyond the veil was the glory cloud, and all the magnificence that could be wrought in gold and silver, purple and fine linen. But I am persuaded that even that was as nothing when compared to that which awaits us when we enter the secret place of God. The writer to the Hebrews tells us just how we may enter. "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated

for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh," how easy it all seems when we look at it in this way! A Christian is all wrong according to the text if he thinks that all the life here below must be turmoil and strife, for there is an abiding even here, and a sweet, undisturbed communion even in the midst of the tempest. A dwelling place is a home, not a temporary shelter to which one may run for momentary relief, as the birds fly to the boughs of the trees in the midst of the storm and then leave again when the storm has passed. It is the idea of a home. What can be more restful and comfortable? The Hebrew for the expression "shall abide" is "shall pass the night." Is it not a wonderful thing that the experiences that have seemed to us to be Heaven begun below, but have been as fleeting as the shadows sweeping the hillside, may be with us all the time? What place is so restful as your home? I know there is a rest that comes to one the moment he accepts the pardon that is offered by the Redeemer and the burden of sin is gone. "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." This is His promise, and He never has failed; but immediately following that expression is this: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

I suppose one might secure the former and never come to the latter. Is not that the rest that comes to us when we are near enough to learn of Him, which is only another way of speaking of the "secret place"?

What place is so comfortable as the home? There we are free from the annoyances of the world; there we have that which seems to soothe and to quiet. Could there be anything more expressive than the words we find in the fourth verse of the 91st Psalm: "He shall cover thee with His feathers." It would be almost a sacrilege for one to use the words if they were not in the Bible; but it is the picture of the mother bird shielding the little ones. What so warm, so comfortable, as the mother's wings, or the nest that love has made? But listen to this: if you will only dwell in the "secret place," you shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty; and as if that would not be tender enough to woo us, we are told again, "He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings thou shalt trust."

Home is the place for explanations. There we tell our secrets. If the people of the world do not understand us, our loved ones in our homes do.

In the 27th Psalm, the fourth verse, David wants to "dwell in the house of the Lord" that he may "inquire in His temple." There were many times when he was perplexed, when he could not understand God. One time he said, "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path is the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known."

And what is so trackless as the sea? Then he says, "I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end." It was as if God there had made some special revelation to him; it was the "secret place," and God had told him the secret of it all, for that is God's way. Did He not walk with Enoch on the way as friend walks with friend? Did He not talk with Moses at Midian and tell him things he never could repeat? I remember very well that John was so near to the blessed Christ that he leaned his head upon His bosom. How easy for Him to bend His head and whisper to him the things He could not even tell the other disciples, for they were not near enough; for there are things that can not be spoken above a whisper. If they were, their power would be gone. One could not thus come near to Christ without receiving some special message.

When Paul was caught up into the heavens, I remember that he heard certain things that it was not possible for him to utter, partly because he had no language and partly because they were secrets he had been told. And one of the best things about Peter was that he met Christ after His resurrection. after he had denied Him with an oath, after he had forsaken Him; and when their eyes met and their hands clasped, the same as in the other days, except that the Master's were marked by the nails, they had an interview. How tender the message must have been! I imagine it was the turning point of Peter's life for real power. He told Mark many things about himself, but of that interview with Christ he never spoke a word. To me it is a beautiful reminder of the fact that Christ is "the same yesterday, today and forever," and if I am only near enough to Him, I may inquire of Him concerning all the mysteries of my life, and He who made known His ways unto Moses will answer me in the "secret place" and in the secret way.

"If I tried I could not utter
What He says when thus we meet."

II

It would be impossible for one to read the verses immediately following the text without being impressed with the fact that the most remarkable results will follow our abiding and dwelling in the "secret place."

In order that the subject may be the more practical and helpful I desire to suggest some things which will surely be ours when we fulfill the conditions.

1. In the "secret place" there is peace. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," our Master said, "but in Me ye shall have peace." I have read that a certain insect has the power to surround itself with a film of air, encompassed in which it drops into the midst of muddy, stagnant pools, and remains unhurt. And the believer may be thus surrounded by the atmosphere of God, and while he is in the midst of the turmoils of the world he may be filled to overflowing with the peace of God, because God is with him.

This is true whatever your occupation, if it is ever so menial. The Rev. F. B. Meyer tells us of Lawrence, the simple-minded cook, who said that "for more than sixty years he never lost the sense of the presence of God, but was as conscious of it while performing the duties of his humble office as when partaking of the Lord's Supper." What peace he must have had!

If you are constantly engaged so that you have said it was impossible for you to enjoy your religion very much because you were so busy, still you may have this peace, because you are in the "secret place." I know that it is impossible for one to keep two thoughts in the mind at the same time and do them both justice; but there is the heart as well as the mind, and while the mind is busy the heart may be rejoicing in all the fullness of God. The orator is conscious of the presence of his audience, and his heart is touched by their appreciation while his mind is busy in presenting the thoughts that move them. You may have all your mind taken up with the book you are reading or studying, but your heart is conscious of the presence of the one you love and who sits by your side. The mother may be very busy in one part of the house; her mind may be greatly engaged, but her heart is conscious of the fact that her little babe is in another part of the house,

and the least cry will draw her to the child. So the mind may be occupied to the very fullest extent, and even be disturbed by the things about us, while the heart may be abiding in sweet communion and fellowship with Him because we are dwelling in the "secret place."

Those were comforting words of the Master's when He said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." So that I may have peace even when trial comes. David found this to be true, for in that beautiful Psalm, the 27th, he says: "In the time of trouble He will hide me in His pavilion; in the secret of His tabernacle will He hide me." The pavilion was a great tent in the very center of the camp, and when he was there nothing could harm him; he could be at peace even if he should hear the sounds of his enemies. But the expression is even stronger than that, for David says that if it were necessary God would even put him in the "secret of His tabernacle"; that is the same as the Holy of Holies; and who would not have been safe there? Here is our "secret place" again, and this is just where God has given us the privilege of going. Why should we be disturbed if troubles are about us and our enemies rise up to do us harm?

2. In the "secret place" there is purity. If our surroundings were only better in this world, our lives would be purer. It is very easy to be good in the company of some people we know; they seem to draw out all the good in us. To be surrounded by certain kinds of scenery is to be lifted near Heaven; to touch a little child pure as the angels of God is to receive a benediction. What could not the presence of God do for us if only we were all the time conscious of it? This is just what I may have, did I but dwell in the "secret place." One of the reasons which David gives for desiring to dwell in the house of the Lord was that "he might behold the beauty of the Lord."

I wish that it might be possible for me to make plain to you as I might understand it myself all the beauty that waits us in the "secret place." Think of the gorgeousness of the Holy of Holies in the ancient tabernacle, which is a type of this! The wonderful curtains and hangings of the place, its blue and purple, its fine twined linen and threads of gold. Think of the beautiful veil with the cherubim, with the embroidery so fine that angel fingers must have wrought them, the table of pure gold holding the bread, and the seven-branched candlestick? Who from the outside looking upon the badger skin tent would have imagined how glorious it was within? So I do not think it would be possible to make plain to you all that awaits you in the "secret place." He who has dwelt there with God could not tell his joy if he had an angel's speech; but this I know, that if you will but enter in and dwell there, the very beauty of the place will make you pure, and you remember that it is only unto "the pure in heart" that the vision of God is promised.

I suppose we might have been with Jacob when in his dream he saw the heavens opened and beheld the angels going up and coming down and heard the voice of God, and we only should have seen the dreary mountains round about. I doubt not but that we might have been with Paul when he was caught up to the third heaven, and we should have seen nothing but the humble surroundings of his tent. And I doubt not but that if Paul were here today he would see God here this morning, and he would have walked on the street with Him yesterday. Is not the trouble with ourselves instead of our surroundings or our times? Every permitted sin encrusts the windows of the soul and blinds our vision; and every victory over evil clears the vision of the soul, and we can see Him a little plainer.

The unholy man could not see God if he were set down in the midst of heaven; but men and women whose hearts are pure see Him in the very commonest walks of life. And there is not a place in the world if it is right that we should have been there, but after we have passed by we may say, "Behold, God was in this place, and I knew it not." And if we can not say it, it is wrong for us to go.

3. In the "secret place" there is power. Oh! that we might all of us possess real power! This is our cry day and night, and yet there is nothing we may have easier. There is no promise with which I am familiar that tells us that we may have power of intellect or of human might. But there is a promise that we shall have power after that the Holy Ghost shall come upon us; and in the olden times He literally filled to overflowing the Holy of Holies, so that at one time it was almost impossible for one to enter. This will come to us likewise when we dwell in the "secret place." In I Chronicles we read, in the fourth chapter and twenty-third verse, of certain men who "dwelt with the king for his work." There can be no effective service that is not the outcome of communion. Our Lord's Day precedes the week of work, and this is always the plan of God. That wonderful fifteenth chapter of John is founded on that idea. We must abide first, and after that we can not help but bear fruit. Oh! that we might be so near to Him that we should be magnetized and charged with a spiritual force that the world could neither gainsay nor resist!

III

I have left to the very last the most practical question of all, and that is: How may I enter into this "secret place"? Can not something be said that will make the way plain? It may all be summed up in this answer. None can "know the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him." It is impossible for any one to enter into the "secret place" of the Most High except through Jesus Christ. He said, "I am the way, I am the door, by me, if any man will, he shall enter in."

It is just what Paul meant when he said, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

There are some places in the Bible where the way seems plain. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me, and I in him." And whatever else is meant by this feeding on Christ, this certainly is true -- we are to set apart daily periods of time when we may have communion with the Saviour. Is it not because we are too hurried that our vision of Christ is blurred and indistinct? It is only when the water is still that you can see the pebbly beach below. You could not go alone with Christ half an hour each day, or even a less time, and sitting still, look up into His face, by faith talk to Him and let Him talk to you, without feeling that for a little part of the day you had been in heaven, when in fact it was only the "secret place" of the Most High. Christ would be in you and you would be in Christ, even as in the southern sea the sponges may be seen beneath the waves, the sponge in the sea and the sea in the sponge. Then we could say with Paul: "I live, and yet not I but Christ liveth in me." Again I have read in the Bible these words: "He that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him." And I have found that I have only to go the way I think Christ wants me to go and to do the things I think He wants me to do to be able to stand on the very mountain top of Christian experience; and that is only

another way of speaking of the "secret place." You could not go where Christ has bidden you without meeting Him, and you could not meet Him without a blessing coming with the meeting.

After all this has been known, I have been told that the vision still tarries. Sometimes that is to try our faith; but He will come if you wait, for He has promised. If, however, after long waiting still He should tarry, take up this old Book, turn its pages with a prayer that God might open your eyes so that you might see Him. This is the garden where he walks; press on, you will meet Him face to face. This is the temple where He dwells; stand knocking at the door, even while you wait it may swing noiselessly on its hinges, and He will lead you Himself into the "secret place."

Did you ever cultivate the habit of talking aloud to God? Sit down this very day and with upturned face and open eyes talk to Him as to your father, as to the dearest friend you have, one to whom you can tell your most secret thoughts; tell them to Him. The very room where you sit will seem to be filled with angels; but best of all God will be there, for one could not long talk to Him without feeling Him to be near. After such an experience some one has written: "Suddenly there came upon my soul a something I had never known before. It was as if some one Infinite and Almighty, knowing everything, full of the deepest, tenderest interest in myself, made known to me that He loved me. My eye saw no one, but I knew assuredly that the One whom I knew not and had never met had met me for the first time and made known to me that we were together." God give us all such an experience. Come into the "secret place." Come in!

After the Lord Jesus Christ had entered the heart of a girl in India, one who was of the higher caste, she was so transformed by His presence that out of the fullness of her love to Him she put on paper a little verse for which I shall never cease to thank God. Will you go with me and with her into the "secret place" of the Most High that we may abide under the shadow of the Almighty?

"In the secret of His presence how my soul delights to hide;
Oh! how precious are the lessons which I learn at Jesus' side!
Earthly cares can never vex me, neither trials lay me low,
For when Satan comes to tempt me, to the 'secret place' I go.

When my soul is faint and thirsty, 'neath the shadow of His wings
There is cool and pleasant shelter and refreshing crystal springs.
And my Saviour rests beside me as we hold communion sweet;
If I tried, I could not utter what He says when thus we meet.

Only this I know, I tell Him all my doubts, my griefs and fears.
Oh! how patiently He listens, and my drooping soul He cheers.
Do you think He ne'er reproves me? What a false friend He would be
If He never, never told me of the sins which He must see.

Would you like to know the sweetness of the secret of the Lord?
Go and hide beneath His shadow; this shall then be your reward;
And whene'er you leave the silence of that happy meeting place

You must mind and bear the image of the Master in your face."

* * * * *

08 -- "AND THE TWELVE GATES WERE TWELVE PEARLS" (Revelation 21:12).

When La Fayette last visited this country, the people gave him a royal reception. A fleet of vessels went out to meet him, the band played "Hail to the Chief," and the national music of France; and it is told that he was unmoved.

As he came ashore, land and water trembled with the power of artillery. Old soldiers saluted him as they shouted his welcome, and he was still unmoved. With waving banners and under triumphal arches, he was taken to Castle Garden, where most of the great men of the nation were gathered together to give him greeting; and he was still not moved. But when he had taken his seat in the great amphitheater, and when the curtain was lifted he saw before him a perfect representation of the place in France where he was born and brought up; and when he saw the old home so filled with the tender memories, the home where his father and mother had lived and died, it is said that the great man was touched, and bowing his face in his hands he wept like a child. If I could only draw aside the veil which separates the seen from the unseen, so that you could behold that city which hath foundations, there would be no need for me to preach, for in the very thought of Heaven you would be almost overwhelmed. I have read descriptions of cities both in ancient and modern times, but never such a description as this; adorned like a bride for her husband; a city in which there is neither sickness nor sorrow, death nor crying; a city of walls and gates; on the east three gates, on the west three gates, on the south three gates, on the north three gates; and the walls had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The angel that made the revelation had a golden rod in his hand with which he was measuring the city, and found that the length was equal to the breadth, and that the wall was 144 cubits; that the building of the wall was of jasper; that the city was pure gold, and that the twelve gates were twelve pearls. It is said that they were wide open by day -- there is no night there; and in that city there was no need of the sun, for the glory of the Lord did lighten it, and the Lamb was the light thereof.

It comes to me like an inspiration that one day I shall enter that city. Can you say it? Your children are going in, your parents are going in, your husband is going in, your wife is going in; are you going in? It is a great joy to know that the things that bring us the representations of Heaven are so substantial. Some people tell us that Heaven is a state, not a place. What then did Christ mean when he said, "I go to prepare a place for you," and what again when he said, "In my Father's house are many mansions"? What is the doctrine of the resurrection? Is it that only the spirits of men are raised? This is not our teaching. There must be some place for the resurrected body. When Christ went out with His apostles to Bethany and a cloud received Him out of their sight. He arose bodily from their presence. It is certain, absolutely certain, that Heaven is a place.

Perhaps some may question, at first, the meaning of the text; and yet I am very sure if we only had the mind of the Spirit, we would find in it much of beauty, sweetness and power.

When the army of Galerius sacked the camp and routed the Persians, one of the soldiers found a bag of shining leather filled with pearls. He preserved the bag because of its brightness, and threw away the jewels ignorant of their almost priceless value. In many cases, passages of Scripture are treated in the same way. There is something for us all in the fact that the twelve gates were twelve pearls.

What Is Heaven?

It is a place of over-powering brightness. Everything that ever came from thence tells us so. Chariots so bright that the only thing to which they could be likened was fire. Angels with faces shining so that men must veil their eyes before them. Moses and Elias so surrounded with glory that the three disciples were overcome with the vision on the mount of transfiguration. The walls are like a great jewel, the streets of pure gold, and every single gate a pearl. You know the brightness of one little gem as it sparkles on your finger; but O! the wonderful thought that every gate is a pearl; and the day will come when we may go sweeping through the gates if we will. God has done everything that He could do, and our entering in now rests upon ourselves. But the brightness of heaven, aside from the presence of Christ, is not due to the gates, nor to the walls, nor to the streets, but to the presence of those who have been redeemed.

I have been told that the deeper the water, the larger the pearl. Whether that be true or not, I can not tell; but I know that from the greatest depths God sometimes takes His brightest jewels. It is no cause for discouragement if you have been a great sinner. Paul was a persecutor, Bunyan a blasphemer, Newton a libertine, and yet they shine today as the jewels of Christ.

Geologists tell us that the diamond is only crystallized carbon, charcoal glorified. This Book tells us something better than that, that "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Heaven is a place of unutterable sweetness. Can you imagine the number of little children there? Can anyone describe the sweetness of a child's song? And when you remember that your own little one may be there! What wonderful singing it is as their lips are touched by the finger of Christ, and their hearts are thrilled with His presence.

"O, the joys that are there mortal eye hath not seen,
O, the songs they sing there with hosannas between,
O, the thrice blessed song of the Lamb and of Moses,
O, the white tents of peace where the rapt soul reposes,
O, the waters so still and the pastures so green,
There, there they sing songs with hosannas between!"

The boy who was blind makes the best expression of Heaven to me. The doctor had cut away the obstruction from his eyes, and the bandages placed there were removed one by one until after a little they had been all taken off. When he opened his eyes in silent wonder as if a new world had been opened to him, he beheld his mother, and yet he did not know that it was she. Finally he heard her familiar voice asking him, "My son, can you see?" He sprang into her arms, exclaiming, "O, mother, is this Heaven?" That is the best definition. Heaven is seeing eye

to eye. knowing even as we are known. If there is one word which better than another will describe Heaven to me, it is an explanation.

"What is Heaven?" I asked a little child,
'All joy'; and in her innocence she smiled.
I asked the aged, with her care oppressed,
All suffering o'er, 'Oh, Heaven at last is rest.'

I asked the artist who adored his art --
'Heaven is all beauty,' spoke his raptured heart.
I asked the poet with his soul of fire,
'Tis glory,' and he struck his lyre.

I asked the Christian waiting his release,
A halo 'round him, low he answered, 'Peace.'
So all may look with hopeful eyes above,
'Tis beauty, glory, joy, rest, peace and love."

A City Of Gates

There is something significant in the fact that Heaven is a city of gates. The idea must be that there is some special way to get in. We can not live just as we please and at the last enter Heaven; we might if it were not enclosed. The Bible tells us that we may come in from the north, the south, the east and west, but we are obliged to pass through the gates, and it is not always easy. "Straight is the gate and narrow is the way"; one might be liable to miss it. "Strive to enter in," says the Bible; so one must be very earnest. Christ said, "I am the way, the truth, the life"; "I am the door"; and again, "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." Some people think that God is so merciful that after awhile they may stand in His presence; but He is just as well as merciful, and He has provided the way by which every one must enter Heaven. It is through the gate. Reformation will not do, morality can not answer; it is giving up yourself to Him, putting your hand in His and letting Him lead you all the journey of life, until you pass through the gates. A child dying said to his father, "I wouldn't be afraid to go if mamma would go with me." "But," he said, "little one, she can't go." Then the child said, "I want you to go," and he said, "my darling, I can't go." Then when the child had prayed to Him who had promised to walk through the valley of the shadow, after a little while he said, "I am not afraid now, for Christ has said that He will be with me, and He will." Lift up your heads, oh, ye gates, lift them up, for the time is coming when with Jesus we shall pass through!

Gates Of Pearl

I am sure that there is some meaning in the fact that the gates are of pearl. Do you know the history of pearls? Humanly speaking, it is a history of suffering. When discovered, it is at the risk of the pearl-fisher's life. It is said that pearls are formed by the intrusion of some foreign substance between the mantle of the mollusk and its shell. This is a source of irritation, suffering and pain, and a substance is thrown around about that which is intruded to prevent suffering; and thus the pearl is formed. Do you begin to see the significance of the fact that the gates are of

pearl, and not of gold? There was a time when there was no entrance into Heaven for us; sin had closed it; man had grievously sinned, he had broken every law of God, and there was no hope for him at all. Then it was that the Babe was cradled in the manger, became a youth, grew to manhood, endured thirty-three years of suffering, culminating in the agony upon Calvary, when in the tremendous tension His heart broke. Then it was He died, the just for the unjust, the innocent for the guilty; then it was that He arose from the dead, went out unto Bethany, ascended into Heaven to swing wide open the gates. And thus it is they are open today; and one never nears of the gates of pearl but he must realize in some measure what salvation cost, not so much to you and to me, but to Him -- humiliation, sorrow, suffering, death; and do you realize that every one who refuses allegiance to Him is arrayed against Him, for He said, "You are either for me or against me, there is no middle ground"?

Twelve Gates

How full the Word of God is! In its teaching, beauty and sweetness come from it with every touch. It is a rock; you can not touch it but the water of life will come forth; it is a flower, you can not come near it without being blessed by its fragrance. There is something to me even in the number of Heaven's gates. The twelve gates were twelve pearls, three on every side, and the city lieth four square. Is this not an indication that God has made abundant provision for our entrance into the city above? It is man who has narrowed down the way. The Bible invitation is, "Whosoever will, let him come." The provision is abundant. No one can stand at the judgment and say anything but this, "Lord, I might have entered, but would not." Twelve gates, and if you are not in it, it is your fault alone. God has done all that He could do. The Trinity has been exhausted, almost, on a sinful world, and He will do no more; it is for us ourselves to choose to enter in, it is very easy to be saved.

In one of the schools of a great city, by the falling of a transom a cry of fire was started. The children were panic-stricken, and the teachers as well. In rushing from the building many were injured; some were killed. When it was found that the alarm was false, returning to her room, one of the teachers found sitting at her desk a young girl who had not stirred. When asked the reason for her bravery, she said, "My father is a fireman, and he told me if ever there was an alarm of fire in the building just to sit still where I was, and he would save me. My father is a fireman and he knows, and I just trusted him." That confidence in Jesus Christ would bring salvation.

Said a man in Glasgow to a distinguished evangelist, "I am very anxious to be saved; what must I do?" The evangelist quoted many passages of Scripture to him, among them John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him," and when he had gone this far the man stopped him, saying, "But I do believe." Then the evangelist quoted the sixth chapter of John and the forty-seventh verse, Christ's own words: "Verily, verily, I say unto you he that believeth on Me hath everlasting life." The man saw it in a moment and cried out rejoicing, "I have got it, I have got it." That kind of acceptance of God brings everlasting life. Twelve gates, and every gate a pearl, and every gate exactly alike, so after all there is only one way.

The Gates Are Open

I am so glad that the gates are open today. We read that they shall not be shut at all by day, and as there is no night there, the conclusion is that they are open constantly. They are open now. Some have been going in since we have been speaking; at every tick of the clock a soul speeds away. I wish that I might go as did Alexander Cruden, seventy years of age, giving to the world his concordance, dying in want because he had given so freely to others. Going into his room they found him kneeling, his face buried in the Bible, his white hair falling down upon the chair, his spirit gone, the very angels filling the room where he had been. I wish that I might go as did David Livingstone. They looked into his tent door and said one to another, "Keep silence, the great leader is in prayer," for he was on his knees. After a little while they came back, and he seemed to be still praying; then half an hour later again, and when they touched him they found that Livingstone was dead. The chariots of God had halted while he prayed, and Livingstone, entering in, was caught up into the skies. Oh, the joy of such an entrance into Heaven!

Dr. Pierre, returning to France from India after a long journey, said that his men when they came in sight of their native land were unfitted for duty. Some of them wistfully gazed upon the land they loved. Some of them shouted, some prayed, some fainted, and it is said that when they came near enough to recognize their friends on shore that every man left his post of duty, and it was necessary for help to come from off the land before the vessel could be anchored in the harbor. Oh! the joy of thus entering Heaven. Welcome from the gates, welcome from our friends long gone, welcome from every angel in the skies. The joy, the joy of one day sweeping through the gates!

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THE END