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CHRISTIAN LIVING IN A MODERN WORLD
By James B. Chapman

(Second Edition)

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by the same author:

Singing in the Shadows
Christ and the Bible
A Christian, What It Means to Be One
Your Life, Make the Most of It

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INTRODUCTION

A book like a sermon challenges the attention of the readers or hearers, not primarily because it is a book or a sermon, but because of the message it contains. The reader will discover that this is not just another book, it is a book with a message. The title of the book, "Christian Men in a Modern World," is a subject of vital interest. The author discusses great themes, pertinent themes, as throughout this book he applies the principles of the Christian life to living in this modern world. Just to think on some of the themes presented is of itself an inspiration. To note chapter headings, such as The Christian Perspective, Cheap Religion, An Appraisal of Life's Values, Faith the Overcoming Principle, The Spiritual Christian, Permanent Triumph of God's People, and Is God Fair? is assurance that the book is written to meet the deep needs of human life in days like these.

The author is a man of wide experience, a preacher of forty years, serving the kingdom of God in such offices as evangelist, pastor, editor, and church executive; traveling widely in his native land, and around the world in promoting the interests of the church and preaching the gospel. He has tasted many of life's joys and blessings, but he has also drunk deeply of its bitterness, its disappointments and its sorrows. Out of a rich experience of this kind, out of a heart which lives in fellowship with God, out of a mind sensitive to conditions of modern life, out of the life which is itself an example of the truth herein revealed, this book has come. We commend it to the reading public. Its message is true, inspirational and challenging. By reading it Christian people will know better how to live in this modern world.

D. Shelby Corlett

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1 THE CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Corinthians 4:17, 18).

Any object whatsoever must be described with respect to one's approach to it. A house, a mountain, a city or a man -- it matters not, the perspective of the observer enters into that which he describes. And this perspective is affected by the essential character of the observer, and by his interests in life. Looking at the same crowd of people, the politician sees so many votes to be directed, while the preacher sees so many souls to be saved.

In his apocalyptic vision, Revelation 4:6-11, John saw four "living creatures." One of the very unusual items of the description is that these holy intelligences were "full of eyes before and

behind," and "full of eyes within." They could see within and know their own hearts, and they could see the past and the future, and for all this, they were yet able to rejoice and sing praises. Knowledge of what they were, of what they had been, and of what their future occupation and destiny were to be did not dim their joy. They were happy even in the fullest light of truth. This suggests, as a parallel, if we are slow to accept identity, that the characteristic Christian attitude is that of optimism. God and truth and religion are not realities from which we need to be protected by illusions. They are blessed realities, and we are happier for knowing and receiving them.

It has sometimes been suggested that the Christian shuns examination of his claims, and that he looks upon scrutiny as sacrilege. This has given rise to the idea that religion cannot stand in the light of science, and that, after all, religion is but a superstition, the refuge of weak intellects and presumptuous minds.

It must be admitted that the first impulse is to shrink from the methods of those who would handle carelessly the elements which have brought peace and purity to our lives. Worldly minded people have no units with which to measure the reaches of faith, no balances in which to weigh love, and no concepts by which to appraise the scope of full Christian hope. It is as senseless to submit the Christian verities to the analysis of unbelieving, impenitent scholars as to trust the repairing of a wrist watch to the village blacksmith. Professor James, in "Varieties of Religious Experience," says, "Medical materialism finishes up Saint Paul by calling his vision on the road to Damascus a discharging of the occipital cortex, he being an epileptic. It snuffs out Saint Teresa as an hysteric, Saint Francis of Assisi as an hereditary degenerate. Medical materialism then thinks that the spiritual authority of all such personages is successfully undermined." It is by such ruthless and unscientific methods as these that critics of Christianity have earned for themselves the name of being unsparing foes of all spiritual life and reality, and they have prejudiced the world of faith against themselves. For such results we can but express regret for both the critics and the criticized: the critics because they have come to the task with a coarseness of technique that doomed their efforts to failure; the criticized because they have given the impression, if they have not actually been tormented with the presumption, that their premises will not survive the light.

We do well to remember the words of Horace Emory Warner, who says, "Scrutiny can change no fact. Analysis has no power over essence. Truths are the same in the shadows or in the sunlight. Realities are invulnerable and unchangeable to whatever processes subjected. The constituent elements of the life we call Christian are substantial, real, unalterable. They are the eternal verities of the life begotten of God in the soul. No possible handling can render them less real, or change their essential nature. The dread of their scrutiny is a confession either of our inability to demonstrate their substantial nature, or of our imperfect faith in their indestructible reality. All such dread is without adequate reason and actually groundless."

In the days of the beginnings of our holy faith much was due men like Thomas and Peter -- the one would not believe the Lord was resurrected until the fullest evidence was examined, and the other was not content to stoop down and look into the empty tomb, but himself descended to make minute examination of the tokens that the Lord had gone away in the deliberation becoming one resurrected into the glorified life. Credit also goes to Paul because he would not give way to the haste of a new ecstasy, but went away into the desert of Arabia and spent three years thinking through his new faith in terms of its predecessor -- the Jewish faith. And by such a slow and

painful process he found a construction satisfying to himself and to the generations that should follow him. It is folly now to assume that these fundamental processes of proof and conclusion have not been examined. The Christian can no more be expected to allow that the essentials of his faith are open to question than the materialist can allow that the existence of things occupying space, possessing weight, measure and chemical composition has yet to be proved.

Credulity and skepticism are alike unscientific. The one is ready to believe when as yet the evidence is insufficient, the other persists in doubt even when the proof is given. The one builds its house on the sand, and the other refuses to build at all because it can find no foundation of sufficient strength. The true method is between these two, and is indicated by the apostolic injunction to "Prove all things and hold fast that which is good." He who has something to conceal seeks to live in the shadow. Truth triumphs in the open. Proscribed inquiry is the resort of tricksters. "Come, now, let us reason together, saith the Lord."

The word "Gospel" is used to describe that body of truth maintained as essential by evangelical people, and its application to other systems is a misappropriation. It is only the evangelical Christian who can say, "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." The word "theology" is closely related to theory, and in ordinary thinking is often placed in contrast with practical or factual. This does not mean that theories may not be true, but it does mean they are not essentially true, and that they require verification; but in some of its phases theology reaches out into spheres where verification is at the present time impossible.

It is not within the scope of our present intention to go clear back to the philosophical question of existence itself. We are all aware that we exist, and that we are responsible creatures, that we possess moral judgment, and are capable of both good and evil, and the subjects of both guilt and peace. We are able to classify ourselves by standards of sincerity, purity, moral and spiritual soundness. Every man's conscience either condemns or commends him. These psycho-moral facts are universal in the experiences of men, and require only to be stated to be admitted.

The influence of heredity and early environment is outside the limits of our present thought, although there is no thought of denying their existence or minifying their force. We do not even stop to consider the divine means by which a sense of "oughtness" is brought home to every man, nor the means by which the transgressor is made aware of guilt for sins committed.

But the Christian experience proper begins with that cataclysm in the midst of which the penitent believer is made conscious that his sins are pardoned, and he for the first time realizes peace within. We may not be able to follow the divine method in pardon, adoption, regeneration, and the later processes of cleansing from sin and the infilling of the Holy Spirit, but when the facts are involved in the consciousness of the individual there is an instance of using the "eyes within" which encourages praise, as it did with those holy intelligences which John saw up near the throne of God. The Christian experience is a definite reality, and Christian testimony is, and always has been, the most effective kind of preaching.

Some would define the Christian light as no more than twilight, and would define the Christian experience in terms that are hazy and nebulous. They would make the Christian attitude

an everlasting groping after the unattained and unattainable. Against such useless speculations we would place that statement of Henry Drummond, "There are definite conditions to be fulfilled for any spiritual attainment; these conditions may be known, and when fulfilled you may count on results."

To the genuine Christian God is a conscious as well as a speculative reality. The Christian experience, summed up as to its essence, as "righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost," is a conscious fact beyond the sphere of controversy, and the Christian's pathway is luminous and vital. This does not do away with mystery, but it does affirm the facts which to deny is to make the Christian religion a merely human thing to which there is no certain divine response, and in reality there is no middle ground between the fact of Christian experience and unlimited agnosticism.

We would not make a play of words, but there is genuine content in the testimony of Job, "I know my redeemer liveth," in the assertion of Paul, "I know whom I have believed," and in the observation of John, "We know we have passed from death unto life." To be inwardly sure that God lives, that we are in the right relationship to Him, and in proper state before Him is to ascend to an eminence from which we can gain a dependable perspective of all things besides. Right perspective is obtained by right emphasis -- by the true appraisal of things eternal, and not from any conscious effort to minify things of lesser importance. Knowledge of God is the key to all knowledge. Supreme love to God is the purifier of all loves besides. Faith in God is father to hope for the ultimate outcome of all good, and the ultimate defeat of all evil. There is no King but Christ, and there is no vital kingdom except that which has its spiritual throne in our own hearts.

But the "living creatures" had eyes for seeing the past. Appraising the past only in the light of human accomplishments, men have rightly concluded that "history is bunk," for its course is filled with bickerings, and see-sawing, and currents that as often run counterwise or backward as forward. The contemporaries have slain the prophets, while the children have risen up to garnish their tombs. That which one generation has revered, the next has neglected and destroyed. In broader cycles, that which one generation or age constructs with much labor and pain, a succeeding age levels with ease and pleasure, until the cry goes up, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit."

But the Christian begins with the biblical intimation that there is a divine plan which persists through it all. God made man with the intention that after he had served out his week of probation he should be transported to heaven and live in everlasting fellowship and communion with his Creator, and this purpose has persisted through the rising and falling of kings and emperors, and the ups and downs of a thousand generations. It is only the shallow purposes of men that have been abandoned. God's purpose, like the scarlet thread which signifies redemption, is ever present, and a better perspective discovers it.

Sin marred the beauty of Eden, but God provided a Redeemer and continued the race. Universal wickedness necessitated the flood, but God gave plans for the building of an ark, and the floods that destroyed the old world lifted the ark to the top of Mt. Ararat and preserved the beginnings of a new probation. Idolatry inundated the post-deluvian world, but God called out Abraham. Pharaoh persecuted the people of God, but God prepared Moses, and the very palace walls of the king gave protection to God's leader during the days of his early education. The

disobedient Israelites died in the desert, but their children entered the promised land. Moses died on Nebo, but God prepared Joshua to lead the people on. Disobedience brought judgments that scattered the people of God among the nations near and far, and made their name a byword and a derision, but God sent His Son to be the world's Redeemer. Often the "faith once delivered unto the saints" has been encrusted with heresy during the centuries that followed the birth of the Babe of Bethlehem, but God has found His Luther, Calvin, Knox and Wesley. Empire has followed its westward trend, but God's purpose in the redemption of the race has brooked every change and found expression in the new environment, and amidst the new restrictions has still worked on.

God has not always fought on the side with the heaviest battalions. Wars have been won and lost by the interference of seeming trivialities. At times it has seemed that the better cause was defeated, and that the wicked bore away the laurels. There has been mystery in the divine permissions. Peter He delivered from prison, but the wicked king cut off the head of the saintly James with the sword. Paul the persecutor was enabled to live through so many scourgings and stonings that his autobiography sounds like the diary of a charmed spirit, but Stephen lost his life at the hands of his very first persecutors. No earthly prophet can take the dealings of God in the past and tell one now by inference whether under certain conditions he shall live or die, for the record shows a woeful want of uniformity. But out of it all we have learned that the blood of the martyrs is often the seed of the Church, and that there is no ultimate defeat to the cause of God. That which warrants the past and makes it consistent with the government of a great and holy God is the fact that His ways are justified in the sphere of the moral and spiritual and eternal, and not in the sphere of the temporal and the passing. Often God may stand in the shadows while men and nations hold the limelight, but He stands nevertheless, and the Christian is sure that "Known unto God are all his works from the foundation of the world." And the devious path by which men and nations have come thus far is yet beset of God, and God is the most certain and potent fact in the records of the past. That is why, like the "living creatures" that John saw, the Christian can look at the past and yet rejoice and sing praise. To others it is a trackless wilderness of chaos and confusion. But to the Christian it is an incident of the divine method and purpose, and he therein rejoices, yea, and will rejoice.

And now, finally, we come to the "eyes before." Surely we are justified in doing as every generation before us has done; that is, suggest that we are at the crossroads of human history and about to witness something different from anything the world has yet seen. I am writing these lines on the night of June 7, 1940. Every radio broadcast brings ominous news from the battle front in France where dictatorship and democracy are measuring arms in the effort to determine which is to live; since it has been decided on both sides that one or the other must die. In our own land there is uncertainty and uneasiness. Economics, industry, politics, public morality, and the spiritual program of the churches are all alike suffering under the feeling that a crisis has come, and that tomorrow things will be either much better or very much worse. And as concerning these things close at hand, the Christian has no particular advantage over others, for his faith does not require that all shall prosper and come out well according to the plans of men and nations. Rather there is place in the Christian's perspective for dearth, darkness, famine and apparent failure.

And then there is the personal outlook. Three months and twenty days ago the treasure of my own life walked on into the shadows and left me lonely and bereaved, but I do not sorrow as do those who have no hope. She went into the presence of the King whom she had served faithfully

every day I knew her -- more than thirty-seven years. And speaking now as a Christian, I can say the future is more inviting now than ever before. I am glad to have lived, but I ask only to live on as He wills, for the future holds no fears, but it holds very many blessed anticipations. I can look before and, like the "living creatures" that John saw, still rejoice and give praise. Others think the appearing of the stars indicate the coming of the night, but the Christian sees them as morning stars announcing the dawning of a cloudless day. Others interpret physical dissolution as an approaching calamity, but the Christian accounts it but an indication that it is about time for him to move out into his permanent dwelling. Others think the bending back a testimonial to the bearing of heavy loads. But the Christian reads in it but an indication that he is soon to stand in the presence of the King, and his form is taking on the order of obeisance in advance. Others see in gray hair the frosts of many winters. But the Christian sees here the appearing of a color agreeable to the crown of life which is shortly to be placed upon his forehead. Others account the failing eyesight a calamity, but the Christian finds here an increasing ability to see the Land that is afar off, and to behold the King in His beauty -- the eyes are losing interest here that they may adapt themselves to the fuller light that soon shall meet their enraptured gaze. "Jerusalem, my happy home, oh, how I long for thee!" The future is as bright as the promises of God, and "we know that if this earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

And as to the world in general and the universe all about, these are all portions of God's house. Usurpers have contended, but they shall finally be cast out. God shall triumph. Christ shall reign eternally. The purified earth shall be a permanent part of God's boundless empire. Wicked nations shall be cast out. Conniving men and heartless tyrants shall end their days. The knowledge of the Lord shall yet cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Peace and harmony shall be universal.

Tomorrow, the immediate tomorrow, what of it? As to its material prospects, the Christian does not presume to say. It may be better or it may be worse. But this much is sure: it is a day of God's appointment, and it is fraught with unmeasured opportunities for being good and doing good. Shall the times be fair? Then in thankfulness we shall serve Him and seek to bring others to do the same. Shall the times be dark? Then men will need the steadying influence of twice-born men, and it may be they will appreciate their lives and testimonies. This is a good time to be alive. The fact that we are alive proves that it is a good time, for our times are in His hands. God reigns, let all the world know it. He reigns, even though all do not bow willingly before Him. He rules where He is allowed to rule, and in other places He overrules.

What of the Christian's perspective? Within is peace. Behind are the evidences of His will in the process being worked out. Before is glorious personal immortality, and the promise of a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. Let us, then, with the "living creatures" which John saw in heaven, still rejoice and sing praises.

* * * * *

Neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver (2 Samuel 24:24).

So set are the hearts of men on bargains that they will go a long way, and pay out of time and money in travel more than the article would cost at the store, in order to get something for nothing. But most men are really suspicious about an exchange which offers things absolutely free, so the sale which proposes something of quality for a price much lower than legitimate merchants ask catches a larger group than the gratis appeal.

I still recall with a tinge of disappointment a boyhood experience at the Old Settler's picnic. Soon after arriving on the ground I met my school friend Arthur, and upon passing remarks we found that neither of us had any money, not even so much as a nickel or a penny. To us the picnic meant red lemonade, peanuts and striped stick candy. But today all these must be passed, since there was no money between us. I was immediately discouraged and suggested that we leave and go to the creek fishing or otherwise spend the day in some fashion that would not demand any fee. But Arthur was not so ready to give up. He observed that the stand men had well filled tubs of red lemonade -- more, he was sure than they would be able to sell at the price of five cents a glass. He prophesied that later the price would come down to two glasses for five cents. Then three for five. All you can drink for a nickel. And then with that magnificent hope of which only a boy is capable, he suggested that at closing time at night there would be some left, and that rather than pour it out, the venders would invite the Stragglers to come up and drink it without charge. So there in the very beginning of a hot afternoon, already thirsty, we took up the prospect of waiting until dark or later for the despairing merchants to give away the remnants of their drink. Now and then when we would drift away from the vicinity of the lemonade stands, the venders would put up a chorus of appeals to the crowds, then one or the other of us would imagine they had commenced to give it away and we would leave our place of interest with great haste that we might be in line for that final bargain in which we hoped to get something for nothing.

But most of us have lived long enough to know that the calamity that makes goods worthless to their owners is likely to make them worthless to us also, and we have also learned that in the markets of this world quality goods usually cost more money. And we have found that an article that bears but a cheap price may be more expensive in the long run, and that some goods cause us to remember the quality after we have forgotten the price. We therefore turn from the venders who offer bargains and do our trading with the established merchants who will be there still when we get ready to buy the second time. Good goods cost more money, but they are worth the difference -- that is our mature judgment concerning the wares of this world.

In the moral and spiritual realm prices go up immediately until the best things are not for sale at any price. Take honor and veracity and purity: the very suggestion of exchanging one of these for money or advantage is obnoxious in the extreme. Set over against every earthly promise, the right thinking person prefers to be right and trustworthy and clean than to have everything else besides.

We do not always jump from the low plane to the high as quickly and easily as we have done in these paragraphs. Many, in spite of the Master's warning, would serve God and yet not

entirely forsake Mammon. They would first bury their father before following the Master. They would go home and make it right with those that are at their house before they would launch out in the Christian way. They would follow Christ and yet not forsake all.

The population of the world cannot be casually divided into the bad and the good. There are many who do not readily classify on either side. Things are not all either black or white. Some of them are gray, and it is not easy to place them immediately. If every man were either out and out for the world or else wholly devoted to God, the problem would be simple. Or, to come down to our own personal experience, if we ourselves were always free from mixed motives and from conduct that borders on the forbidden, we could rest much easier about ourselves and our final disposition.

Neither is it fair to charge everyone with hypocrisy who falls short of the best in religion. That is, some are sincere in a measure who are not completely committed to the way of God. Of such it may be said that they hope to reap the rewards of righteousness without accepting all of the adjustments involved in righteousness. In other words, they are spiritual bargain hunters and are out to get quality at a reduced price.

Under a moral government like the one of which we are subjects, it is sometimes possible to live for a time as spiritual "deadbeats," that is, to enjoy better conditions than our own merit would warrant. I think no one who is fair-minded will question that whatever greatness our country possesses it owes to the piety and religious sincerity of our fathers. History gives invariable testimony that wherever people immigrate to a new land just in order to better their economical status their coming makes no contribution to the moral and spiritual good of their new home. It was like this with the Spanish gold hunters of the early American colonial period. It was like this with many of the English settlers who came to Virginia. But whenever people come for moral and spiritual reasons they do make a contribution to the well being of their chosen land. It was like this with the Pilgrim fathers, and with the many who came to America to set up family altars, to establish public worship and to found schools in which the Bible was the principal textbook. The foundations of our nation's greatness were laid by these early Christians, and the real pioneers were not the statesmen and the soldiers, but the ministers and the humble laymen who gave unstintingly to make our land a Christian land. But now the children and the children's children have come along to enjoy the fruits of this superior civilization, but to use up their patrimony like so many parasites. Children of the founders allow the churches to close for want of support and attendance, and they themselves spend the Sabbath on the golf courses and in indulgence in holiday diversions. They want a safe place for their children, but they themselves sit about in indolence while designing men foist liquor and gambling and the salacious motion pictures upon the land. These would not think of doing anything active for the corrupting of our people, but, on the other hand, they are indolent citizens who are content to warm around the fires their fathers built, and make no contribution of even a bundle of sticks to the fuel supply. These may be said to have cheap patriotism. And any claim they may make of willingness to die for their country is not sufficient compensation, for we all are obligated to help make our country a place that is worth dying for. In fact, it requires a better type of patriotism to sustain one in a daily and continuous right course of living than it does to enable one to die dramatically in a time of public excitement.

But we are thinking of religion in its more formal and personal sense. Jeroboam, you know, made religion easy for Israel by setting up two places of worship, one in the north and one in the south, so that no one would have far to go, and so no one would need to go to Jerusalem at all. But this concession to ease and convenience marked the drift of a people and the downfall of a nation. It was not long until men substituted household gods for even the shrines at Dan and Bethel, and set up common people for priests instead of the chosen sons of Levi, and the whole land forgot Jehovah. They started with cheap religion and ended with false religion.

In the days of Jeremiah the priests in Judah, feeling sorry for the people, commenced to say, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace," and "healed the affliction of the daughter of my people slightly," and paved the way for drift and corruption and destruction.

But why hark back to antiquity? A great denomination in America, during a given decade, had an unusual number of accessions to its membership, but when the net results were tabulated it was discovered that the losses had been greater than the gains. The principal editor of the denomination, commenting upon the matter, suggested that the disappointing results were accounted for by the fact that church joining had been made too easy. In the desire to save souls and count accessions ministers had made religion so easy that those accepting it did not take it seriously and drifted out faster than they could be brought in.

General William Booth of the Salvation Army, himself a mighty crusader and apostle to the neglected, looked forward with fear to the time when men would "have Christianity without Christ, religion without the new birth and profession without possession." He feared they would come to take church joining for conversion, baptism for regeneration and appearance for reality. John Wesley was quite certain there would never be a time when there would not be a people called Methodists, but he feared lest they might be overcome with success, and give way to popularity, and cease to be a virile and evangelistic people who pressed home upon themselves and those that heard them the demands of New Testament standards of experience and life.

But why go even to our contemporaries? Our first duty of search is with ourselves. As the living conditions become more pleasant, men have the tendency to become soft and flabby. So, in a sense, we are the vulnerable generation ourselves. It used to be noted that when the early Christians came toward the end of a period of persecution it would be a rare thing that a Christian should recant to save himself from the lion's den or the stake. But when there had been a long respite, and a new persecution began, recantation was common. Life became sweet when the days were pleasant, and even Christians clung to it too tenaciously. This is a day of ease with us. Physical plenty is matched with toleration, and if we could just remove fear of death and of future judgment, we would be in the millennium now. But "these are times that try men's souls." These are times that make men soft. These are the time that make men less than men. Our day is a good day for pretense and profession, but if we are genuine, we must be so by our own will -- the times do little to help in that direction.

Araunah would make it easy for King David. Here is the level threshingfloor which the king might use as an altar. Here are the threshing instruments which will do for wood. Here are the oxen for the sacrifice, and all are offered to David without charge. But David rejected the idea of cheap religion, and paid the full price for all he used. He would not offer to God things that cost

him nothing. This was the proper attitude for a rich king. A poor man might take whatever he or his friends possessed and God would accept it. But when one was able to pay God could not be pleased with one who would spare himself.

It is not far different in the markets of God from what it is in the markets of this world. In both we usually get just about what we pay for. In the markets of God men come to the altar with proud, impenitent, unforgiving hearts and then go away with a formal, powerless, unsatisfying religious experience. They bring but a partial sacrifice and arise with a limited blessing. They withhold part of the price and go away with but a substitute. It is cheaper to whitewash than to wash white. It is cheaper to just profess over a crooked past than to make restitution and confession and find the evidences of mercy with the Lord. It is cheaper to join the church than to humble the heart before the Lord and men. Men would like to have "old-time religion," but old-time prices are dear. They would like to have satisfactory evidences that God is their Father, but that costs in heartbreaks and tears. Christians would like to be filled with the Holy Spirit, but one cannot be filled with the Spirit until he gets ready to be emptied of selfishness and pride. It is not that men prefer the mild, meaningless, "take it by faith" kind of religion that is the bane of the times, but that kind is cheaper than the kind that satisfies the heart and gives peace and rest in life and in death, so men take the cheap kind at the lower price.

And it is cheaper to be just a nominal church member than to be an out and out Christian. The nominal church member can go to church just intermittently -- regularly on Easter Sunday -- and yet be consistent, for he does not claim to be very good. He can leave out prayer meeting from his worship program and Sunday school from his service schedule, and yet have some kind of hope. He can give of his money meagerly and just when he feels like it, and he can leave foreign missions out of his list of responsibilities. Of course a church member like this will not get much comfort out of this religion, but since he does not invest much in it he may still think he has a bargain. The minister cannot depend upon members like this for any service that is difficult, but of course such members do not exact much from the church and the minister. It is just a cheap religion all the way around. The member can supplement his church fellowship with his club and lodge and he can salve his conscience by contributing to the Community Chest. He can major on being kind to his family and offering his children the "best opportunities." Of course his religion will break down in a crisis, but if he can still remember then that he did not pay much for it, perhaps he will at least realize some compensation, for he will even then be sure that the best goods cost more money on the markets of God.

But lest we should seem to say that one can make his choice between the real and the formal and not be much worse off, seeing there was a difference in the price.. we must make a summary that is unequivocal. Formal religion does have secondary values. It is pretty much the social thing for one to have his church, just as he has his lodge and his club. And even the formal acknowledgment of interest in the high and holy brings some personal and social reward. Even at a man's funeral it adds much to the propriety of the occasion if the minister can tell that the deceased was a church member. We do not disparage any of these values. Rather we let them stand for their fullest claim. But, personally, why have any religion at all? My answer is that I want religion to do everything -- for me that religion is supposed to do. I want it to bring me unmistakable evidence of pardon for past sins and of present acceptance with God. I want it to bring into my heart the consciousness of moral purity and holy estate before the Lord. I want it to bring me assurance and

comfort in life and in death. I want it to furnish me a sure anchor of hope by means of which I may anticipate the joys of heaven, and which will be strong enough to enable me to depend upon it when my loved ones pass on out of my sight and when I come myself to walk out into the shadows. And such a religion as this must be unmistakably real. For such purpose mere camouflage is worthless. To serve such ends religion must be one hundred per cent genuine. And such a religion is as different from the cheap kind as substance is different from shadow. The best of the cheap kind is but an imitation composed entirely of human elements. But this real kind has the best of the human elements plus the divine elements, which are themselves the factors that differentiate Christianity from pagan religions. Christianity is better than the others just because it is "the power of God unto salvation," while the others are but the forces of insufficient man directed in religious channels. Nothing in all the world pays such poor personal dividends as cheap religion. The homely man may pass for comely by reason of the assistance of the tailor and the beauty expert. And if he passes as comely, that is about all there is to it, for physical beauty is on the surface. The "four-flusher" may get the honor which would come to him if he were actually rich. And that is about all there is to it; for men will cease to honor the rich some time anyway. The pretender may pass as a scholar, if he but learns to hold his tongue, and he may thus steal the homage intended for the wise. But unreal religion fails in the major purpose. It fails to bring inner peace and assurance. It fails to give the anchoring hope of eternal life. It fails to bring communion and fellowship with God. It breaks down just at the time when one has nothing else upon which to depend.

And so, as for me, I come now to join with David in rejecting a cheap religion. I want quality, and I know quality demands the highest price. But I still want quality, and I want it so much that I will pay the price. I know the price cannot be something I do not have -- that would be a travesty on the justice and mercy of God. I know that what I have and all I have must be enough, and so I come asking for a religion so real and strong that I can safely hang all my hopes upon it in time and for eternity. And to have such a religion I bring my all.

O God, our heavenly Father, save us all from both the fear and the love of men, and give us grace to love Thee with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. We pray for the fullness of Thy blessing, and in return therefor we offer Thee our all. We pledge to Thee our fullest price that we may claim at Thy hand the fullness of Thy grace. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

* * * * *

3

AN APPRAISAL OF LIFE'S VALUES

For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Mark 8:36, 37).

The founders of constitutional government took their cue from universal human experience when they defined fundamental rights to consist of life, property and the pursuit of happiness; for it is impossible for anyone to get away from his own inner sense that he is an entity, a person, and that things have a relation to him in the sense of ownership, profit, utility and their opposites.

Stating the case as it is for the present world, we know that a man must first have life before he can have property or have anything in addition to life. That is why a worldly wise Satan in the days of Job said, "All that a man hath he will give for his life." Although Satan is the author, yet these words are true within limits. They are not true to the wide scope to which Satan sought to apply them, indicating that honor and integrity too must go if they stand in the way when a man would save his life. But within the limits of earthly good, life is first, and a man would be fooling who would give his life for property, position or passing worldly honor; for these things can be of no profit to him if in gaining them he loses his life.

Then it should not be difficult for us to follow on to the conclusion of the Master, that if, when we come to the end of life, we have not saved our souls, there can be no profit in the accumulations we have made otherwise. And just as a man is worldly wise who would give all his material possessions to save his life, so a man is "other-worldly wise" who gives up anything and everything demanded that he may save his soul for eternity.

We state these two principles in the beginning that we need not revert to them frequently hereafter. Life for the body and eternal salvation for the soul are at the basis of all earthly and heavenly gains. Let us acknowledge these fundamental values and make them into a foundation upon which to build. Let us place them out in a class by themselves that we may not become confused when other comparisons are made. No earthly good is in a class with life itself, and no eternal gain is in a class with salvation. There can be no gain on earth unless a man is alive and here to claim it, and there can be no reward in heaven unless a man is saved and there to enjoy it.

But as we come to the consideration of values in the classes or ranks which fall somewhat below life and salvation, we find it convenient to approach from just two angles. We may appraise life's values in terms of soundness and in terms of dimension.

I. In Terms of Soundness

That word sound is one of the big little words of our language. It applies to almost everything. It means free from flaw or defect or decay; undamaged, unimpaired. Applied to the body it means healthy and robust. Applied to the mind it means sane and well balanced. Applied to finances it means solvent. Applied to judgment it means dependable for wisdom. Applied to doctrine it means orthodox, historically acceptable. Applied to legal matters it means valid. Applied to an act of any kind it means thorough. And it is an exceedingly difficult word to corrupt into any secondary or reversed meaning.

Let us think of soundness as applied to the body, and as implying good health. Both justice and mercy compel us to say that health and soundness of the body are not the heritage of all, and those who live well in spite of the handicap of physical weakness and ill health testify to a wealth of spirit that is a full compensation for their physical lack.

But health is a duty for all to whom it is available, and any dissipation that endangers health is sinful. We know that moral evil cannot attach directly to anything material; so when we say that alcohol is an evil, we mean that it is poison to the human body. All the evils that come out of it are chargeable in the end to just the one thing, and that is that alcohol is a poison and is

injurious to the human body. The same may be said of the use of tobacco. Tobacco is expensive, but this consideration alone could scarcely condemn it. The use of tobacco is a filthy habit. But even at that, it could be tolerated if it were a food or even if it were a harmless palliator. But it is a poison and its use is injurious to the human body, therefore the whole tobacco business, like the liquor business, is illegitimate.

The foundation for health and longevity is said to be laid before one reaches the age of twenty. That is what makes the matter pathetic, for there are few who can be stirred to concern about health and long life at such an early age. Later, when health is a boon, and long life a prize, it is too late to do much about it.

The scriptural putting of the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit gives ground for the highest motives in taking care of the heritage of health which may have been our portion, and this conception puts eating and drinking and exercise and work and everything that has to do with the building or destroying of the body on high moral grounds. Health is partly a heritage and partly a duty. But in any case, health is a good thing. Let us not underestimate its worth or neglect its demands.

Then there is soundness as applied to the intellect. There are some who are over-credulous and accept statements without demanding evidence. Then there are some who hold that nothing can be really proved, and that skepticism and agnosticism are the attitude of intelligence. But, as is usually the case, the golden mean lies between these extremes, and the scientific mind as ready to believe as to doubt, and asks only for sufficient evidence to be convinced.

After Lincoln started his practice as a lawyer he came to the conclusion that he was not familiar with the laws of evidence, and that he did not really know when he had proved anything. He therefore dropped out of active practice for a year and gave himself to the study of geometry that he might find out when he had proved anything. He wanted to be sure that he himself knew when he had made a point in the courts.

There are those who would cast away all the conclusions of the past and start all over in the pursuit of knowledge. But this is intellectual egotism. Time tested truths are valid, and are the basis upon which progress depends. This is true in science, in philosophy, in morality and in religion. And those who are so intellectually flighty that they make a heap of all that is accepted by men and try to build a temple of knowledge on bare ground are too presumptuous to be either sound or useful. It is all right to examine the foundations, but it is not necessary to wreck the superstructure. And whatever is true will stand for honest scrutiny and will come out in better evidence than it went in. Unreasoning skepticism and unfounded faith are alike untenable, and the man of sound mind will not hastily embrace either.

Agnosticism is untenable in an intelligible universe. Just as light is involved in the existence of the eye, so knowledge is involved in the existence of the intellect. And one cannot be classed as of sound mind who has come to the conclusion that truth does not exist or cannot be found. But if it exists and can be found, then the sound mind sets off in pursuit and will not be embarrassed to confess its find if once it truly overtakes its object.

And, finally, soundness applies to moral character. Much of the bias of judgment is accounted for by warped affections. To love well is to think straight. To be defiled is to color all we see. "To the pure all things are pure." Those who would define all goodness as mere adjustment of the will have overlooked the fact that while we do business in our heads, we live in our hearts. We do not do what we know we should, we do what we desire to do, therefore sound moral character requires the purifying of the affections as well as the enlightening of the intellect and the correction of the will.

Bishop Quayle used to tell of a friend of his who worked at an observatory on the top of a hill. When work time came this man would climb the hill, enter the observatory and lock the door behind him, that he might work undisturbed. All through the hours of his assignment the man would study the heavens above him and make notes on his observations and do the work he was expected to do. But when his work time was finished he would come out of the observatory, walk down the hill and turn to a little five-room cottage on a side street where he lived with his wife and little ones. From this experience Bishop Quayle drew an analogy. He said we are all somewhat like that. We go out to work in our heads and with our hands, but we come home to live in our hearts.

There is no power within the human realm by which our love can be purified, but this is the province of divine grace. There is promise of a fiery baptism with the Holy Spirit, and fire is the element which purifies. There is a purifying of the affections that will bring us to love the good and hate the evil, and this state is essential to sound moral character.

In this country we believe in the separation of the church and state, but that does not mean we are atheists. It means rather that we are challenged to be sincere, clean and real. It means that we discount the formal and question the effectiveness of force. We know that if men are good they must be good in fact. We know that neither fear nor hope of gain can father genuine morality. One must be good in fact. We must be sound morally. And let us not suppose that our democracy can exist without morality, or that true morality can exist without religion. A state composed of citizens who are morally sound will be an enduring state. But a state founded upon atheism, moral looseness and practical godlessness will collapse.

II. In Terms of Dimension

Volume must have three dimensions: length, breadth and thickness. And life has volume. Every life has some length, some breadth, and some thickness, and the product of these three is the measure of life.

The full life involves childhood, youth, maturity, old age, and in the ideal life all these periods are experienced. Our day is not entirely of our own making, but nevertheless, we should plan to live long. If in the province of God our day is shortened, that is not our responsibility. But we should plan to live long. There are adaptations to every age, so that one can do things at one period of his life -- useful things -- which are not possible to him at some other period. It is indeed a poor life that involves youth as an essential. If the calling is such that only a youth can perform it, then the youth should reject it. If the joy of living ends when the bloom of youth falls, then the joy was not a fruit, for the fruit follows the falling of the bloom.

But let us not forget that a straight line, be it drawn ever so far, cannot encompass volume. It may be that it is just our records that are at fault, but it seems that Methuselah did little else than to live a long time. There is nothing to indicate that he lived fully while he was at it. It may be he just centered his interest on longevity and gave little thought to breadth and thickness. And he is not alone. All of us have known people whose lives were little more than one long, monotonous line. They scored one good point, but one point is not enough.

The volume of life depends largely upon its breadth. We should plan to live widely. Even better still, we should live widely. Faith and righteousness should be the only limiting factors. That breadth which would junk faith and disregard righteousness in order to know to the full all the possibilities of life is yet more limited than it thinks, for one cannot know the blessed provinces of faith and righteousness if he lives in the township of doubt and sin.

But we should avoid provincialism both in knowledge and in sympathy. I know the tendency in modern education is toward early specialization and continued concentration. One has said that the modern student is called upon to "learn more and more about less and less." And this may be necessary, since the body of human knowledge is now so great as to be entirely beyond the capacity of any individual. And yet we should not give away entirely to the trend of the times. The whole scope of knowledge is our rightful inheritance, and even the shackles of specialization will give a little if we pull at them hard enough and constantly enough.

But as mentioned before, we live in our hearts more than in our heads anyway. And we can be as broad as our sympathies. Caste is the curse of more lands than India. Right in our own lives we have a tendency to shut ourselves in and neither know nor care how others fare. Dickens' Scrooge in the Christmas story is typical of many who confine their sympathies to their own selfish concerns. Knowledge makes us a part of everything, sympathy makes us a part of everybody, and the limits in both cases are of our own setting.

A famous man boasted that he never met a man he did not like. Perhaps he was a little more fortunate in his acquaintances than some of us. But I think we can all be so full of sympathy that we can at least say we never meet anyone who does not interest us. I often see people whose choices seem to me to be very unwise, and whose manner of life is entirely different from my own. But even these people interest me. I want to know why they choose as they do. I want to know from what unfortunate past their unfortunate present sprang. I want to know by what means they are convinced that their course is the wise one. I want to know what their plans for the future are. And even when I seem utterly unable to contribute anything of value to such strange acquaintances, I find they contribute something to me and I live more for having met them.

Eight months ago my wife, my companion for thirty-seven years, went on into "the more excellent glory." This deepest sorrow of life has nevertheless broadened my sympathy. Just today I examined all the death notices in the morning paper, and compared the age of each deceased one with that of my beloved. Many of them were younger than she was. Some of them left minor children. Some of them died in tragic accidents. My sympathies went out and I felt a community of interests with the bereaved. My dread has become my enlargement. I know I can never be as indifferent toward the sorrows and bereavements, even of strangers, as I have been in the past. I do not boast, as some have boasted to me in my grief, "I know how to sympathize with you," for I have

found that everyone's sorrow has its own sharp edge, and that there are no duplicates in the repertory of grief. But even learning this has made me broader.

And there remains yet the thickness -- the depth and height of life. At the Old Kentucky Home in Bardstown, I asked the guide where the well finished brick came from which composed the walls of the old mansion built there when Abraham Lincoln was a babe in a backwoods cabin not more than forty miles away. He said the bricks came from England. Answering my insistent inquiries, the old guide went on to say that these bricks were made in England by expert brickmakers, and that the brickmakers had an arrangement with the shipmasters by which a good supply of bricks were kept stored on the wharves in England. Ships from those shores brought manufactured goods. Those going from these shores took raw material. A cargo of manufactured goods was much lighter than one of raw materials, but the ships, sailing ships, they were, had to have heavy cargo in the holds for ballast, so the shipmasters filled their holds with the English brick, and higher up they placed their paying cargo. They brought the bricks to this side, and here unloaded them to make room for white oak and walnut logs, and other heavy materials which paid tariff, on the return trip. The bricks on this side of the ocean still belonged to the brickmakers in England, but as they had been transported across the Atlantic without charge, the arrangement just served to widen the field for the distribution of brick, and the ships could travel faster with the bricks in the hold, for this low-slung weight enabled the sailors to enlarge the sails and stand up against more wind.

We have all learned by now that we must have ballast to stand up against the winds. We have found we cannot be shallow and stand the blasts. We have found that we flounder when we over-advertise. Perhaps the metaphor will bear the exhortation to live deep. Think more than you speak. Love more than you do. Balance your shouting with praying. Seek rather to be praiseworthy than to receive praise. Be more careful to earn than to collect. Allow that character is more valuable than reputation and that manhood far outweighs money.

And how shall I say that concluding word on the height of life? "If a man's reach is not longer than his grasp, what is a heaven for?" It is customary to tell the young that they are preparing for life," but I think this is a wrong construction. Youth is living now, and the mature and the aged are still just getting ready to live. Anyone is living who is doing what he should do at the time he is doing it. Dirt, they say, is just soil misplaced, and dirt in the field is soil, not dirt. Child, youth, man, all are living and all are getting ready to live. There is no period from which the highest motives are debarred, and there is no time, not even in the dying hour, when one can do better than just his sincere best.

Man stands upright that he may the more readily lift his eyes to heaven. For a time his feet must be upon the earth, but all the time his heart can be in the skies. We must day by day perform our ordinary services to men, but through it all our motives can be the pleasing of God. The king on the throne may have heart and eyes but for the earth, while the digger in the ditch may live in the fellowship of angels. It is the heart and the motive that differentiate men.

Length multiplied by breadth, and the product multiplied by thickness equals life; and life is little or big, depending upon the measure of these dimensions. I may not come to you and exhort you to live long -- this may be beyond your power. There are some limitations on breadth that are

also beyond you. Books and travel and leisure for art cost time and money, and you may not have these to spare. But there is no reason at all why we should not all live deep and high. Here there are no limits except the ones we ourselves set. Down to the depths, then, of a pure and sincere heart, let us begin our life today. And up to the heaven of highest motive, let us aspire. And then, even though longevity be denied us, and even though breadth draw its lines too soon, we shall live big, because we lived so deep and so high.

* * * * *

4

FAITH THE OVERCOMING PRINCIPLE

And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith (1 John 5:4).

In the Greek language there is a word which means "the inhabited earth"; another which means "the age or dispensation"; and yet another which means the "present world system." And it is the last which is used in the scripture before us. Neither one of the other words involves any moral significance, but this one involves the whole of the moral universe which is opposed to Christ. There is in this world of which John speaks much that is indifferent but it includes within its realm all the organized forces of unbelieving mankind -- "force, greed, selfishness, ambition and pleasure." It covers the uncontrollable universe in its organized sense. It is the empire of evil, the dominion of Satan. It is the sum total of all a Christian must meet when he endeavors to live for God.

This distinction in words makes clear the apparent contradiction between the statement that God loved the world and the prohibition against our loving the world. God so loved the world of lost mankind that He gave His Son to save whosoever believeth in Him. And we should love that same world enough to gladly give ourselves in the task of saving it through the glorious gospel of Christ. But our love for the world of lost mankind is indicated by our separation from the world of organized evil, and that separation must be in spirit as well as in form. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:15-17).

This use of the word world is not peculiar to John. Paul used it in Romans 12:2, when he exhorted Christians to "be not conformed to this world," and James used it in James 4:4, "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." This world that our faith is to overcome is, therefore, the sum total of all that opposes God and those who set out to live for God.

John also uses the word faith in a comprehensive sense. The simple idea of faith is just believing God or believing what God has said. This is the meaning of faith when it is set forth as a condition for gaining God's favor and obtaining His help. "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5: 1). But sometimes the term is used to describe faith as character, rather than just faith as an act. For example, Paul speaks of the

"unfeigned faith" which dwelt in Lois, Eunice and Timothy, (2 Timothy 1:5), and again in 1 Timothy 1: 5 he speaks of "faith unfeigned" as one of the essential things in fulfillment of the divine requirements. In such cases the idea is about the same as we would describe as faithful.

But in the opening verses of the fifth chapter of 1 John, leading up to the verse which is before us, John speaks of the things a Christian believes and the things he does -- he believes that Jesus is the Christ, and he loves God and keeps His commandments. Also he speaks of what God does for those who are possessors of this faith -- he says such are "born of God." And then he gives a sort of summary in which he identifies those who have faith as the same as those who are born of God, and these in turn are identified as the ones who overcome the world. All this leads to the conclusion that John sets two equally comprehensive terms over against each other, and says in substance, "Whoever has all that is implied in being a Christian is able to triumph over all that opposes him in his endeavor to be a Christian."

Our Christian faith does not deny the existence of evil. It acknowledges evil in all its crude and subtle forms. It confesses the existence of a personal devil, who, while not omnipresent, is assisted by myriads of fallen angels and wicked abandoned spirits, so that in practical reality evil is everywhere. Our faith takes cognizance of opposition, and defines the Christian way in terms of war and conflict, even to the point of holding that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. Ours is a militant faith, but it is a victorious faith.

I. Let us think of our Christian faith from the approach of its historic and basic doctrines.

We need not go back to the very beginning. Let us rather just begin with the life and teachings of our Lord. He was miraculously born, His life was spotless. His teachings were peerless. His miracles were marvelous. His death was high priestly and substitutionary. These are the facts concerning Jesus as Christians hold them. But such claims are so high and unusual that there is need of irrefutable evidence of their trustworthiness, and this evidence is furnished by the miracle of all miracles, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

It is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead that justified all that is claimed for Him during His life, and it is His resurrection from the dead that connects the Jesus of the Gospels with the Christ of the Epistles and of Christian experience.

There is much in the story of the life of Jesus that calls for pity and love, rather than for faith. He was born in a stable. He was cradled in a manger. He was hungry at the fig tree. He was set at naught by the rulers. He was homeless. He held no office in either church or state. He was tried illegally and convicted without dependable evidence. He was worshipped in mockery. He wore a crown of thorns in lieu of a king's miter. He was nailed to a tree in shame. He was associated with the wicked in His death. He was buried in a borrowed tomb. We recite these things glibly now, but think of them in the light of their day and you will see that a faith founded upon such occurrences might be a faith of passive pity and endurance, but it could not be a faith of triumph.

It is Easter morning that turns tears into triumphs and marks the Christian faith as a victorious religion. This fact was of such immediate importance that those who went out to preach

after that Easter morning announced their theme as "Christ and the resurrection." Before the resurrection Christians worshipped crouching behind closed doors, but after the resurrection they came out to announce the good news to the world. It is said that the early Christians kneeled to worship in all their meetings except those which occurred on Sunday. On that day they stood to pray in honor of the Lord's resurrection and as a symbol of triumph.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is a fact of history more fully credentialed than any other major occurrence of the past. "The Lord is risen. He is risen indeed." But out of this fact grow the essential doctrines of the Christian system. He "arose for our justification." "Because he lives, we shall live also." Since He arose from the dead, we have an Advocate with the Father in heaven, and we have the promised Spirit on earth. Our Christian creed is a victorious thesis. It does not stop with a diagnosis of men's ills, it proposes a remedy and a cure.

II. Let us think of our Christian faith as an inner working force in the hearts and lives of those who accept it.

Christ's contemporaries thought to slander Him by calling Him "the friend of sinners." But this title so became Him that it has clung to Him throughout the centuries. In Christ there is hope for the hopeless, help for the helpless and salvation for all.

It is to the glory of Christ that those who come voluntarily to Him to eat and walk and talk with Him do not remain sinners. Their change is not simply improvement, or reformation, or the revolution of the iconoclast. It is the inner change of will and affections as well as the outward change of conduct and conversation.

The gospel of Christ enjoins the highest ethical practices, but this is not its glory. It includes the most beautiful sacraments, but neither is this its praise. Its glory is in its power to transform and make new the hearts and lives of those who receive it. "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ," cried Paul, "for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." This inner transforming and sustaining power is the heart and soul and glory of the gospel. In the gospel economy every command is a promise. The will to obey is the condition for power to obey. The ten lepers started toward the priest's house to tell him they were clean, at the Master's word, when as yet their uncleanness clave to their flesh. But "as they went they were cleansed." The gospel brings into the believer's being life and light and purity from above. And there is "expulsive power" in this new grace from God to drive away guilt, to cleanse away pollution and to dismiss weakness in time of temptation and trial. The Christian life is a victorious life. In Christ even the weakest is made to be "more than conqueror." Within the sphere of the personal Christian life, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

III. Let us think of the Christian faith as offering an explanation of life to those who believe it.

All intelligent men are philosophers. They cannot avoid asking "What is man?" "What is life?" "What is the ultimate end and purpose of all that is?" Those who do not ask these questions are not intelligent. Those who do not earnestly seek the answer to such questions are dead while

they yet live. Those who decide there are no answers to these questions are themselves without hope. Those who are content with answers stated in terms of earthly values are content with inadequate explanations, and must be classed as practical fatalists and logical pessimists. There is no justification of the pain and struggle of living if in this life only there is hope. The fleeting pleasures of time are deceptive and bear the curse of mockery, if death ends all.

But according to the Christian faith man is an immortal soul. The present life is a probation -- a test period, a dressing room for eternity. Life serves its end by furnishing us with time and opportunity to prepare for heaven. Success is not measured in terms of what we gather and hold here, but in terms of what we are when we leave this world. The purpose and end of the myriads of forces and functions which we have to do is to transform us into the moral and spiritual likeness of our holy Maker, and prepare us for happy fellowship with Him forever.

"Old age is a calamity," observes the man of the world. "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness," replies the Christian. "He dies in his youth, his life was lost," reports the man without faith. "He will grow faster in heaven than he could ever have done on earth," consoles the Christian. "The body is temporal, and already there are signs of irreparable deterioration, What's the use?" inquires the unbeliever, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," testifies the Christian. "The world is full of toil and pain and trouble, and life ends in death," remarks the doubter. "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us," says the man of faith and hope and assurance.

Sometimes men chafe that we must now walk by faith, and cannot see clearly as yet. But there are tokens of immortality that keep the Christian's courage up. A man passed a boy who stood patiently holding a string. "What are you doing?" inquired the man. "I am flying my kite," answered the boy. Looking up toward the hazy sky, the man remarked, "I do not see any kite." But the boy replied, "I cannot see it either, but I know it's up there, I can feel the pull." The Christian knows heaven is up there; for even though he cannot see its jasper walls, he can feel the pull of its holy gravity, and this answers all the questions, the puzzling questions, about life and its purpose, as no others on earth can get them answered.

IV. Let us think of the Christian faith as it relates to the material, moral and spiritual universe.

The poet was wrong when he reported that "only man is vile"; for moral evil cannot exist apart from personalities. It is not important that we should be versed in demonology, but there is no escape from the conclusion that there are other intelligences besides men who have lifted up the banner of revolt against a holy God, and in the starry heavens above us are indications of "something wrong." In the earth and atmosphere of our own earth are aberrations in the way of storms and lightnings, weeds and brambles, ferocious beasts, burning deserts, frigid polar blocks, and conflict between sea and land. Men speculate as to the end of it all, but their speculations all lead to deterioration and final defeat. Some say the moon will slow the rotations of the earth until disaster comes that way. Some prophesy that the world will finally burn up with fire. Some say it

will become too cold for life to exist upon its surface. Some think it will finally fall back into the sun. Some believe it will break into bits and disappear as "star dust."

And as to the race of mankind: What shall be its end? Endless coming and going of generations, say some. Final disappearance of man by reason of his own follies or by reason of climatic changes upon the surface of the earth. Wide indeed are the margins of speculation, but they all agree in one thing -- the end is either useless or calamitous.

But what is the Christian faith? It is a victorious vision, even though the details are not clear. The Christian cannot bind himself to the limitation of time, for he knows that "one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" -- time is no factor with God. But according to the Christian's faith, the end will be triumph for God and righteousness. In the end the incorrigible will be shut up in the prison house of the universe, and heaven will be a land without a tear or sigh. Earth itself will be reclaimed for the empire of God. Even man's body will be resurrected from the dust to become forever deathless. The lion and the wolf will lose their ferocious disposition, and "nothing shall hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain."

Even when applied to the cosmos -- the universe -- the Christian's faith is not a cringing, faltering, pitiable thing. Rather it is stalwart, upstanding and victorious. This is the faith that meets the whole organized empire of evil and overcomes it. This faith acknowledges a mighty devil, but it brings against him an Almighty Christ. It does not minify sin, but it does magnify salvation through Jesus Christ. It does not deny evil in any of its forms, but it finds in Christ a remedy and a cure for all that is wrong with men individually, collectively, presently and eternally. It finds in Christ the means for salvaging man's world, and all worlds, and of bringing into glory all who put their trust in Him. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God."

* * * * *

5

SELFISHNESS AND UNSELFISHNESS

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

Commenting on the reversed order by which the Hebrews were accustomed to conjugate the verb to be, one versed in both the language and the religion of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, offered the following explanation: "It was the regular custom of the fathers to omit the name of God when reading the Scriptures or when speaking of Him in regular conversation. So instead of saying God did this or that, they simply said He did it, and so the pronoun became first of all a synonym for God. Then it was but natural that arranging the order of language, God should be first. Then there were the teachings of the sacred Book regarding the attitude of a good man toward his neighbor in which it was enjoined that the neighbor should be given preference over self. So the place for the neighbor came right next after God, and so the order was and is, 'He is, thou art, I am,' instead of 'I am, thou art, and He is,' as you have it in

English. It is the modern who has reversed the order, the Hebrew order is the original and correct order, for it is God first, my neighbor next and I last."

As a matter of form, some have the ability to say, "God first," who break down when it comes to saying, "My neighbor next, and I last," for the philosophy of selfishness has invaded and all but inundated the world. The Golden Rule has in too many instances been replaced by the rule of gold, and men have asked incredulously, "If I do not look out for my own interests, who will look out for them?" The answer to that question is, If you will look out for the interests of God and your neighbor, God will look out for your interests. It is said that Queen Victoria once called upon a British business man to undertake a mission for the government that would require all his time and attention for an extended period. When the matter was stated to him, the man was distressed, and in near panic inquired, "But if I go away for a long period like that, what will become of my business?" The noble queen replied, "You look after the queen's business and the queen will look after your business."

But many find it difficult to believe that the Golden Rule is practical. They accept it as an ideal, but hold reservations as to its application. They try to forget that their competitors are their neighbors, so they can omit them from the list of those to whom they owe preferential treatment. To believe fully in the practicality of such an attitude as the Golden Rule involves, one must be able to see farther than just the twenty-four hours in which he lives; for sometimes one must wait many days to take up again the bread which he has cast upon the waters. But Christ's philosophy of life is exceedingly practical, and the "good neighbor" policy pays in "the long run." On the other hand, when one takes it upon himself to look after his own business, the King pretty much leaves it with him to do it. The responsibility belongs to the King only when the person in question makes it his business to attend to the King's business. Likewise, when one looks to his own affairs first, pretty soon those he has to deal with learn from him to look to their own affairs, and in the end the man has a bigger job than he would have had if he had "swapped work" with those with whom he has to do.

Just a little while ago I received a letter from an acquaintance in which he spoke of a difficult problem in connection with the work of the church. He wrote, "We had the problem pretty well worked out, and could have carried through all right, except that Brother A___ allowed his selfish interests to interfere, and he refused to go along with us, unless he himself could be assured against loss of any kind." And it often occurs that the problems of life miss out on solution because someone connected with them is weak in the faith that he will fare well himself, if he but gives attention to see that others prosper. To look out first for the good of others does not mean that we will fare the worse ourselves. Rather it means that if we are sincere in our concern for others, our own vineyard will have better care than though we gave our first thought to it ourselves. This advantage cannot be the motive, otherwise the plan will not work. But if the motive is pure and high, then it will work without our having to force it.

Some time ago I ran across a listing on "Marks of selfishness," and "Marks of Unselfishness," which was very interesting. Of course we must take into consideration that few will be willing to plead guilty to the charge of selfishness, and for that reason we shall have to just observe the marks and make our own deductions. Or perhaps, better than this, we shall be

benefited if we find out what these marks are and give attention to shunning those which point us out as selfish, and run hard after those which testify that we are unselfish.

1. Marks of Selfishness:

(1) It is a mark of selfishness when we have the tendency to make self the benefactor, and bring self to the fore when any choice or action is being considered.

(2) It is a mark of selfishness when our tendency is to make ourselves the subject of conversation, and when we find delight in reciting stories in which we ourselves appear in favorable light.

(3) It is a mark of selfishness when we are found to be unusually "touchy" and thin-skinned.

2. Marks of Unselfishness:

(1) It is a mark of unselfishness when we make "others" the chief consideration in our going or staying, in our choices and actions, and account ourselves beneficiaries only when we can be such along with the others for whom we bear our principal concern.

(2) It is a mark of unselfishness when we find it possible to deliberately choose to see the best in others, even when to do so is to bring our own glory into at least partial eclipse.

(3) It is a mark of unselfishness when we find it easy to make God and others the chief topics of conversation, and when we can deliberately, and without ostentation, turn favorable comment intended for us to the credit of someone else.

If one will take the trouble to analyze the "Marks of Selfishness" which are enumerated, he will find that they pretty well cover the attitudes and tendencies which make us nonsocial, and "hard to get along with." When you propose a line of action, and your companion says, "But I don't see how that will bring any pleasure or profit to me," he has already said more than his words imply. He has said that he is not interested in anything that does not minister to his pleasure or profit, and you know right away that here is one very much in need of "being born again." It is not enough now to enter into argument to prove that the course proposed will, after all, be to his interest, for you have found that this is not a person of whom you can expect unselfish action. But since we know this of another, it should not be difficult for us to bring ourselves to class meeting, and there find out why we do or do not do things. Is it because our minds race quickly to the consideration of how much the course will contribute to our own pleasure or profit? And if we find this is our norm, we should be as ruthless and fair in taking the remedy ourselves as we were in prescribing for another.

Of course we know more about ourselves and our own experiences than we do about other folks and their experiences, but this is just another reason why we should not talk too much. If we refuse to talk about ourselves, we shall not so often be guilty of excessive talk. But if we must talk about ourselves, then we do well to select the instances in which we were corrected and taught valuable lessons, rather than to major on the instances in which we were the hero and the

instructor. We all know this form of despicable egotism when we see it in others; but it is sometimes easy to imitate the vices we despise, and in the lists of conversation, there is a temptation to meet the lion with a bigger lion, until Herod fairly out-Herods Herod. Perhaps some of the fault may be unintentional, but it would be well for us all to check and see how well we stand on this matter. When a noted preacher remarked that he found he had inadvertently made a promise which it was inconvenient for him to keep, the colored boy who operated the elevator, replied, "Yes, sir, it sure is easy to over-talk." And I think we all know this to be true. Often in thinking back upon occurrences and conversations, we have mused, "Now, if I had just thought, this is what I should have said." But looking back over my past as a Christian I can think of many more instances in which I said what I now wish I had not said than of instances in which I was quiet and now wish I had spoken. Even our divine Master found time for golden silences amidst words that were always like ripe yellow oranges in baskets made of silver.

In the Love Chapter, 1 Corinthians 13, Paul spoke of love as being "not easily provoked." Our modern speech has abbreviated this phrase into "touchiness," or being "thin-skinned." No matter about the word, we all know what it is, and we know how disagreeable it is to have someone around who will always be taking things that do not belong to him in the sense of being "hurt" over words or actions that had no more than general reference to him. These thin-skinned people are accused also of having their feelings spread out until one walks on them unintentionally, scarcely being able to miss them if he walks on the floor at all. But it is not our purpose to preach. It will do more good for each one of us to examine himself in this matter. Pride and selfishness are the basis of touchiness, for touchiness springs from an exaggerated sense of importance. Why should I think people mean me when they tell things that apply to me, which things indeed may also apply to many others? There are so many who are better known examples of both wisdom and folly than I am that the chances are I was not in the thinking at all. And if I was intended as the butt, why should I feel that I am insulted? Upon what ground could I claim immunity? If what they say or do is uncomplimentary to me, I should know that I either deserve it, or else not deserving it, my spirit and conduct will constitute my best defense.

But perhaps there is nothing more exacting than the demand to see the best in others. Someone asked Dr. H. C. Morrison what he thought Paul meant when he said, "Love thinketh no evil." His reply was, "I think he meant that if I have perfect love I will always put the best possible construction on everything and deliberately seek to see the best in everybody. Suppose, for example, I am a Sunday school superintendent. One morning as I walk down the street, I see a brother who is a teacher in my school turn into the grogshop near the corner. If I am filled with perfect love I will think to myself, 'God bless that good man. He has gone in there to ask the bartender to send his children to the Sunday school. Here I have gone right by this place every day and never once have I thought to turn in there and ask the bartender about his family, and here one of my teachers has reproved me, and by God's grace, I shall be more zealous and shall look out more diligently for opportunities for winning people to the Lord.' Now it may turn out that the Sunday school teacher was a hypocrite and turned in there to get a drink. But until I knew his purpose was bad I gave him credit for a high motive. That, in my judgment, is what is meant by the saying that 'Love thinketh no evil.'"

Perhaps we would explain our reluctance to undertake an unselfish life on the basis of the fact that the world is full of selfish people who will take advantage of us. We reason that if others

find out we will do them favors without expecting anything in return they will bankrupt us with their asking. If they find out we will turn to their account any good word spoken, they will exploit this tendency for their own undeserved popularity, and that will make us partners to a public wrong. We would be unselfish if others would be unselfish too. We would give to others, if they would in turn give to us. We would speak kindly of others, if they would just not forget us when the praises are passed around. Perhaps we do not see that such a situation as we imagine would make unselfishness impossible. Nay, the very essence of unselfishness is the will to be overlooked.

Finally, Jesus gave the supreme test to unselfishness when He required His disciples to love their enemies and do good to them from whom they could expect nothing but harm. Paul made a summary of it when he exhorted, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." A Christian is laid under special obligation to his enemies. If he neglects anyone, it must be his friends, from whom he may reasonably hope for charity and consideration. But he must never overlook or mistreat his enemies. For although he may rely upon the faithfulness of his friends, he must yet win his enemies before he can depend upon them, and with this bigger task before him, his enemies become his special charge.

In the old school reader there was a story under the title, "The Noblest Deed of All," a story which may now be somewhat new just because it is so old. It related to a very wealthy man who had three sons to whom, when they were all come to years, and while he was yet alive, he divided his fortune. This division affected all his money and goods, except a very valuable diamond which was an heirloom in the family. Concerning this gem, the father said, "I cannot divide this diamond, and I do not want to sell it that I might give to each of you his share of the money. But I want to give it to one of you, and when it is given, it is your property to keep or to sell, as will give you the most satisfaction. But here is what I have decided to do: I want us to all go on our way, now. At the end of a year I want us to meet here again at my house, and then I will ask each of you to tell what he thinks is the noblest deed he has performed during the year, and to the one whom I judge to have done the noblest deed of all, I shall give the gem." To this plan all agreed. At the end of the year they came together and the sons one by one recited what they considered their noblest deed of the year. One told how he had leaped into the water, at the risk of his life, to save the life of a drowning child. At the conclusion of the story the father said, "My son, you have done well, but not nobly." The next told how he had found a friend in hunger and nakedness and had given his own rations and cloak for the saving and sustaining of the life of his friend, even when the articles in question were given at the risk of his own starvation and exposure. To this, too, the father responded, "My son, you have done well, but not nobly." The third told of finding a mortal enemy at whose hand he had once narrowly escaped death. This enemy was found asleep on the edge of a precipice over which he could have easily been pushed, and into which he would probably have fallen from the effect of the slightest stir in his sleep. To the side of this sleeping enemy this son had crept noiselessly that the enemy might not be awakened and endangered thereby. With gentle care he had drawn the enemy away from the edge of the cliff, and then had awakened him to tell him of his danger, and had gone his way, expecting still that he would be repaid only with the continued curse and injury of his enemy. Scarcely had the story ended, when the father cried, "The gem is yours, my son, for yours is the noblest deed of all."

Once when John Ruskin was about to conclude a lecture on Art in London, he came to the place where he was to give examples of the standards of excellence which he had described, and

here he said, "I shall not multiply examples. I will just name one -- the name is Michelangelo." And so in this address we have mentioned no names, and now we shall name but one -- Jesus Christ, "Who, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor that ye through his poverty might be rich." He is the example of unselfishness. Let us look at Him, and then pray to be like Him. We can never be like Him in the plenitude of His infinite character, but we can be like Him as the drop of water is like the ocean.

We come in Thy name, O Lord Jesus, and we ask for that grace that purifies the heart. We ask that Thou wilt come in the fullness of Thy Spirit's ministry and purge out carnal selfishness from our hearts, and fill us with that love which enables its possessors to be kind and helpful even to their enemies. We believe that our own best and deepest interests will be served by our forgetting them in the interest of Thy glory and the good of other men. Help us to believe this so firmly that we shall put this faith into practical life today, and every day, until we shall see Thy face in heaven. Amen.

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6

SPONTANEITY AND REGULARITY IN LIFE AND SERVICE

And they continued stedfastly in the apostle: doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. . . . Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour (Acts 2:42, 3:1).

That prayer meeting in the upper room at Jerusalem which eventuated in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the infant Church was the most remarkable prayer meeting ever held on earth. There was the prayer of Samuel which brought lightning, thunder and rain in harvest time to assure Israel in the face of the threatenings of the Philistines. There was the prayer of the prophet that turned the sun back ten degrees on the sundial of Ahaz, and the prayer of Joshua that made both the sun and moon to stand still. But that prayer meeting in Jerusalem brought changes in the hearts of men and in the world of mankind that were more revolutionary and permanent than any changes that ever occurred before.

It need be no reflection of either preceding or succeeding ages for us to say that the Day of Pentecost was a spiritual climax. In the atmosphere of that occasion miracles were normal. The bodies and minds of men were healed and blessed, as well as their souls were delivered and cleansed from sin. That day of power was the subject of many prophecies in the centuries which preceded it, and it has been the standard by which hopes in succeeding centuries have been measured. No better word has yet been found to describe a time of spiritual blessing than to say it was a veritable Pentecost." The highest claim a church can make is to call itself a "Pentecostal church."

Of course there was much preparation. Immediate preparation for that blessed day commenced when two of John's disciples saw their teacher point to Jesus and heard him cry, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!" The preparation continued and intensified as additional disciples came and the college of apostles was completed. On down

through the days of Christ's own preaching men learned from Him that there was to be an outpouring and an infilling that would make the Day of Pentecost a better day than even the one in which the Lord in bodily form moved about among His people. After His resurrection from the dead our Lord inflamed expectation by setting the date for the Spirit's coming as "not many days hence."

But when Pentecost actually came it took on the aspect of spontaneity. The divine was so manifest that the plodding human did not seem important. God was so among His people that there must have been a temptation to neglect even food and sleep. Why should anyone worry about petty and passing duties? The great day of God's power was on hand. Shouting aloud, praise of the noisiest sort, liberality unparalleled, joy unspeakable! Pentecost! One such day could easily justify a lifetime of monotony, but it was likely to give one the feeling that thereafter monotony and the commonplace had no more place at all.

But on the background of this glorious day of spontaneity is painted for us the picture of two men quietly and unobtrusively going to the regular prayer meeting -- on time. It was the ninth hour and just God's "common" children were going to the temple as was their wont. Surely Peter and John can stay out today and say, "What's the use? Nothing will happen up there any way. And all that will ever happen will at best be no more than a shadow or repetition of what has already happened. This prayer meeting will be formal. They will be dry and regular up there. We have had part in a prayer meeting that really counted. We shall not bother with the ordinary any more."

But, no, these men did not say that. They did not allow spontaneity to become a substitute for regularity. They allowed no substitutes at all. Their new gains were to be net, for they were to do all they used to do and all others did, and have their new advantages besides. They were to use their Pentecostal wine to season the old corn of known duty. They were to be good Jews as well as good Christians.

It is a good thing to do well when it is pleasant to do so, but one cannot depend on pleasure as a guide. Kingsley said we should be glad every morning when we wake up that there are some things that must be done which we do not like to do; for these disagreeable things furnish the discipline that we need. Good habits are a help, especially in times when feelings fail us. When we feel like doing good, we should by all means do good. But when doing good is in the nature of an effort, we do well to fall back upon principle and go on doing good anyway. It is a fine thing to visit unsettled parts of the country where we can "take the course we desire and go the short way to our destination. But for the most part, we shall find it necessary to go by way of chosen highways, where curves and turns are marked, and where familiar numbers keep us assured that we are going to the city of our choice. We should welcome spontaneity when we have it, and we should keep on with regularity both in season and out of season. "Does thee plan to speak, if the Spirit moves thee, John?" asked the anxious Quaker. John Wesley answered, "I plan to speak that the Spirit may move me."

Let us consider the place of both spontaneity and regularity in some of the ordinary instances of life and service:

First, let us think of them with reference to the development of our own subjective lives. Let us think of them as they relate to prayer, Bible reading and meditation. We all know there are times when prayer is easy, when the Bible is as a burning and shining light, and when it is a delight to think on the ways of God. These times we appreciate and we shall pray that their return may be more and more frequent.

But we cannot escape the fact that it is sometimes an effort to sing "Sweet Hour of Prayer," and that sometimes the Bible does not seem to hold a message for us, and that our meditations are like "wandering sheep" which seem not to hear their master's voice. What shall we do then? Shall we leave off prayer until praying comes easy? Shall we neglect the Bible until its light breaks forth anew upon our souls? Shall we just allow our minds to drift until weary with wanderings they come at last to dwell upon thoughts of God? No, this is not the way. In times of dryness we must pray that we may pray, we must dig in the Bible until the mine yields up its treasure, we must bring our thoughts to time repeatedly until they learn to delight in the law of God. We must hammer away with regularity until spontaneity returns.

I used to read and hear of the persistence of praying men like Luther, Wesley and Mueller, who were reported to have prayed two, three or more hours a day. I thought they prayed on their knees in continual repetition, and I marveled that they were able to hold themselves to their tasks so long. But I find this was not their method. Luther and Wesley both obtained help from written prayers. These prayers they read slowly and thoughtfully, using their carefully chosen words to express their own feelings and desires. Often they would ponder long upon a given word or sentence, and would seek in much searching of their hearts, to bring themselves to the place where their own sentiments were in line with the words and sentences of the written prayers of good and great men.

Mueller describes his own method in some detail. He said that in the beginning he used to try to spend his whole time on his knees and in audible prayer. But he found he did better if he mixed prayer with reading of the Bible. His method was to read the Bible straight through from beginning to end. Beginning with the first chapter of Genesis he would read that day until he sensed that he had the message God would give him for that day. Sometimes a few verses sufficed, sometimes a good many chapters were required. The next day he took up where he left off the morning before and read on in the same manner and to the same purpose. In this way, during a period of years, he read the Bible through one hundred and fifty times. When he came to anything in his reading that suggested it, he would stop to pray, to search his own heart and to think further on the message given to his spirit. And in a prayer life of more than fifty years, Mueller testified humbly that he had not failed for one single day to "get audience with God." He suggested that it was somewhat like getting audience with a great man on earth. In such a case one would not rush without preparation right into the presence of the great one and there begin with breathless haste to ask favors and seek blessings. Rather, one would follow all the usual routine rules for "getting audience." There might be instances in which there would be many hindrances and considerable time would be occupied before you could stand in the immediate presence of the great one. At other times there would be little delay. But in every case the big job is getting audience. Once you are in the great one's presence you can soon state your business and get an answer. Prayer is like that. No doubt we all spend much time in reciting prayers that are heard by no one but ourselves, for we have not taken time and gone to the trouble of securing audience. Perhaps we have not

realized that the effort to pray is so often a preparation for prayer, and we have thought we might get the results without attending to the causes.

We have spoken of Bible reading only as a means of grace and assistance in devotion. But we all know it is necessary to study the Bible, as well as to read for devotional purposes. We have seen men get what amounted to an inspiration in the understanding of the Bible; perhaps we have had lucid moments ourselves, and we have thought this so much better than study that we have neglected books and lectures and hard work somewhat on the theory that some time we will understand as by revelation. But those times of lucidity come better in connection with study and application than by indifferent waiting. When we have done our best to find out, we have sometimes had the assistance of revelation. Thank God for all the upper room spontaneity that comes our way, but let us not forget when the prayer hour comes. There is no substitute for the grind of regularity, and no super-religion can invalidate the ministry of the commonplace.

Then there is the matter of Christian stewardship on money, influence, talent, etc. Some would pass the question of money, lest they be charged of having money for their motive. But we should not forget that our Master said more about money than any other one thing. He warned against the dangers of covetousness and the evil of hoarding. He magnified the advantages of liberality, and gave content and meaning to giving that was entirely new.

There are times when we "feel that God wants us to give," and at such times it is a great joy to do what we very much want to do. But shall we withhold until liberality becomes a force within to compel? Nay, the tithing Christian knows it is his duty and privilege to support the whole program of the whole church and he puts his tithe into the treasury of the church without waiting to feel like doing so. Covetousness is a great temptation and money has a way of clinging to us, once it gets into our hands. It is for our protection that God has arranged that the tithe of our income should be claimed for His spiritual kingdom without the trouble of our asking, "What is to be done with this money?" The tithe goes right into the treasury of the local church to pay fuel bills, janitor's service, foreign missions, pastor's salary, and any and every bill that has to do with maintaining the church and its program in the world. Giving money is for the layman what preaching and active ministry is to the minister, and should be taken in the same serious spirit and done with the same unvarying regularity.

It has been frequently observed that a tithing Christian, after his tithing plan is well adopted, will in addition to his tithing be quite as liberal a giver as other Christians. That is to say, his regularity does not hinder his spontaneity. Rather, his regularity encourages his spontaneity. The solid peace which results from systematic tithing encourages him to seek the ecstatic joy which results from spontaneous giving also, and again, spontaneity does not become a substitute for regularity. In the atmosphere of Pentecost, the Spirit-filled Christian still goes to prayer meeting on time.

But the principle applies to testimony, preaching, and to every phase of Christian life and service. It is a wonderful thing when the Spirit of the Lord comes upon a Christian and moves him as He did Samson in the camp of Dan, and what a delight it is to speak when the Lord puts the words in our mouths. But the Bible Christian turns right back to his books and study from his mount of inspiration, for he realizes that if God can bless ignorance, He can bless knowledge so much

more. Speaking personally, I have come to the preaching hour without time or opportunity for preparation of mind and heart, and I have been blessed beyond my expectation on such occasions. But I have steadfastly resisted the temptation to depend on such a plan for the time to come. Rather, in thankfulness that God did not fail me in my extremity, I have turned back to harder study and more earnest prayer, lest coming to another such a crisis because of willful or careless neglect I should be unable to have faith for a blessing which I had so little right to claim.

It is a wonderful thing to be well situated in church life, and to have leadership of your own choosing, and a program of service that fully appeals to you. It is easy to work when you are happy. But shall we quit when a pastor is called that we do not like? or when a Sunday school superintendent is chosen for whom we did not vote? or when the missionary president is a bore? or when the young people's leader is not spiritual? or when the members of the church are wanting in hospitality? or when the service program of the church is too drawn out? No, in times like that we should remember how our Lord went to the synagogue in His home town, "as his custom was." If Jesus could attain a reputation for regularity in the uninteresting service of the synagogue at Nazareth, surely I can find grace to follow His example in attending to the means of grace in a regular manner, even when there is want of interest and spontaneity.

Excessive attention to form tends toward formalism. Too great fondness for liberty tends toward unbridled license. The golden mean is a more difficult way than either extreme. It is more difficult to keep your car just where it belongs on the road than it is to run it into the ditch on the right or over into the oncoming traffic lane to the left.

Dr. H. C. Morrison, in the dramatic manner which is his wont, says he once visited the devil's house, and the devil asked him to be seated. But when he cast about for a place to sit, he found on the one hand a cake of ice, and on the other a red-hot stove. The ice stands for formality, the stove for fanaticism. But we must not choose between such extremes. Rather we must find that way which gives sufficient attention to forms to get the assistance for reverence and the encouragement to order that we need, and then we must keep alive and vital in experience and service, but must not disregard causes and conditions. Following the thought of our scripture lesson, we would say we must be thankful for Pentecost, but we must not be late to prayer meeting. We must delight in the "times of refreshing" that come from the presence of the Lord, but we must be faithful, even when the power of good and proper habit must be drawn upon to furnish momentum to get us by the place of drought. We are glad when the meetings are interesting, but when they are not, we will follow the rule of not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. We are glad when the resurrected Lord appears in the midst of the group, but we will go every time so we shall be there at the right time. Spontaneity if we may, but regularity in any case: this is the rule of the Bible Christian.

* * * * *

7

VIGILANCE THE PRICE OF SAFETY

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and "am deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ (Colossians 2:8).

It would seem from a study of the methods of John Wesley, that he first thought that once a Christian had come into the enjoyment of the grace of heart purity or perfect love there would henceforth be no personal problems, or any problems as relating to a society of believers who had come into the fullness of the blessings of the gospel. But there arose division among Wesley's own followers, and some of them drifted into great extremes of faith and temper, and it became necessary for Wesley to reprove them. Then after considering the matter more maturely, Wesley saw that the blessings of God are offered upon condition, and that this is true of the keeping of God's grace, as well as upon its reception to begin with. He therefore wrote a tract and distributed it among his followers, calling attention to the dangers which he believed beset the pathway of people who set out to live for God in this world. The content of the tract was largely negative, but by contrast the positive virtues were intimated. It has now been a long time since this tract of Wesley's had general distribution and it is likely that many Christians of today have never read it. Also those who read it years ago have probably become rusty regarding the things which it contains. It therefore seems proper to bring to our attention the outline of the words of this wonderful Christian leader.

I do not have Wesley's tract before me, and I do not propose to follow his discussion of his points. But the points themselves are so fitting that it would be folly for me to try to state them in my own words, and the general trend of his discussion doubtless has influenced my own thinking, although I make no effort to either remember or forget what he said. Wesley's message appeared under the general theme of "Beware," and his points were: (1) Beware of pride. (2) Beware of the daughter of pride, enthusiasm. (3) Beware of Antinomianism. (4) Beware of sins of omission. (5) Beware of desiring anything but God. (6) Beware of making a rent in the church. (7) Be exemplary in all things, especially in little things like dress, laying out your money, and in serious and useful conversation.

1. Beware of pride. Paul exhorted all not to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think. There is an assumed self-abasement that savors of unreality, and which is injurious to sincerity. One cannot actually account himself as dishonest and vile, when he knows that his full desire is to please God and live a good, unselfish life. Henry Ward Beecher suggested that it is not necessary for anyone to belittle himself. All he need do is let his shadow fall upon someone who is really good and great. After that he will not need any help to bring his estimates of himself down to sizable proportions.

Wesley allowed that there are a hundred different kinds of pride, and suggested that one may even become proud of his meekness, in which case his meekness becomes but a shadow and a pretense. There is pride of race, which is the temptation of those of noble pedigree or of supposed noble pedigree. Then there is the pride of face to which the comely are exposed, and the pride of grace which is the bane of the religious.

Pride is a temper of the heart, and does not necessarily appear on the outside. But we know its opposites as meekness, humility and patience. Paul observed that tribulation worketh patience, and we know that tribulation crucifies pride. Tribulation shows us what others think of us, and when we discover that others have appraised us at a lower figure than we have named as our value, it humiliates us. But when we find that others hold us in higher esteem than we hold

ourselves the discovery lifts us up. That is why Jesus said, "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted and he that exalteth himself shall be abased."

But pride is personal inflation. We hear a great deal in political circles these days about "inflation of the currency." Practically everyone dreads inflation, but all seem more or less afraid that it will be forced upon us. Brought right down to its simple analysis, inflation as the politicians think of it, means appearing to be worth more as a nation than either our fixed assets or national income can justify. And they tell us that when such inflation comes there will be a temporary boom in prosperity, but this will be followed by financial disaster, nullification of debts and depression such as will entirely consume all the apparent advantages of the inflation. And that is what comes to the individual when he gives way to pride. Solomon said, "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

There is a state in God's grace wherein we live so consciously in God's presence that we do continually "pour contempt on all my pride." Isaiah found this in the temple. There he saw the Lord high and lifted up, and he himself fell upon his face crying, "I am undone." He was just as good and just as worthy that day in the temple as he had been previously, but when he saw himself in the presence of a holy God he suddenly became aware of the limitations he had possessed all the time. This is our hope and God's way for us. As we see more of God, we care less for self, and the way to self-abasement is the way of divine exaltation, until we can say, "To me to live is Christ." "Beware of pride," and of depending upon your own good works and upon the arm of human strength.

2. Beware of the daughter of pride, enthusiasm. Wesley used this word enthusiasm with the same meaning as we now use the word fanaticism. The meaning, as Wesley gave it, is expecting results without giving due attention to conditions. If we expect to receive without asking, if we hope to be spiritual without time spent in Bible reading and prayer, if we expect to wield a good influence without living consistently, if we expect people to come to church without being invited, if we expect to speak well without study, if we think God will send a revival without travail of spirit on the part of His people, if we think the work of God will find support without our tithes and offerings, we are enthusiasts, fanatics, and expect results without attention to adequate causes.

Wesley concluded that it is important for us to make way for receiving God's blessings by passing on the things He gives us. He said of himself that as soon as he received money he passed it on as quickly as possible, lest money should get hold of him. And his philosophy of economic life was (1) Make all you can, (2) save all you can, (3) so as to be able to give all you can. And in private devotion and public service he was careful to make way for singing and thanksgiving, as necessary to further reception from God and spiritual growth on the part of the Christian.

It is not always given us to know the exact connection between cause and effect, but we know there is such a connection, and that we get things when we pray that are denied us when we do not pray, and that God's faithfulness to us is conditioned upon our faithfulness to Him. This is not so much that God is unwilling to bless the unworthy, as that our own hearts condemn us and our own faith will not work when we do not bring our best to God when we come to ask His best for us. There are mysteries in the Christian life, just as there are mysteries to the human mind in all

worthwhile things, but there is no magic. We get out of the service of God according as we put into the service of God, and better conditions on our part bring fuller blessings on God's part.

Once a preacher excused himself from grinding study on the theory that he would simply open his mouth and God would fill it. But a more logical Christian replied, "He will fill it, indeed. He will fill it with air." But if we would learn, we must study. If we would grow in grace, we must give attention to the "means of grace." If we would have friends, we must show ourselves friendly. If we would accomplish good, we must give ourselves to doing good.

Feelings in the Christian experience are results and not causes. We should not seek to feel good, but to be good and do good. We should not strive to be happy, but to be useful, and when we are useful, happiness will come as a byproduct.

3. Beware of Antinomianism. This is a big word which was, I think, invented by Luther, and adopted by Wesley. The import of the word is "against law." Applied practically it means the divorcement of experience from practice. It means that you can be right and yet not do right. That you can be holy and not righteous. That you can stand well with God and yet be in disgrace with men for your own folly and wickedness. Of such error, Wesley said, beware. The word sounds old-fashioned, but the idea is as new as today. People profess to be Christians, and yet indulge in wine, gambling, tobacco, worldly amusements and tricky business methods, and they would be deeply hurt if you suggested they are not Christians, and they would be unaffected if you insisted that they depart from iniquity to warrant their naming themselves after Christ.

In some communities in India, where the Mohammedans are consistent in abstaining from alcohol, and the Hindus likewise are true to their law of prohibition of liquor, and where every man is known by his color and his religion, rather than by his nationality, when a white man is seen drunk, the people remark, "He is a Christian." But in our own land, where Christian enlightenment has made men wise, a man is required to prove his profession by his life. But we do not seek to pass this on to others, we want to face the issue ourselves. Beware of excusing yourself in matters of practical Christianity. Remember that faith is based upon faithfulness, that while we are not saved by good works, we are saved to good works. If we claim the blessings of the gospel, we must comply with the requirements of the gospel. Law does not include grace, but grace includes law. To be saved from the law means to be saved from the rigors of the law by being made to love the things the law demands. It never means license to break the law. I am, for example, not under the law which forbids murder, for I am under the grace that enables me to love all my fellow men. Therefore the love of Christ constrains me before the law against murder has any opportunity to restrain me. In the divine order we are made right before we are expected to do right, but we keep right by doing right. Beware of Antinomianism, of making void the law.

4. Beware of sins of omission. There are many passive graces in the Christian galaxy, like patience, and self-control, and for their exercise we have need of many prudential maxims. We need to "bridle the tongue." We need to "rule our spirit." We need to literally close our eyes to seeing blood, and shut our ears to the hearing of blood. We need to shake our hands from the holding of bribes, and refuse to go with the multitudes to do evil. What everybody does is not necessarily wise or right. There is a never-ending demand for keeping ourselves in hand and

allowing no wild thoughts or unwise and hasty actions to mar our reputation for sanity and consistency.

But passivity can carry us too far. It can take us on to where we conclude we are not our brother's keeper, and that it is required of us only that we be good, and not that we do good. There is danger that we shall become harmless, but not militant. We may decide that if others will leave us alone, we will not trouble them. We may conclude that making and saving are the end of the law, and that giving is neither necessary nor desirable. We may neglect opportunity for testifying, thinking it enough to just live inoffensively. We may fall into that error of which James speaks, "He that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." What did this man do? No, that is not it. He just did not do anything. He was not guilty of an evil deed. He just passed an opportunity for doing a good deed or saying a kind and helpful word. Negative goodness is not enough. If we would be genuine Christians, we must also possess and practice positive righteousness. Beware of being so good that you are just "goody-goody." Beware of being good for nothing.

The true Christian not only has a shield, he also has a sword. He does not stop with warding off attack. He attacks evil with a militant spirit. He does not hold to the fallacy of "peace at any price." He knows that in this world we are born unto conflict, and that we must fight, if we would win. The Christian who is at peace with a world that is at war with God has difficulty in explaining his allegiance. Beware of omitting the Christian duties, and of passing over the Christian opportunities. We are here to do good, as well as to be good, and we are challenged to active service, as well as to passive suffering for Christ.

5. Beware of desiring anything but God. Coveting that which is rightly another's is condemned by the Ten Commandments, and the possession of worldly goods is the snare of many. But it is likely that Wesley was not thinking in quite such an elementary sphere. He was writing to Christian people, and it is likely that he was warning against seeking to be like others, seeking for religious happiness, seeking for "power" to do miracles, seeking for manifestations that will cause others to wonder. And knowing how treacherous and transient such things are, he would say, beware of seeking anything but God.

There is a difference between manifestation and demonstration. Manifestation is on the inside, demonstration on the outside. Manifestation is what God does for us as we meet conditions for His favor. Demonstration is what men see in us as we work out what God has worked in. This is not discounting demonstration altogether, but it is suggesting that it be given only passing attention.

Sometimes in the presence of an effective preacher of the gospel, or in the company of a saintly soul we may be tempted to pray, "Lord, give me what that man has." But what we may see and think we want is not the pure grace of God, but is the grace of God shining through a special human personality, and it is the human features that especially impress us. If God were to give us what man has, He would have to give us that man's personality, and that is not what we want at all.

We may ask God to make us demonstrate like someone else whose zeal and fervor have impressed us. But this too is irrelevant. We are not adapted to the form of demonstration which is another's, and enforced uniformity is a hindrance to personal enlargement. The little verse in the

old schoolbook that made the robin conclude "I would rather be my honest self than any made-up daisy," is full of thought for us. It has been suggested that if we could all place our bag of troubles in a common mart, and then if it were given us to know all that is connected with the troubles of others, and then with this enlightenment we were asked to take our choice, we would go right back and pick up our own burden in preference to the lot of any other. A change of environment is not our solution. An exchange of personalities is both impossible and undesirable. Transformation of temperament will not help, for any temperament has its limitations and drawbacks, as well as its advantages. God is our only solution, and He has made provision in His grace for exactly what we each one need. Therefore let us not frustrate His grace. Let us not become entangled with incidentals. Let us desire God. Let us seek to be perfected in His grace. But let us close our ears to all who would set us on the track of tricks and trappings and spiritual alchemy. "Now the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, a good conscience and faith unfeigned." All else is gratuitous and incidental. Not all of God's gifts will meet the need. It is God himself my spirit craves. But when He comes into my life to reign in the fullness of His grace and glory, there is no craving left unappeased, and I am enabled to look on all there is in the world, and all there is in the transient and incidental of even the Christian life, and still say, "There is none on earth or in heaven I desire but Thee."

6. Beware of making a rent in the church. Wesley's challenge was stated in dual form, "Beware of schism -- of making a rent in the church." We know that in the past great fundamentals have divided the professed followers of the true God. Such a separation came when a portion of the faithful in Israel proclaimed Jesus . of Nazareth as the promised Messiah, and when the others would not hear and heed the message. There was then a sharp and permanent separation. There was such a separation in the visible church when Martin Luther proclaimed the apostolic doctrine of justification by faith, and all would not hear. Even Wesley himself led off a separate group composed of those who had themselves become partakers of vital things in Christian experience and life. And there are other instances of separation over fundamentals in which the separatists were "pushed-outers," more than "come-outers," and other such instances may yet occur in the history of the Christian Church. To such cases Wesley evidently had no reference.

Rather his thought was turned to the instances in which within a group of worshipers ambitious people who have real or imagined qualities for leadership make themselves or their own pet notions nuclei for clans and inner circles" which minister to pride and personal preferences, rather than to the glory of God and the advantage of His cause in this world.

Questions relating to general church union are beyond the sphere of interest for the most of us, and if we are interested, in the most cases there is nothing we can .do about it. But within our own group there is responsibility, and here we are enjoined not to contribute to divisive tendencies, but to work for peace and co-operation in service.

It is a serious thing to break fellowship with other worshipers of God. And the sad part of it is that Christians are so serious in their religion, that they usually do not go far until they begin to impugn each other's motives and become divided in spirit, even when circumstances work for keeping them united in form. Solomon gave the man who sows discord among brethren a low place in bad company, but David commended as good and pleasant the dwelling together of brethren in unity.

Our present purpose does not warrant our branching out into questions of wisdom about church joining, church union, advantages and disadvantages of denominationalism and such like. We are thinking in terms of the personal unit in God's work. How shall I go about it to develop and maintain unity among God's people? Well, Christ is the gathering place of His disciples, and the way to get close to all of them is to get close up to Him. I would perhaps waste my time if I went about preaching "let us get together." But when I get up close to Christ all those who are close to Him seem immediately to recognize me as a brother. But when I get off and warm my hands around the enemy's fire, I need someone to identify me in the crowd, for few will know me as one who companies with His people. After all, then, the call for unity among Christians is a call to each one of us to a closer walk with Christ. Not simply a conversion of doctrines, or even a broadening of nominal and official fellowship, but a "drawing nigh to God." Our oneness is in Christ, not in external vows and formalities.

7. Be exemplary in all things, especially in little things like dress, laying out your money, and in serious and useful conversation. In this last instance Wesley forsook his negative form and gave a comprehensive and positive precept. Perhaps we all love hero stories, and perhaps we have dreamed of a red letter day in our own lives when with one bold act we would justify our whole existence upon the earth. But most of us have lived long enough now to know that usually we miss the big opportunities.

We were too young when one war came, and too old when the next appeared. We were at the place just before and just after the accident occurred, but we were not on the spot at the big moment. We could be at the wonder spot only one time, and on that day it was raining, so the beauty that some describe escaped us. The night of the big eclipse it was cloudy in our part of the country. The great man did not move into our circle when he was a boy, so we narrowly missed being his chum. And it is the same way with deeds. We are not called upon to do one heroic act and be through with it. We do not have a challenge that we can answer and prove once and for all that we are what we claim to be. No, our lives are made up of little things. Just as the "little drops of water and little grains of sand make the mighty ocean and the pleasant land," so we must content ourselves with an accumulation of minor deeds and mediocre speeches.

Wesley mentions dress as one of the little things in which we should be exemplary. By being exemplary is not meant that we shall be models of the latest fashions, nor that we shall be companions of outmoded styles. On this matter the Scriptures stick, as they usually do, to principles, rather than to rules of thumb. There are at least two reasons for human dress, one is necessity and the other is modesty, and the exemplary person regards both these demands. We must wear clothing in the winter to keep us warm, and we must wear it in the summer to protect us from the heat, and our clothing should be adapted to this utilitarian purpose in disregard of the styles which would have women wear furs in the summer and light and unadapted garments in the winter. And dress must have respect to modesty. Clothing was given our foreparents the day they fell into sin in substitution for the halo of innocence which was taken from them, that their shame should not appear. And in spite of the faddists, let us not forget that clothing is the handmaiden of modesty, and that its style, texture and fullness should pay tribute to this fact. And, again disregarding the faddists, the well dressed person is the modestly dressed person, whose dress does not call for remark for either comeliness or homeliness.

Laying out your money is also listed among the little things. Money is just stored up labor, and labor is but the material form of time, and time is the commodity of which life is made. Therefore the careless spender of money is involved in many serious complications. Laying up money is condemned as the sin of the miser. Laying out money too lavishly is the sin of the prodigal. But in between these two extremes is the place for Christian economical life. Industry and frugality are virtues. Laziness and prodigality are vices. The Christian must give thought to earning, saving, spending, and giving, with giving as the guiding motive. And yet not indiscriminate giving, but thoughtful and religious giving, such as will, in the judgment of the Christian, honor Christ and change the gift, by processes of divine alchemy, into the kind of gold that can stand the fire and be at par when the gold of earth has perished.

Serious and useful conversation. These "little things" begin to loom large. It has been remarked that the diagnostician does not go far until he asks to see the patient's tongue, that from it he may judge the state of the general health. And I think it is the same in spiritual matters. The tongue, the lips, the mouth, the words, how frequent the appeal of inspired prophets to these indices of inner condition! How earnestly did David pray, "Let the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer."

Wesley thought few people could talk for more than an hour at one time without saying something they should not say, and on this account he recommended frequent withdrawal from social communication, and thought that work, even exacting work, is more friendly to godliness than leisure. Most people think they could do well if they but had more time to pray and to meditate and to do good works. But the temptations that come to the idle are more subtle, and have better opportunity than those which come to the busy, so we are perhaps more fortunate than we think, who find ourselves too busy to be much affected by incidentals about us. When sin first entered the world God, in mercy, prescribed work as a remedy to allay the worst effects of the fallen state.

Careless talk, the use of bywords, the habit of speaking evil of others, the tendency to spread evil surmises which have not been authenticated, make jokes of religion, of matrimony and of death are bad for both the spirituality of the speaker and the good manners of the hearers. The Christian should be a lady or gentleman of the first class. For while good manners do not always embrace Christian graces, Christian graces should always embrace good manners.

When about to tell something uncomplimentary of another, if we would always stop and ask, "Is this true? Is it necessary to tell it? Is it kind to tell it?" we would probably leave off many things that we spread all too readily. But even conversation dealing with good things, religion, the church and God can run shallow by reason of excess, so that it is not enough to judge that conversation is serious, it must also pass the test of being useful.

But a complete summary of Wesley's seven points pretty well covers the scope of commended Christian life. To avoid pride, fanaticism, lawlessness, sins of omission, seeking things that are outside the will of God for us, . making factions in the church and giving our attention to the matter of being a good example in all things, including such little things as dress, laying out money and engagement in serious and useful conversation is to just about assure ourselves that we shall be approved of both God and men, and that we shall be able to do good

and not evil all the days of our lives. And in our pursuit of such a life, we ask for divine grace and wisdom.

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8

THE SPIRITUAL CHRISTIAN

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted (Galatians 6:1). And I, brethren, could not write unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ (1 Cor. 3:1).

The task of reconciling the ideal and the real is never fully completed in this world. It is approximated, however, in one of two ways by practically everybody. On the one hand, some give up their ideals and settle down to contentment with whatever is. This they often do for themselves, and for others and for the world in general.

In such a state they become mere encumbrances -- just adding to quantity and numbers without affecting quality or weight. Sometimes they become content with themselves, and not with others. In that case they become egoists and critics, or even descend to the position of satirists and sour pessimists. Sometimes they become content with others and not with themselves. In this case they normally suffer from inferiority complex or drift into a state of super-sensitiveness and self-condemnation on the border line of insanity and nervous collapse.

But there is a better way, and that is the way of bringing the life up to the standard. The standard, we conceive, is invariable in its final analysis, but variable in its application, according to the light and knowledge which we possess. "That servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." This is the meaning of the saying, "Noah was perfect in his generation, and Noah walked with God." That is, in the light of the day in which he lived, Noah was as good as he knew how to be. It is according to God's mercy that the full light does not shine upon us all at Once, but it comes little by little as we are able to receive it. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." The Christian life is a progressive life. It begins with a crisis, but it continues as a process. Christ seems close enough that one can grasp Him even in the hour of the penitent's faith. Still He goes on before as a peerless pattern to the time when we shall see Him on His throne, "when the mists have cleared away."

Ideally, every Christian is a spiritual Christian, and the subject of this address appears as but a truism. But really, every Christian is not a spiritual Christian. What shall we do? Shall we ascend the judgment seat and set up a standard and say whoever does not come up to this standard is not spiritual? No, we cannot do that, for the whole life is occupied with the task of bringing the real up to the ideal. Perhaps we would better content ourselves with lifting up the standard and let who will come up to it.

John Wesley, quoting from another, said, "There have been from the beginning two orders of Christians. The majority of the one order live an honest life, doing many good works, abstaining from gross evils and attending the ordinances of God, but waging no downright warfare against the world nor making any strenuous effort for the extension of Christ's kingdom. These aim at no special spiritual excellence, but are content with the average attainments of their neighbors. The other class of Christians not only abstain from every form of vice, but are zealous of every kind of good works. They attend all the ordinances of God. They use all diligence to attain the whole mind that was in Christ and to walk in the very footsteps of their beloved Master. They unhesitatingly trample on every pleasure which disqualifies for highest usefulness. They deny themselves not only indulgences which are expressly forbidden, but also all those which by experience they have found to diminish their enjoyment of God. They take up their cross daily. At the morning's dawn they pray, 'Glorify Thyself in me this day, O blessed Jesus!' It is more than their meat and drink to do their heavenly Father's will. They are not Quietists, ever lingering in secret places, delighting in the ecstasies of enraptured devotion. They go forth from the closet as Moses came down from the Mountain of God, with faces radiant with divine glory, and visiting the degraded and the outcast, they prove by their lives the divineness of the gospel."

Almost anything can be approached through its opposites, and in the case of spirituality there are a number of opposites, depending upon the angle from which approach is made. Sometimes spirituality must be thought of as contrasted with materiality. Material things have a way of getting very close to us until their ideals blind us to higher values. This is what happens to the miser and to the covetous man. This is what happened to Esau. Coming in from the chase weary and hungry this "profane" man thought honor and responsibility of small consequence in comparison with food for his body. He had no right to sell the birthright. That was given him by the "accident" of providence. It involved much responsibility, as well as certain privileges, and an honorable man would hold on to it and die, rather than sell it and live. There are some things like purity and honor that have no price and to which a man who sees things in their true light will hold fast at any cost whatsoever. We are really not bound to live, but we are obligated, if we live, to live right before God and men. So a man who is spiritual will properly appraise things material and will not become their slave. Or stating the matter positively, a spiritual Christian is delivered from the love of money, the love of material goods, and the love of cheap reputation. He is devoted to the things of the soul, and accounts character true worth, and is without price where right is involved.

Then spirituality is in contrast with formality. Form is inescapable and desirable, but when form is without spirit it is formality. Take the instance of the human body: it has form, but while the vital spirit is in it, it is alive. But when the spirit is gone out it is a corpse. Religion, like all life, has its forms. It has its personal habits and its social orders in home, state and church. But when it has . these and no more, it is formality and like its prototype, the human corpse, becomes unsightly and deserves only to be buried out of sight. It is a good thing to pray, but merely saying prayers in the absence of sincerity and faith is no better than the heathen can do. It is a good thing to go to church, but if one goes only for custom's sake and does not there meet and worship God, church going has no virtue. Hymns and songs and sermons can be artistically correct and yet be but the products of cultured minds and be disconnected from true spirituality.

Spirituality may be in contrast with legality. "There should be a law against it, and the law should be enforced," says the legalist in church and in state. And one can be ever so exacting on himself and on others and yet be harsh and cruel and unchristian. It is not unusual to find people of faultless outward conduct who are minus love. Paul conceived of persons so talented that they could speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and yet not be spiritual because without love. He thought of the possibility of being gifted and possessed with a willingness to give away all one possesses and, even willing that his body should be burned, and yet, being without the inner content of love, be without profit. The state must maintain prisons for the incarceration of the socially unfit for the protection of the innocent. But prisons do not make men new. The church exercises some authority over its members, but it does not save men by church trials and the enforcement of discipline. Problems are not solved really until they are solved in a spiritual atmosphere, and our task is not to destroy men, but to save them.

Spirituality is often the antipode of worldly. The Scriptures use that word "world" to describe the whole course of the age as it runs in transformation to the way of God. Worldly includes wicked, but it takes in respectable also. It begins at the top just under the lower boundary of the kingdom of God and extends down to the nethermost hell. The world has a bid for every one -- it had a bid for the Son of God himself. It offers pleasure, ease, honor, promotion, popularity, creature comfort, and everything appealing in substitution for the Spirit of God as an indwelling presence. Often worldliness is defined only as it respects adornment of the body. It includes this, but it goes much deeper. The spirit of the world is almost as universal and penetrating as the air we breathe, and mere vows and intellectual decisions are insufficient to defend us against it. We must have the Spirit of God dwelling within us, else this other spirit will break in and spoil our goods and use our souls and bodies as a home and basis for operation.

St. Paul gives us an idea of what spirituality is not when he tells the Corinthians he could not write unto them as unto spiritual, but as unto babes in Christ. As babes these Corinthian Christians could not take strong meat, but had to be favored with a milk diet. Little people are easily offended, and these nonspiritual Christians were little and had the characteristics of infants. If people claim to be spiritual they should be able to bear the disagreeable. This is, I think, a better sign of genuine spirituality than any demonstration one can make. Ability to take the undesirable uncomplainingly is needed more often than ability to enjoy the desirable. Almost anyone should be able to keep up his courage when things go his way. But in the world we have tribulation and the spiritual Christian is able to glory in tribulation. Tribulation is said to work patience. This is done by making it necessary for us to appraise ourselves anew. We are hurt when we think we deserve more than we get. But when tribulation does its work we learn that we are not pets in the universe, and that the worst that can come to anyone can come to us, and this new appraisal makes it difficult for us to get hurt. It is on the principle that one who is already flat on the ground cannot be forced lower. And when we get our own appraisal low, others, even when they think to belittle us, exalt us, for they give us a higher rating than we give ourselves. In the Love Chapter, 1 Corinthians 13, Paul asserts that love beareth all things and never fails. Undoubtedly this is speaking of the fullness of love, and such a state is therefore the same as that which we are calling a spiritual state. A spiritual Christian is able by the grace of God to keep his balance and . equipoise when there is pressure such as would naturally be expected to upset him. He is able to possess his soul in patience. He is habitual in the practice of true temperance, which is the New Testament word for self-control. St. James describes a high class Christian as one who bridles his tongue, and does not

say things he should not say. We may think of talkativeness as just a human trait without moral and spiritual significance. But James warns that there is invariably sin in too much talk. This must be true because one cannot talk much without saying something he should not say. Scandal, gossip, backbiting, offending by words -- how long indeed is the list of sins of the tongue toward which much talk invariably trends! But let this not be simply a call for more careful use of the tongue. Let it be also a challenge for obtaining grace that will bring the tongue under control. There is not much in the New Testament about mere abstinence. The stroke is at the place of fundamental error -- the heart. Out of the heart come the words of the lips. The Spiritual Christian does have his tongue under control because he has his heart under grace.

St. John described the spiritual Christian as one who loves God and loves his brethren in the Lord Jesus Christ. And it makes it clear that the demand is for practical love. That form which would assert love and then break down on its practical proof cannot pass. The spiritual Christian does not love in word alone, but in deed and in truth. When there is a company of spiritual Christians together, onlookers must be moved to say, "Behold, how they love one another!"

Coming again to St. Paul, he lays it down as a principle that the spiritual Christian shall be a restorer of lost love and a healer of broken faith. "If any man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." It takes more grace to bear with another's faults than it does to tolerate our own sins. But it takes yet more grace to restore the erring than merely to bear with them. And still more grace is required to restore in the spirit of meekness -- to restore and not brag about it. It is relatively easy to drop names from the membership roll, but to bring the wandering back to the fold -- that is the test. People who err and know they err are usually sensitive and can be won only by those possessed of a heart full of love. The spiritual Christian may not be talented, but he will have love and compassion. He may not be a theologian so that he can analyze one's spiritual ills in intelligible terminology, but he can point the penitent to the Savior. He may not be wordy in prayer, but he will have faith for the divine intervention. He has a sense of the divine presence in his own life, and therefore arises to hope and faith for others.

If my subject called for the possession of talent or ability of a natural kind it would be in order only to either congratulate you on your possession of the treasure or to sympathize with you on your want of it. But seeing it is possible for the weakest and least gifted to be spiritual, I think it is allowable to close with such an exhortation as Paul gave, "Be filled with the Spirit." Be a spiritual Christian. Be spiritual in the essential sense by becoming Spirit-filled, Spirit-cleansed and Spirit-anointed. Be spiritual in voluntary attitude by laying your principal evaluation upon the things of the soul, rather than upon the things that relate to the body. Deny ungodliness and worldly lusts by turning your back entirely upon them. Reject the offers of the world once and for all, and account nothing as having value except in its relation to the kingdom of God. Give your life to God as an offering poured forth. Be hard on yourself and considerate of others. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." You need not be a fanatic, you need not become a religious curiosity. You should become a worthy example of Christian character and conduct that you might say, as did Paul, "Follow me as I follow Christ."

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THE PERMANENT TRIUMPH OF GOD'S PEOPLE

But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold (Job 23:10).

Just why books should have prefaces and introductions, no one seems to know -- and few seem to care. But a little while ago I chanced upon Adam Clarke's preface to the Book of Job, and being confident that not many had read it, and having a little desire to read something "different," I read the following beautiful paragraph: "This is the most singular book in the whole sacred code, though written by the same inspiration, and in reference to the same end, the salvation of men, it is so different from every other book of the Bible that it seems to possess nothing in common with them, for even the language in its construction, is dissimilar from that of the law, the prophets, and the historical books. But on all hands it is accounted a work that contains 'the purest morality, the sublimest philosophy, the simplest ritual, and the most majestic creed.'"

By this time I was interested in Dr. Clarke's preface, and so I went on to another paragraph in which he says, "As to the Book of Job, it is evidently a poem, and a poem of the highest order; dealing with subjects the most grand and sublime; using imagery the most chaste and appropriate; described by language the most happy and energetic; conveying instruction, in both divine and human things, the most ennobling and useful; abounding in precepts the most pure and exalted, which are enforced by arguments the most strong and conclusive, and illustrated by examples the most natural and striking."

And still not content, I read one more paragraph, "All these points will appear in the strongest light to every attentive reader of the book, and to such its great end will be answered: they will learn from it that God has way everywhere: that the wicked, though bearing rule for a time, can never be ultimately prosperous and happy; and that the righteous, though oppressed with suffering and calamities, can never be forgotten by Him in whose hands are His saints, and with whom their lives are precious; that . in this world neither are the wicked ultimately punished, nor the righteous ultimately rewarded; that God's judgments are a great deep, and His ways past finding out; but the issues of all are to the glory of His wisdom and grace and to the eternal happiness of those who trust in Him. This is the grand design of the book and this design will be strikingly evident to the simplest and most unlettered reader whose heart is right with God and who is seeking instruction in order that he may glorify his Maker by receiving and by doing good."

These lengthy quotations will excuse me, I hope, from any further effort to expound the Book of Job, concerning which I profess to be no expert at all. But I would like to draw attention: (1) to Job's individual case; (2) to the case of God's people in general; and (3) to what seems to me to be the purpose of trials in this world.

I. Job's Individual Case

1. Job was a man who loved God and obeyed God up to the measure of his light. The statement was that "He was perfect in his generation," which we take to mean he was as good as he knew how to be. We cannot judge a man in the light of fuller revelation. We cannot judge Noah or

Abraham or David or any of the ancients on that basis. We cannot even judge people of a generation two steps back from ourselves by the light we have today. Two generations ago many devout Christians in America owned human slaves, and many useful ministers of the gospel took part of their "quarterage" in rum, and it was so reported at the end of the year without bringing offense to anyone. But Job was a good man. Using the term as we understand it, we would say he was a true Christian.

2. When first introduced to us, Job was in good health, had many friends and was prosperous and popular. He was situated so favorably that one can scarcely escape the feeling that he was what a good man ought to be, and that the evidences of well-being were divine testimony to his purity and dependability.

3. Without any fault on his own part, Job lost all that could be accounted outward evidence of God's favor. His children were killed, his wealth was stripped from him, his place among the elders of the city was forfeited, his friends forsook him, his wife advised suicide and he was afflicted with painful and loathsome diseases.

4. Job's friends, reasoning from known premises and following the usual logic, reached the conclusion that Job was not in God's favor. They decided that Job was a hypocrite, and a fraud, and that his punishment had at last caught up with his crimes. They made no distinction between material and spiritual good, and reasoning that a good God could never render evil for good, they were confident that the original prosperity had been transient, and intended as a means to bring Job to repentance, and he, having stiffened his neck, was now finally cut off with punishment that was to be both severe and lasting. The facts in the case and the logic of such matters as relate to cause and effect sustained the conclusions of Job's "miserable comforters."

5. But Job still contended that he was right, although he had to admit the facts of his outward life were against him, and also that the logic of his friends was the accepted logic of men in general. But he contended the case was not as it seemed. He still held fast to his integrity, and testified that he had not sinned to cause his misery, and that he could still get his prayers through to God, although he could get no answer in explanation of his plight. In desperation Job longed to come up before God's judgment seat where he would plead his own case and win it before the intelligences of the universe. In his desperation he rushed ahead to seek out God's way, but he found nothing. He turned to the right hand, then to the left. He sought in the darkness behind him, but God eluded him everywhere, and made no explanation of His way with Job.

6. At last the light breaks in on Job, and he discovered that although he could not trace God's ways, he was not lost for all that, for God kept track of him, knew the way he took, and would in the end bring him out purified like gold that is drawn from the furnace. Here he found consolation and stopped. The full explanation must wait. But it was enough to know that the present is not the end, and that when the end comes it will be favorable, and that the triumph of the righteous, and not the defeat, will be permanent.

II. And Now to The Case of God's People in General

1. Whatever may have been the case in the childhood days of the race, we know that now health and wealth and prosperity and popularity and general well-being are not dependable evidences of divine favor, and that the absence of these things do not prove that God is displeased. We know these things from observation, as well as from the plain statements of the New Testament. The writers of the New Testament warned that those who would be rich would have excessive temptations, and that the preponderance of God's people in the new age would be poor, and that persecution and unpopularity would be all but universal for good people. And in our observations we are unable to discern the righteous from the wicked by the size of their bank accounts, the state of their health, or by any other external evidence of well-being. There are some good people who are favored in the things of this world, but for every saint in this class it would not be difficult to find a sinner whose outward state is every bit as good.

I know it is an easy philosophy that reasons that God wills the health and prosperity of His people. But its being easy does not save it from the fault of being false. Many of the saintliest people are invalid, and not a few such are desperately poor.

And it will not do to say that judgment will overtake the ungodly in this world, for it does not always do it. Many who have been wanton and covetous and cruel have lived in plenty and died in peace, so far as the world is concerned. The difference just does not show up on the outside.

2. The evidence of acceptance with God is internal peace in the heart. To many this may seem insufficient. Why does not God vindicate His own now? Why must the evidence be so personal and so subjective? Rather, we should rejoice that it is internal and enduring. The witness of the Holy Spirit to our spirits is closer and more dependable than any outward show that could possibly be given. But it is not our province just now to justify God. It is enough for us that this is His way. He has chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, to be the heirs of His kingdom. He has made the Christian's heart His temple. He has made our riches to be the gold of the spirit. He has arranged that we shall possess values unrelated to our temporary estate.

And neither shall we take prosperity and popularity as contradictions of the Christian testimony. For while not many noble and great after the flesh are called, it is never said that none such shall come in, and the history of the Church contains the names of some whose stars shone bright among men, as they shall shine later in the diadem of the Lord. We must just leave it with the statement that externals are not criteria. Not all the rich are bad, not all the poor are good. Not all the good are unfavored, and not all the evil are rewarded. Externals are just not guides -- that is all. The difference is in the inner man in which realm the wicked are unfailingly poor and the righteous are rich without exception.

III. And Now What is The Purpose of Trials in This World?

We speak of course of the trials of the righteous. Why should a good man suffer? Why should a holy man be sick? Why should one of God's favorites be poor and without employment?

If these questions puzzle us, remember they have puzzled many of our betters. But Job suggested the best explanation that has yet been given. He said he would come out of his trials like

purified gold. The fire separates the gold from every clinging thing that is not of its nature. And trials serve to divorce us from everything that we cannot keep forever. It is a mercy that people get old and that they get sick, for these things serve to make it easier to die. It is a good thing that the world should not be too friendly, for that makes the final parting from it less bitter. I speak from experience here. There is less to hold me to the earth since I have been bereaved than there was before. Benjamin Franklin complained that his friends had left him. He was older than the majority with whom he associated in his active years, and yet they died and he lived on. But he missed his old friends and the earth was less his home.

But the compensation of it all is in that "He abideth faithful." Some years ago a woman waited in the front pew until the crowd had somewhat dispersed after the service, and then arose and introduced herself, and said, "You used to know my husband, and you knew the family, somewhat, also. I heard you were to be here, and as I prayed over my heavy burdens and cares, it came to me that if I would come here today you would say something that would help me. So I came a hundred miles, and must go back right away, but I cannot go until I have told you a little of my heavy load. My husband was a good man, as you know. But when difficulties arose in connection with his work, and he was blamed for the trouble, he seemed unable to throw it off. After two years of melancholy he died without there seeming to be anything particularly the matter with him. Our son, who was devoted to his father, took on a melancholy turn after his father's death, and in a few months he also died. With great personal sacrifice I kept my two girls in school, and prayed and hoped they would justify our lives by being useful somewhere. But, as you know, the elder, after making some beginning in Christian service, turned to sin and disgrace and broke my heart again, and has never yet been recovered from the snares of the devil. A few months ago, my last, my little girl, began showing signs of unbalanced mentality. In her hallucinations she turned against me and claimed to the neighbors that I am mean to her, and that I beat and mistreat her (although just the opposite is the case -- we have been the closest pals all her life) . Last month I took her to an institution for examination and observation. Last week I got the report which was to the effect that my little girl is afflicted with an incurable form of insanity, and the experts, studying the family history, think the whole chain of calamities is chargeable to a strain of insanity that came down through my husband's side of the family, and which was the cause of the break under the strain in every ease. It is hard for me to pray and keep my faith, but God has helped me, and I still trust Him and believe that in the end He will bring everything out right. And I believe He sent me here today that you might help me."

The long recital was concluded with the woman's eyes still dry. I replied, "I cannot think God sent you here for me to help you, for compared with what you have suffered, I really have never had any sorrow. But I believe God sent you here to help me that I might help others. I have to stand up from day to day and preach to people that there is a God who knows and cares and who will never, never, never forsake them. And sometimes I am pressed with the feeling that some of them have sorrows and troubles so deep that my assurances must sound shallow. But I believe God sent you here today to help and strengthen me that I might with the greater assurance tell men and women that God will stand by them and see them through. I will tell them that I know a woman whose sorrows are three times as bad as theirs, and yet she does not give up her faith, and God does not withdraw His assurance. You have been sent here today to help me?"

At the conclusion of my words the woman's fountain of tears was broken up, and in the midst of it her broken heart found some relief, and her tempest-tossed soul saw a glimmer of light. "Oh," she cried, "that is just the help I needed. I had felt that it was all to no purpose. But if my experience helps you and helps you to help others, then there is some good in it, and I shall go back to my humble calling and hold fast to the promises of God and I shall see His face some day and all will be clear."

The calamities of God's people are transient, but their triumphs will be permanent. That is why from the midst of his trials, Job could arise to say, "Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever! For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me."

God of mercy and of grace, we, like Job, find it difficult to always know the way Thou dost take. But we are consoled with the assurance that we are not lost to Thee; but that the very hairs of our heads are all numbered by Thee, and that when our probation is over, having been served successfully and faithfully, we shall see Thy face, and all shall be clear. Give us grace to suffer and to wait, "until the day break, and the shadows flee away." In Jesus' name. Amen.

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10

OUR HERITAGE FROM THE PAST

When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also (2 Timothy 1:5).

Extremes are easier than the golden mean. We all know there is a past behind us, but it is easier to either become a devotee of antiques or to cast away the old as a liability than it is to sanely survey the past and take from it the good it offers as the miner would seek the diamonds among the "pipes." Things are not valuable just because they are old, neither are they worthless for the same reason. Some old things are good, some are of small worth. And these same observations should be made regarding the new. Age is not a full criterion.

Bishop Quayle observed that the mightier the river the greater its debt. Using the Mississippi as an example, he mentions the immediate and distant tributaries as creditors of the mighty "Father of Waters." And he says life is like that. A man's size is pretty much measured by his debts. If he has drawn upon others he owes these others for their contributions, and his ability to bless is the measure of the blessings he has taken from others.

"Time brings about great changes," but these changes are largely limited to incidentals like modes of travel, plans for transmitting thought, and conveniences of daily life. The great fundamentals in man remain the same, and the great fundamentals in nature continue as they were.

There is no instance in which the changing incidentals and the unchangeable fundamentals are better illustrated than in those things which pertain to Christianity. Perhaps we may cover the thought we have in mind by saying that the message of Christianity is always the same, while the methods of Christianity vary with the ages and in different communities during the same age. Failure to make this distinction between the principle which is constant and the details which vary has led to many errors both in thought and in practice.

There are a few words and phrases like "Faith of Our Fathers," "Back to the Bible," "Old-time Religion," and "Pentecost" which have precious meaning within limits, but which have often been maligned by the assigning of undue latitude. These words and phrases are applicable to the message of Christianity, but not to its methods. They are synonyms of type, and not assignations of dates. When they are applied to methods they lose their meaning, and may even become placards of deadness and earmarks of spiritual exhaustion.

It has been remarked that the Church is the conservative element in society, and that it is the last to accept any new idea or to adopt any new reform. This is partly because the Church has moorings, while the rest of mankind are always at sea. People who hold to the Bible as the Word of God are not easily excited by the sudden announcement of some revolutionary idea, and by the time the Church gets around to examine the thesis of the novice, the first converts to the idea have become remiss, so the Church never does become involved.

But this tendency toward conservatism has sometimes been misapplied. When Sunday schools were first proposed many good church people opposed them as being out of harmony with the spirit of the Sabbath day. When it was first proposed to provide heat in New England churches "the old guard" violently opposed the idea on the ground that it was a concession to fleshly ease and comfort and out of harmony with the heroic spirit of worship. John Wesley and the early Methodists opposed the use of musical instruments in the church on the ground that such instruments in the history of true worship as represented by Judaism and Christianity always made their appearance in times of spiritual decline, and that inanimate instruments were incapable of expressing praise to God. It has not always been easy to satisfy immersion congregations with indoor baptisteries, on the ground that Jesus was baptized in a river. It was with reluctance that many modern churches abandoned the common cup in the communion service before the urge of new ideas of sanitation because the change seemed to be a step toward "modernism."

But when these things are pointed out the thoughtless make a heap of all the church possesses and say, "It is all reactionary. It is all obsolete. Let us discard it and turn to things that are new." The wording of some of the historic creeds is baffling to those who have not studied theology so some would abandon all creeds and substitute a freelance religion in which everyone believes whatever he chooses and does whatever is right in his own eyes, without acknowledging any authoritative standards of any kind. This is confusing the message and the methods and forgetting the distinction between the incidental and the fundamental.

It is like the distinction between a house and a home. It is a very convenient thing for a family to have a house. It is encouraging to the family's sense of unity to own the house in which the family lives. But the house is not the home. In fact the home may yet be intact when the house and all its furnishings are burned to ashes.

Christianity was in the world for fourteen centuries before the advent of the printing press. It was here nineteen centuries before the radio came. It was here before the time of good roads and motor cars. It was here before the modern church edifice with educational equipment was even dreamed of. But no agency has made greater use of printing than the Church. There are few Christians nowadays who do not approve the singing of hymns and the preaching of the gospel "over the air." Good roads and motor cars have occasioned the closing or moving of many country churches. Practically any wide-awake church is thankful for an adequate church building. The old-time "Pulpit voice" is seldom affected by modern preachers, no matter how "old-fashioned" they may profess to be. And the various departments and auxiliaries into which it is customary to divide the church for service purposes have made their appearance everywhere. We welcome all the changes as advancements and consider ourselves faithful yet to the vision of our fathers who made the best of their situation in their endeavors to be good and do good.

But our chief debt to the past arises from the unchanging elements of the gospel -- the message itself. A grandmother, a mother and a mother's son, all in their order possessed and passed on the heritage of "unfeigned faith" -- faith that is not put on. This faith involved the Fatherhood of God, the Sonship of Christ, the personality and office of the Holy Spirit, the lost and exposed condition of man, the atonement in the blood of Jesus Christ, the work of regeneration and of sanctification by the Holy Spirit, the dependability of the moral law, the fact of communion with God, the assurance of immortality, the hope of eternal life in heaven. All these and more we have as a heritage from those who have gone before us. They were not inventors, but were discoverers, and we share in their finds.

Abraham went out "not knowing whither he went." But he came out so well that we can assume the life of faith in God without reluctance. Moses endured as seeing Him whom he could not see. But the issues of his seeming unequal choice were such that we feel there is no risk in taking Christ in preference to all that might be offered in substitution for Him. Job's patience was a trial to his friends, but we know now that it pays to wait upon God. Daniel's fidelity was rewarded. Paul rejoiced at the end that he had "kept the faith." John saw inside heaven and then tried to tell us what he saw and heard in the poor language which our minds can grasp.

And between the men of the Bible and ourselves are the generations in which were faithful men and women who lived up to all the light it pleased God to give them, and then went out with testimonies of triumph on their lips to light the river's crossing for us. From them we learn how to live -- and how to die. We know but few of their names, but we are enlightened by their sustained glory.

And what shall we say of our debt to Martin Luther who rediscovered the way of salvation on condition of simple faith? of the early Baptists who insisted that every believer is his own sufficient priest under Jesus Christ the great High Priest, and assured untitled men that they can find God without the necessity of pope or priest or other human mediator? of John Calvin and John Knox who thundered out the law of God until men became aware that God is Judge as well as Savior? of George Fox and the Quakers who testified to the reality of "the inner light" of spiritual experience? of John Wesley and his coadjutors for their unrivaled construction of the doctrine of

scriptural holiness? of General Booth and the Salvation Army for their example of zeal in world-wide evangelism?

Nay, more, we have a heritage in the godly forebears and immediate parents who brought us into touch with the finer things of life at the price of much sacrifice of creature comfort on their own part. There are exceptions, of course, but the most of us owe a debt to our parents which we can pay only to our children. Our parents are gone now. But even if they are living, they ask not that we shall return to them the heritage they handed us. They will consider themselves rewarded if we pass on what has been given to us.

Our danger is that we shall not sufficiently cherish the noble fortune to which we have fallen heir, and that we shall squander it in riotous living. Even in the affairs of this world, it is said to be just as big a task to husband a fortune as to make it in the first place. Many a rich man's son has died penniless because he was careless of his patrimony. The father laid the foundation in a life of prayer and devotion. His son neglected to set up a family altar. He forsook the house of God for the golf course and places of diversion. He spent his money on selfish pursuits, instead of accounting his means a sacred trust to be used in advancing the kingdom of God. And now it happens that the heritage is gone. The children of the new home are worldly and lawless. The old church is deserted and in disrepair. The heat of evangelistic fervor has cooled in the community. The chain has been broken. The trust of the fathers has been dispersed. Come, let us turn again to the old paths. For a time now we have seemed to think ourselves sufficient. But we know better now. We are beginning to see the disappointing end of the ways of the worldly wise. We know now that the broken cisterns of the ungodly will not hold water. Let us return to the fountain from which our fathers drank. We know now that the ways that merely seem right, without actually being right, end but in the ways of death. Just as the inventions of men have done nothing to provide substitutes for air, water and food for the body, so their sophistries have given nothing in the place of God's Bible for the intellect, God's providences for our bodies, and God's Spirit for our hearts.

"Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Jeremiah 6:16).

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11

GRACE AND GOOD SENSE

And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ (Philippians 1:9, 10).

A doctor was giving expert testimony in a New York court. The case involved mental responsibility, and the doctor finally said that in order for a man to be really sane he had to possess good health, be in easy circumstances as regarding income and expenditures, and be a man of clean moral and spiritual affections. Pressed by attorneys, he admitted that on such a basis there are probably not more than five person out of a hundred who should be classified as truly sane.

We all know there is an inclination to justify whatever we have a desire to do, and from this we know that it is necessary to be good if we would be wise. If a man's heart is right, so that he loves only what is pure and good, he has already passed the first test in the school of sound doctrine. The conduct of men is affected by what they believe, but what they believe is affected by what they love, and since it is the specific work of the Holy Spirit to purify the affections, the Spirit-filled man will be a wise man and a good man. If men would make progress in education there is nothing that will help them more than to become possessed of purified and exalted motives, and this makes the prayer for an increase of love as a means for promoting good sense a very fitting thing. Lord, give us more grace that we may have better judgment. Sometimes men speak of "common sense" as though it were indeed a common thing. But the very fact that we remark upon it is proof that it is the exception, rather than the rule. We speak of one who is not noted as a specialist of any kind and say of him, "But he has a large amount of just good, old-fashioned common sense." Now this kind of common sense is an eclectic thing composed of choice selections from the judgment of all. The person we have credited as having common sense has himself the sense that ordinarily it would require the whole community to furnish. There is practically no one that is not remarkable for sense of one kind or another. But the trouble is he compensates his good judgment with bad judgment until we are uncertain whether to trust his ideas or not. Now if the man of common sense has the quick discernment of one, the patient mental process of another, the dependable conclusion of a third, and that practical application of still another he has built himself up to the place where we are bound to respect him almost as a paragon, and yet he does not show a single factor that is exactly unusual. It is our compensating follies that keep the most of us from making high marks in the school of wisdom. Solomon said, "Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour, so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour."

There are two things which stand in the way of good moral judgment, and love is the remedy for both:

1. Men err in judgment and practice for want of courage to do what they should.
2. Men err in moral judgment because of stubbornness and unwillingness to surrender their own way. They hold out for their preference even when they have become convinced that they are wrong.

Love, perfect love, cures the first disease by casting out slavish fear, and inspiring courage that dares to take the consequences of righteousness, whatever they are, for perfect love involves moral conviction that right is might and that victory in the final sense will come to one who does right. I speak of this as moral conviction, for I am sure it is something more intuitive than the conclusions of intellectual reasoning.

But love also cures stubbornness. Backbone has two provinces. One is to give the body a reasonable rigidity, and the other is to give it a certain amount of flexibility. If the backbone becomes altogether rigid, the victim is henceforth unable to walk anywhere except on perfectly level surfaces, for it is necessary to lean forward when going uphill, and backward when going downhill. And this is as applicable to the moral as to the physical realm. Unfortunate indeed is the man who thinks that man was made for the Sabbath, and who must keep rules, even if it costs lives

to do so. The legalist is no more Christian than the materialist or the formalist. St. Paul suggested that love is "easy to be entreated."

The Bible deals with the principles of holy conduct, not very largely with rules of thumb. It exhorts us to pray, but it does not settle for us the question of the attitude of prayer -- whether it should be kneeling, standing, sitting or lying prone on the ground. And yet we need direction in the details, as well as in the principles of life.

When Israel was en route to the promised land they were shown the general direction they were to take by the pillar of cloud and fire. But they also accepted the services of Hobab who was able to direct them to the water holes in the desert and act as eyes for them in setting the distance they were to go day by day. The pillar gave them the principles, but Hobab filled in with details. Likewise, the Bible gives us the principles, but we need the Holy Spirit to give us detailed direction. And this is the promise of Jesus. He said, "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth."

The heart of Christianity is not its doctrines, true and dependable though these be. It is not in its sacraments, beautiful and important though these are. It is not even in its ethics, although the standards of conduct are faultless. Rather, the heart of Christianity is in having Christ crowned within the heart. It is to be filled with the love of God. It is to be baptized and filled with the Holy Ghost.

We do not like the word mysticism on account of its association with philosophy in which connection it involves dreamy contemplation and long dwelling upon practical unrealities. But we do not have another word to describe what we mean, so we call what we have in mind "true mysticism." God is real, and the indwelling of His Holy Spirit is a conscious fact with those who have it. And there is promise of help for our intellects in the scope of the Spirit-filled life.

It is distasteful to speak frequently of the Lord's leadings, just as it is distasteful to spread family secrets abroad. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show unto them his covenant," so that when a Christian majors on saying, "The Lord told me to do this," or "I felt led to say that" there is a deserved resentment on the part of the listeners. Nevertheless, God does have a way of directing His people, and those who are delicate and instant in "minding the checks" will have growing satisfaction in the discovery that in them is fulfilled the promise that a good man's steps are ordered by the Lord.

Unfortunately men have a tendency to base conclusions on too few specimens. They have known one or heard of one who was deeply religious and was unbalanced. They conclude, therefore, that one who goes in for religion is mentally inadequate. But they have observed the "sports," and not the normal examples. Even those whom they have observed might easily have been worse if they had not been religious. But the large majority of those who have found grace in Christ have found wisdom in Him also.

Sometimes it is charged against the Church that it is reactionary, and that it is the last unit of society to accept a reform or to acclaim a new idea in the social order. And there are no doubt instances in which the Church has been too slow. But the general testimony is that the Church is

slow to accept that which is new because it has found a larger portion in that which is old than others have found. Take intellectual concepts: at the close of the French Revolution the French Academy listed more than eighty "scientific facts" that were inconsistent with the Bible, and which therefore proved that the Bible is not dependable. But before a hundred years had passed every single one of those supposed scientific facts were abandoned by the scientists themselves. Men anchored to no rock at all are likely to drift lightly, but that does not prove that their drifting is in the right direction. Christians do have something substantial in their Bible and their vital inner experience, and they are not ready to abandon all their gains to follow every will-o'-the-wisp that shallow thinkers offer as guide to the unwary.

But we must not generalize. The prayer of Paul is a prayer for individuals. His desire was for improved discernment on the part of everyday Christians. He wanted their intuitions as relating to things that differ to be keener and more dependable. He wanted them to know intuitively when they should shun certain companions, and when they should join in for the purpose of doing good. He wanted them to have that inner "feel" which would enable them to stop or go according to the interests of Christ's kingdom and their own influence. He wanted them to get to where they would not be asking, "Is there any harm in this?" He wanted them to come to where they would emphasize the positive qualities of a good life which would make them worthy of their Christian profession in thought, word and deed. He wanted them to become outstanding for good and wise choosing and holy living. But how could all these things be accomplished by prayer? Surely so many requirements would demand prayer for seminary training and the gift of intellectual capacities of spectacular sort. No, nothing so complicated as all that is involved. The prayer is just a petition for more spiritual grace -- more inwrought love. "I pray that your love may abound more and more," that your judgment may improve and your conduct be worthy of commendation. Do such by-products come from such a source? They certainly do. Let us do not more than refer to our own experiences. Is it not a fact with you and me that we are wisest when we are best? Do we not seem to be masters of sociology when we are overflowing with love for our fellow men? Do we not exceed our teachers in matters relating to God when our souls are aflame with His holy fire? Do we not excel in that wisdom that is characteristic of the soul winner when we are melted with holy passion for bringing men to God? Do not our tongues become as the pens of ready writers when we are truly moved by the Spirit?

Before this time I have listened to a "reformer" while he told of the evils of the dictators and of the general tendency of men to be bad, and the indications that the world is incurably sick. I have listened and been convinced by what he said. But when I have gone away I have said to myself, "This is a bad situation, and something should be done about it. But what can I do about it?" And I have not been much helped by any answer I was able to give. But when I come to a proposition so simple as the one before us, I am encouraged. I can do something about this. I can open my heart to a fuller incoming of the divine Spirit. I can lay myself liable to an increase of love. I can love God and God's people and a lost world more than hitherto, and since I have found that this will do just about all I need to see done, I am encouraged.

I pray for myself as Paul prayed for us all Lord grant me an increase of love. Take out of my heart everything that is contrary to Thy love. Fill me till I want no more. Purge me until there is nothing unlike Thee left. Saturate me until there is no room for self. Make me so fully like Thyself that when men see me they will think of Thee. Do this for me that I may be wise to choose,

courageous to act, even when the course required is unpopular; willing to yield, even when my strong personal preferences are violated, and patient to believe and bear when there is nothing active I can do to better matters. All these things Thou canst accomplish in me by an increase of Thy love, and for this I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

* * * * *

12

THE GOOD CHURCH MEMBER

Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular (1 Corinthians 12:27).

Maxims and Proverbs have their place, but one needs always to be warned against partial truths, lest they be taken as complete truths. It is frequently asserted that "The Church is an organism," and so it is, but it is also an organization. Membership in the organism is conditioned only upon that change wrought by the divine Spirit known as "the new birth." But membership in the organization is based upon the voluntary assumption of the mutual relationship between the members included in the organism, so that while one cannot be a Christian without being a member of the Church, he may be a Christian of initial grace and novitiate standing without having yet acknowledged the responsibilities involved in his new relations. This is why in the proper practice of the Church and ministry distinction is made between being converted to Christ and joining the church. And while conversion is a deeper and more fundamental change than joining the church, there is a sense in which church joining implies responsibilities which are an advancement upon conversion. Conversion, properly speaking, involves only state and standing with God, while church joining involves also standing before men.

It is a tragic mistake to substitute church joining for the new birth, and when a society becomes predominantly nonspiritual it is nothing more than a club and should not be called a church. The very word church means "the called out," and in New Testament usage the implication is the called out from the masses of the world into devotion and fellowship with God.

It is such an easy thing to stop with the emphasis on the condition and make of Christianity a mere human endeavor. Men speak of "deciding to do better," and of "seeking to imitate Jesus." These are good things to do, but they do not make New Testament Christians out of people. Becoming a New Testament Christian involves these things, but it involves more. There is a work of God's grace that corresponds to the human desires and the human needs. And until this work is approximated, the heart is yet unchanged and the sinner may be improved, but he is still not a Christian.

This is no effort to state the maximum. Rather it is a sheer endeavor to set forth the minimum. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Salvation is not by character, it is by grace through faith. Character is a product of grace and human cooperation involving time. Salvation is like the planting of the seed. Character is in the nature of a harvest. Men do not wait until harvest time to sow the seed. Neither do sinners wait for processes to save them. The Bible way is to repent and

believe on Christ, and this divine program assures a divine answer in a changed nature and the witness of the Holy Spirit to pardon and peace with God.

But although the new birth is the essential beginning without which church membership is sheer mockery, still, born-again people ought to join the church. Men are saved and made right with God without the sacraments, but this is no reason why they should go along neglecting to be baptized and to partake of the Lord's Supper with others of God's people. Likewise those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ are forgiven of their past sins without assuming the vows of fellowship and service in connection with other Christians, but this is no excuse for going on as "independents." The vast majority of the Christian people of the land are church members, and every person who is a genuine Christian ought to be a church member. This is no brief for a certain fellowship. But everyone who calls himself a Christian should find a "church home" where he can attend upon the means of grace for his own soul, and where he can pay in his money and unite his prayers with others for the progress of God's spiritual kingdom on earth. This is a trite, old-fashioned way of putting it, but it is the right way to put it, with all due respect for any who have become enamored of any new way or any easy way. First get soundly converted to God so you know for yourself that you are a genuine New Testament Christian, and then join a church in the fellowship of which you can be happy, busy and useful.

But our subject is not merely church members, but "The Good Church Member." I have no qualification for judging who is or who is not a Christian, and there need be no question as to who is a church member. You are the only one who knows for sure whether you are a Christian or not, and you are a church member if you have been publicly received into the fellowship of people of God. But just as one may be a Christian and still be a weak Christian, so, likewise, he may be a church member and yet not be a really good church member.

Let us pass over the principal point with just the briefest repetition: one cannot be a good church member unless he is a good Christian, and he cannot be a good Christian except he be born again by the operation of the Spirit of God. Hence, the good church member is a born-again Christian.

But startling as the statement may sound at first, it takes less to please God than to please anyone else. All one has to have to please God is a humble, sincere heart. But to please men one must have in addition to a good heart, a consistent life. This is why Paul could say we are justified by faith only, while James contended faith without works is dead. Paul is speaking of justification before God only, while James is speaking of justification before men as well.

The world has certain standards by which it measures Christians and Christians must live up to these standards before their profession of attachment to higher principles can be accounted valid. For instance, the world requires honesty, veracity and purity of the professing Christian, and unless the Christian lives up to these standards his claims to vision and inner peace and witness of acceptance with God will be rejected. The world's religion does not include all the Christian's religion involves, but the Christian's religion covers all the world's standard involves. The good church member is consistent in his conduct so that he brings no reflection upon the house of God. The world has no scruples against judging motives. So just as soon as it catches a Christian in unworthy conduct it dubs him a hypocrite at once. After that that Christian is not a good church

member, even though he may be restored to favor with God, until he has time to live down his bad name and convince observers again that he is what he claims to be. Those who generalize in saying, "The church is full of hypocrites," more often than not have particular cases in mind -- instances where a church member took short cuts in trades, slandered a neighbor's good name, camouflaged the truth for a purpose, indulged in fits of sinful temper, used language unbecoming a Christian, broke down on a civic duty, revealed a selfish streak or in some other way brought the name by which he was called into disrepute. It is well enough that we can answer the objector by reminding him that by staying out of the church he is associating himself with the hypocritical world which in both numbers and degree out-hypocrites the church. It is well also that we can remind him that one never stumbles over another who is behind him, and that his stumbling over hypocrites is bad on his own reputation. But it still remains a fact that the inconsistencies of professing Christians are greater hindrances to the work of God than all the infidel societies in the land. And it also yet remains that the strongest argument in favor of the divinity of our holy Christianity is the consistent lives of those who do live what they profess. A good church member, therefore, is one who lives up to the standard by which the world itself differentiates the righteous from the wicked.

Those who say, "I do not care what people think of me," are speaking carelessly. Aside from one's standing with God, his greatest asset for doing good is his good standing with men, and a good church member will go a long way out of his way to keep the confidence of any person whomsoever. The good church member will pay a debt the second time rather than have a forgetful creditor go on thinking he has not paid at all. He will suffer wrong rather than to do wrong. He will not stop with abstaining from actual evil, but will avoid anything that might become the occasion for having his good name evil spoken of. He is not only just in his dealings with men, but is merciful and considerate also. He never considers a trade finished until the other man is satisfied.

A good church member hopes to receive good from the fellowship of his brethren, but he is more anxious to do good than to receive good. He does not ask, "How little can I do and get by?" Rather, he asks for a task commensurate with his ability. He does not ask, "And what shall this man do?" when he is called upon to render a service or endure a sacrifice, but answers immediately, "Here am I; send me." He pays his tithe into the treasury of the church without hesitation and without assuming to dictate how the money shall be spent. He is always ready to give in addition to his tithe "as the Lord has prospered" him. He accounts no earthly possession as having value except in its relation to the kingdom of God, and he gets more satisfaction out of what he gives to the church than out of any money he uses otherwise.

The good church member will share in the counsel of the whole body, but he will not contend for his way beyond what is reasonable. And when the church decides a matter contrary to his advice, he gladly co-operates and goes along with the majority to do the work of the Master. A good church member is not factious, for he feels that God wants him in the church, and he does not feel free to lightly quit because he does not like the preacher, or because things are not always done according to his plans and specifications, or because someone else is promoted and he is overlooked, or because others do not do their share and he thinks he is imposed upon. He cannot easily take offense, for he is not working for men or for money, but for God whose rewards will come without fail.

The good church member has high regard for leadership. Peter warned the preachers against "lording it over God's heritage," but Paul counseled us all to "obey them who have the rule over you." Jesus Christ taught His disciples that they are all brethren, and that He alone is their Master. But in such a fellowship leadership is needed more than anywhere else. There is not much place for authority in the church. Even membership itself is voluntary. But it has been proved over and over again that Christian people will follow leaders so long as the leaders lead them right. And this is a characteristic of the good church member.

Authority is the refuge of littleness. A man does not need a throne if he is naturally "head and shoulders above the other men of the tribe." He does not need a crown if he has golden wisdom inside of his head. He does not need a scepter if he has genuine force of character. He does not need robes of purple if he has a heart that is royal blue, He does not need protection from the masses if his goodness is able to bear the most careful scrutiny. Many words are the justification of a weak cause. This paragraph is for the church members who are in places of leadership.

The good church member is a member of his local church and of his whole denomination. He believes in the purpose and in the means for attaining that purpose in use by his church, and therefore he supports everything from the sexton to the bishop, and includes all in the scope of his prayers from the choicest member of his own household to the heathen in the antipodes. The good church member is a believer in his local church, in his denomination's home missionary undertakings and in its foreign missionary enterprise. He believes that the method of the organized church is the most economical of men and money of any possible method for being good and doing good, and he is loyal to his organization. He turns a deaf ear to pleas from "independent" programs, believing that movements are safer and longer lived than men.

The good church member is patient with the processes which are necessary for doing good. Henry Ward Beecher once said, "The church is not a museum for the exhibition of eminent saints, but a workshop for the production of useful Christians." And in a workshop there is always the unfinished product, but there is also always a looking forward to the time when the real product of the factory shall be offered for public approval. Also, in the best workshop there is some waste. Not all raw material can be utilized, and there is something of sadness that some things must be cast away. But the wise manufacturer does not give up his factory on account of the waste, and he utilizes every means for reducing the waste to the minimum. The good church member is like that. He does not get discouraged with the church because it is unable to reach and save everybody, but he does work hard to make the standard of efficiency as high as possible. Jesus said the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath, and by so saying He indicated that man is the valuable factor in it all. Man is not made for industry, but industry is made for man. Even the church exists for the blessing of men, and not to subtract from the sum of man's good. And the Good Shepherd who cannot rest easy while one lone lamb is yet outside the fold is represented by the good church member who is ready always to bear that the processes for saving men may have their further chance.

A good church member is one who believes in and enjoys the fullest expression of Christian experience and life. He does not mimic others just in order to be uniform, and he does

not depart from the customs of others just to be different. The good church member is really just an old-time Christian who is in earnest to receive all the good he can for himself and do all the good he can for others. He reaches for the substance, rather than for the shadow, and covets to save his life by devoting it to Jesus Christ and the interests of His spiritual kingdom. He is aggressive and militant because he knows this is the way of safety, and because his own soul is awakened and revived. He realizes that no man can accomplish very much working by himself, and he has discovered that nine-tenths of one's ability to secure co-operation is his willingness to cooperate with his brethren. He is not "churchy," but he is loyal. He is narrow in the good sense of the word. He has found that those who say, "Oh, one church is just as good as another," really mean that no church is worth giving much attention, and he has found that he can do the most to help other churches by being an enthusiastic promoter of his own church.

Of course there is danger that one shall overestimate his own importance. But I think there is even a greater danger that the average Christian will think his part too small to be of any consequence. He thinks he would be glad to do a larger part, but he is not challenged by the small part that falls to his lot. The great symphony orchestra was in full swing. The big important instruments were doing their part well. But the man whose task it was to play the little piccolo became discouraged. "The others have important parts," thought he, "but this little instrument will not be missed, even if I do not play at all." And so he ceased to play his part and not many noticed the difference. But the great director stopped the whole orchestra and called out, "What is the matter? I cannot hear the piccolo." We are all members of God's great orchestra -- "members in particular," Paul reminds us. Our part may seem to be but a small part -- so small in fact that many would not notice if we dropped out. But the Great Leader knows what we are supposed to do, and the music will be marred if we do not play. Let us play to please Him. The orchestra needs the piccolo as well as the first violin, and He has placed us in the organization as it pleaseth Him. And, after all, it is not the places that are honorable, it is the Lord himself who is to be praised. There is no higher place for you or me than the particular place for which the Lord has chosen us.

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13

FAITH A FACTOR IN CHRISTIAN LIFE AND SERVICE

Without faith it is impossible to please him (Hebrews 11:6). Pray . . . that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith (2 Thessalonians 3:2).

Faith, like love, is not really divisible. John challenged those who claimed to love God by the standard of their love for their fellow Christians, and condemned as false those who claimed they loved God and hated their brethren. And faith is like that, and unbelief is like that. The infidel (from Latin *en*, plus *fidelis*) is one who is not faithful or one who has left off fidelity. And it has often been demonstrated that one who does not trust God is doubtful of his fellow men. In the courts of law a man who does not honor the oath is not a dependable witness. The old Christian who paid his bill to the landlord and rejected a receipt on the ground that "God is witness between us that I have paid you," and then called for a receipt when he found the landlord was an infidel was right in his deductions. And Paul was no doubt drawing on experience when he asked for prayer that he might be delivered from men who did not have faith.

We know that faith in its most primary sense is the prime condition for forgiveness and peace with God, and that all the way along one must trust for the mercy and keeping power of God, so that we are saved initially by faith and continue to live by faith as we walk the Christian pathway.

But today we are thinking of faith as a principle and as a factor in Christian service. It is not necessary that we think of faith as anything different from what we have already seen it to be. Men have sometimes mystified faith unnecessarily. Ask many, "What is faith?" and they will quote from the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen." But that is really a characterization and not a definition. Faith does give substance to things which are yet in the future and makes very real things that are invisible. But faith itself is simply believing God or believing what God has said. And if we are to work for God, which is but another way of speaking of service, we must believe Him and believe what He has said.

There is no higher place in life than simply the place where God wants us to be. That place may be, in the estimation of men, a very humble one, and it takes the continual exercise of faith in God and His promises to be content to fill the humble place in the full assurance that it is the highest promotion, since it is God's place for us.

But it may sometimes chance that the will of God places us in positions of responsibility and influence. Here one is sure to see much of his work come to nought. One who is dependent upon results for encouragement is in a position of uncertainty. Think of the work of the ancient prophets. Think of the work of the Master himself. Think of the work of early Christians. Those who praise today may cry "crucify him" tomorrow, and we must have that penetrating faith that sees farther than the present day to enable us to keep our courage up. God is true, and His promises are true. This we know, even when our best intended efforts seem largely to come to nought.

The trial of our faith in God is based largely upon the fact that we know so little of His ways. We are much like Job. In his distress he sought to find out the ways of God. He leaned forward, but God was not there. He stepped backward, but could not touch God. Right, left, up, down, every possible place was searched, but God evaded him. But in his extremity Job bethought him of the fact that it was not essential that he discover the mind and plan of God. "He knoweth the way that I take." I cannot discern his way, but He knows my way, and "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him." His way is mysterious, but my faith in Him and His word makes me sure that His way is right. Into my life has come a large portion of disappointment, sorrow and deep bereavement. Why such things have come I do not know, I cannot now find out. If I had to trace before I trust, my faith would be paralyzed. But I trust as I understand, and trust wherein I cannot understand. I believe God in the sunshine and in the shadows. I believe also that the work I do for Him will and does prosper, although there are often few evidences that appeal to the senses of men. God knows, and He will bring to fruition the sowings which I make for Him. This faith enables me to be patient in the tests, and to wait in hope for the reward which He shall give. It is impossible that I shall be underpaid for my expectations are from Him, and if He does not reward me now, He will reward me later when I shall need the reward more and can keep it longer.

Faith and faithfulness are words very closely related in sound, and of course closely related in meaning. Faithfulness is faith become permanent. Faithfulness is rendering to God for His mercies already bestowed. One must have faith first as an act, then with time faith takes on the character of state, and dependability on the part of the Christian answers to the fidelity of God to all His promises.

In the second place, there is a sense in which we must have faith in ourselves if we are to be happy and useful in the service of God. Paul called this faith "a good conscience. We know we are sincere and pure, and upon such knowledge we base our faith that we are within the divine provisions for peace within and victory without.

The Master, in His Sermon on the Mount, set forth the necessity of accepting our own measure when receiving, as well as when giving. "With such measure as ye mete, .it shall be measured unto you again." There was a principle in the old law which forbade any man's having varied measures or balances. Whatever he used in measuring or weighing what he sold, he must use the same in measuring what he bought. But this same principle is applied to us in our dealings with God. "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (1 John 3:18-22). Thus God makes us the criteria of our own blessing. We cannot believe Him to bless us and our efforts, except we come with the conviction that we have prepared ourselves for such blessing. It approaches the irreverent, but it comes to this: we cannot believe God to bless us unless we would ourselves bless one under such considerations as we ask Him to bless.

There is, of course, a continual conviction of unworthiness, so that pride and self-sufficiency are utterly ruled out. But, on the other hand, our unworthiness must always be to us limited to the unworthiness of inability, and must exclude volitional disobedience or careless neglect.

But how can I have a clear conscience, knowing myself as I do? Some people tremble over the thought that "God knoweth the heart." But this is really occasion for rejoicing. My neighbors must judge by my conduct, and my conduct is often colored by weakness or misjudged by my neighbor on account of his limitations. It is really easier to please God than to please anyone else; for while there is no possibility of my deceiving Him in the very least, yet, on the other hand, I need nothing more than transparent sincerity to obtain His approval, and the approval of my own conscience, on that account. But I need judgment and efficiency to enable me to please my neighbors and my friends.

And in the sense in which we are speaking the same standard which brings God's favor brings also the favor of my own inner monitor. It used to be said of one that "He has the strength of ten because his heart is pure." And it is that way with us all. A man can meet the persecutions of his enemies, and even brook the misapprehensions of his friends, but he whose own heart condemns him is weak and hopeless.

In actual conflict and in the conflict of his own reasonings upon circumstances, Paul was wont to say, "Nevertheless, I am not ashamed." This was not the boastings of an egoist who could disregard what others said and did. Rather, it was the witness of a Christian who could say, "I am right, even though circumstances do not prove it, for I have an inner consciousness that tells me so, and I can be brave and courageous even when all about me falls down upon my head." A man may not be able to command votes and win in the elections, but he can be right, when it is not given him to be President. An approving conscience is a boon of greatest value, and yet the humblest can have it, for its conditions are subjective and possible to all. It may not be given us to be profitable servants, but it is ours to be faithful, and to be assured of approval now and at the end of the day.

In the third place, we must have faith in our fellow workers. It is little anyone can do working by himself, and one cannot get far having others to work for him. The demand is for mutual confidence so that men can work with one another. Even in worldly business, a partner is worth more than an employee. But if the relation must continue as employer and employee, there must be mutual confidence. Big business cannot be built up on a fabric of petty dishonesty, for if a man teaches his employee to steal for him, it is but a step until that employee will steal from him. Faith begets faith, even as suspicion begets suspicion. If we doubt men in our hearts they will be aware of it, and they will in turn hold themselves in position where we cannot do them harm when we turn false, as they believe we will do.

The church is not only a fellowship of communion, it is also a fellowship of service, and one of the reasons for joining the church is that by united service we are able to accomplish things which are important to all of us working alone. Of course there are some people who do not believe in joining the church. They say there are so many hypocrites in the church, and that there is so much lethargy and useless motion in organized Christianity. But they should remember that there is more hypocrisy in the world than in the church, and that at its worst, organized Christianity is doing more for the salvation of souls and the uplift of humanity than all agencies private and public outside its pales. But unless one is going to believe in his fellow workers, it is best for him to stay outside. There are some who are not too bad as solo singers who demoralize a quartet and exasperate a choir. These exceptional people must be the whole meeting or they will be no part of it at all. But the fact still remains that we can accomplish more working together than we can working alone, "Else how can one chase a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight?" One working alone for God can chase a thousand: another working alone can chase a thousand. The two drive two thousand enemies from the field. But if they would organize and work together they would be able to take on eight thousand extra enemies which in the unorganized state are that many too many for them.

A generation ago, when John Cecil Rhodes was the Diamond King of South Africa, the press carried stories about his life like later stories of Thomas Edison and Henry Ford. One of the stories of Rhodes was about the time when as a youth he took a position as an assistant in a sideshow. He and two others performed the amazing feat of "catching the cannon ball." I do not know the technique of the trick, but very close co-operation was required. One man stood in the sight of the crowd and pulled the string that fired the cannon, Rhodes stood out in front and caught the cannon ball in his hands. A third partner who worked out of the sight of the crowd, pulled his string just at the right moment to nullify the effect of the charge, and this was the secret of the success of "the catcher." But one day this unseen partner doubted the timing of his colaborers, and

did not pull his string on the second. The result was the future Diamond King went to the hospital for a term of months. Much of the work of the church requires just such delicate timing as that. A missionary goes to the foreign field in the full confidence that his fellow Christians will bring in their tithes and offerings for the evangelization of the world. The God-called man gives up his secular work to enter the ministry in the full confidence that his fellow Christians will stand by and do their share. The humble layman puts his little gift upon the place in the full confidence that his fellow Christians will do likewise and that the program of the gospel will not fail, and none of us can know in advance that the others will do their share, but we must believe they will, and on the basis of this faith, do our share too.

We come now to faith in the possibility of the task to which we are assigned. It is as important that a man should be unashamed of his work as that he should be unashamed of himself. Ours may be but the task of digging a ditch for the foundation, or cutting a rough stone for a place down under the ground, but for all that, we can join in the credit for helping to build a cathedral.

Our field of useful service is limited to those who believe in us, and that in turn is pretty much limited to the ones in whom we believe. By this we do not mean that we must believe men are right who are not right, but we must believe in their interest and savability. Great soul winners have always been great believers in men. The motto of the Salvation Army whose task it is to strive to help the most hopeless, is "A man may be down, but he is never out." Knowing people found that the confidence people, who live as parasites by hard luck stories, put Spurgeon at the top of the list of "easy" men in London, but the great preacher was rewarded for his undefeatable faith in men by seeing many of them make good who utterly failed under the tutelage of those who boasted that no one ever deceived them, because they never believed in a man until he proved himself. Spurgeon believed in them so they would prove themselves.

In old China, it is said, prospective schoolteachers were asked this apparently inapplicable question: "Will a stray dog follow you on the street?" The thought was that the homeless dog was a good judge of temper, and that one whom such a dog recognized as a friend would be a safe person to trust to be kind to children who were trying to learn. But little children are also good judges of temper, and one whom the children shun has something fundamentally the matter with him, and common people have an uncanny way of knowing when they meet a friend. Mere assertions of love will not turn the trick. People know intuitively whom they should trust, and they trust them who in turn believe in them and their possibilities. In such a matter appearances will not do. The suave word and the politician's smile and handshake deceive only the shallow. No cloak is thick enough to cover an indifferent heart. On the other hand, the misfortune of a rough exterior is not effective in nullifying the heart of one who is truly a brother under the skin.

Faith in our task is not always easy. Truth has never been popular. Men's hearts respond to the way of ease and self-indulgence. The devil is a sworn foe of Christ and righteousness. The hearts of all men are depraved by sin and take to evil more naturally than to good. The organized "world" is in opposition to the kingdom of God. Even the prophecies of the Scriptures depict a dark conclusion for the present evil day. Any but a stout heart would quake from such a sight and give up the task as useless. Pessimism is the easy way, and the useless way. Unless we believe men can be reached and saved, we shall not be instrumental in reaching and saving them. But how can one believe in the feasibility of the Christian task under such conditions as beset it now?

As Christians our fundamental tenet is faith in God, and the fundamental content of the very word God is goodness. God is, and God is good. He is good, even when He seems to be severe, as is the case much of the time in His providential dealings with the world and with men, sickness and poverty and death, notwithstanding! But how can it be? It is true because God is primarily interested in the spiritual and the eternal, and to this end lays tribute to the material and transient. It is to the end to which we look for full justification of God and His ways with man.

And because we believe God is good, we believe He made man with the highest possibilities. Making him thus involved tremendous risk. Had man been but an automaton he could have been infallibly saved, but his life and happiness would have been on a level so low that it would have compared only with the sphere of stocks and stones. And even in his fallen state man is not an utter and hopeless ruin, for by what the theologians call "prevenient grace" God seeks after the wanderer and strives to bring him back. The atonement made by Jesus Christ upon the cross is (notwithstanding all the theological controversies of the past) available to "whosoever will" come to God through Christ. The instrumentality of the gospel is perfectly adapted to man in his present state to encompass his salvation. The facts upon which the gospel rests are such that a man can judge them through his senses. The ethics of the gospel is adapted to man's conscience. The philosophy of the gospel is adapted to man's intellect. The appeal of the gospel is adapted to man's heart. The power of the gospel is adapted to man's will. The comforts and assurances of the gospel completely meet the needs of those who receive them.

Let us come then and fully subscribe to the creed of the Christian worker: I believe in God who is infinite in mercy, love and power; I believe in my own sincerity and purity as vouched to me by the Spirit of God on the basis of conditions which I have knowingly and consciously met; I believe in my fellow Christians, and am glad to be a coworker with them in the great field of God; I believe we can accomplish what we ought to accomplish in the reaching and saving of men, women and little children, and in bringing in the full quota for the membership in the Church Triumphant which shall one day appear as a bride adorned for her husband, and of which then, as now, I hope and plan to be a member. And in this faith I announce myself ready and willing to perform any service lowly or great under the direction of my blessed Lord and Master to whom be praise and glory now and throughout the ages of the ages. Amen.

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14

NEITHER HEREDITY NOR ENVIRONMENT

Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? (John 9:2).

We are all heirs of the common heritage of humanity through our parents running all the way back to Adam. From our immediate parents we receive certain capacities, trends and tendencies which identify us with a narrower clan within the human family. In our general and special heritage there are many things which taken together make for each of us a wonderful fortune. There may be also a few things which answer as handicaps and limitations. But whatever the fortune, we received at our birth the capital which has enabled us to operate the business of life

up until the present time. We could but receive it passively, and whether it was much or little, we ourselves are not to be either complimented or condemned.

The custom of accounting men as products of factors over which they have no control is not a new one. It is the easiest alibi for our own failures, and the best method of accounting for the successes of others which cannot reflect any credit upon those whom we may be inclined to envy.

Dale Carnegie observes that two generations ago some of the very leaders of thought, men like Emerson and Horace Greeley, were adepts of "phrenology," and believed that a man's capacities could be read in the bumps which appear on his head. Many stores retained phrenologists in connection with their selection of persons for their staff, and a good many are known to have lost their positions because the bumps on their heads marked them out as wanting in ability or as possessing qualities that were undesirable.

That is indeed a poor philosophy which contains no message for the less fortunate. It is not only a poor philosophy, but with thankfulness we affirm it is a false philosophy. It is all well and good for those who have it to boast of their "blue blood," but must the others be told there is no hope? Must a man succumb to the handicaps of his heredity? Is man but plastic clay in the hands of unknowing fate? Must all take the place for which the heritage of the past fitted them?

The early years of our lives, likewise, were entirely in the hands of others. We could no more choose the guardians and companions of our infancy than we could choose our parentage. We are happy if we find in ourselves evidence of wisdom and goodness in those who taught us by precept and example our first lessons on how to live in the curious world into which we found ourselves introduced. But whether those evidences reflect credit or blame on the guardians and companions of our earliest earthly days, we cannot either undo what was done or go back and live those days again.

It were folly, of course, to say that heredity and environment are not factors in our making. But it is a hurtful heresy to hold that they are determining factors. In our responsible years we must not surrender to the fatalistic notion that our parents and our surroundings made us, and that we are neither to be praised nor blamed for being what we are or for what we are in the process of becoming.

No matter how baffling the phrases of theologians, philosophers, psychologists and others, we all know within ourselves that we are responsible. We know we are not clods and stones upon which the elements work at will. We are not even primarily dependent flesh and blood. We are essentially mind and spirit. The sun of our surroundings tans or bleaches according to the use we make of its rays. Circumstances are but fibers out of which we weave our own cloth. We know these things are true, no matter what the speculators say, and no matter how much we might at times prefer the alibi which determinism furnishes the individual.

"Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?" asked the fatalistic disciples. But the free Master replied, "Neither this man nor his parents, but that the glory of God might be revealed." This does not mean that the man's blindness was in no sense the responsibility of his parents. But it does mean that neither the blind man nor those who lived with him were to

take the situation as complete and hopeless. The man's very limitation became the occasion for a notable miracle, so that many a by-stander may have wished himself the victim of misfortune only that he might on that account be partaker of the Master's mercy.

Hezekiah was the good son of a bad father. Joseph kept his purity in vile Egypt. Even the Nazarene acquired His cognomen from a city without reputation for either wisdom or fame. On the other hand, Manasseh was the son of a good father. Solomon, the builder of the temple of God, turned to idols right in Jerusalem. Judas, the treasurer of the college of apostles, became a traitor while enjoying the Master's choice favor. Men may be bent toward a certain course by their heredity, and they may be encouraged in the selection of a certain way by their environment, but at the point of choosing they are free, and in spite of all that unsought forces can do for or against him, man is yet "the architect of his own destiny," and should be praised for his virtues and blamed for his vices.

Excuses and alibis are easier than self-correction and evangelism. And so even to this day wherever men meet to talk it is popular to berate the dictators and bewail the evils which we have no power to correct. All these things are done as substitutes for personal repentance and responsible use of the means at hand for improving the general conditions of our day. Many who berate the dictators abroad yet vote for liquor at home. They become exercised regarding "the terrible days in which we live" and then go out to desecrate the Sabbath and disregard the laws of God and man themselves. They talk of "the good old days" of the Pilgrim fathers, and then do not attend church themselves. They glorify their fathers' and mothers' religion, and themselves neglect family and secret devotion. It seems to be a human trait to get agitated over things we cannot help, and to be little affected over things that appeal to us for choice and action. But the order is in reverse: it is no use to get stirred up over things we cannot help, and when we get stirred up over things we can help, we should do something about them. There are many things in our present environment which we are as powerless to help as we are to help in the matter of the environment of our infancy. But we must not generalize too soon: there are many things we can help, and perhaps by the time we get these done other evils will have been corrected by others or we shall be strong enough to help with these also. Therefore what we cannot do is no excuse for being remiss in the things we can help.

Coming first to ourselves: let us be encouraged by the fact that nothing that is outside of us can get inside to do us harm without our consent. It is the will that counts. The power to perform may be denied us, but whoever wills to be good is good. But let us not avoid the converse: nothing outside of ourselves can get in to do us good without our consent. It is our response that counts. We may be brought up in the very "lap of the gospel" and yet be renegade. It is not what has been offered us, but that which we have received that makes the difference.

Never once did Jesus accept or reject anyone on the basis of his pedigree or his surroundings. To Christ every man was an opportunity. What good could come of blaming a man's parents for his plight, even though they were somewhat at fault? What good could come merely of charging a man's state to his own guilt and leaving it there? Here was a blind man who needed help and who seemed ready and willing to accept it. Christ disregarded the pride of Paul and the unsavory occupation of Levi, and offered them both a place in the apostleship. But neither the

proud pedigree of the one qualified him, nor the unsavory occupation of the other constituted an insurmountable barrier.

Pride and self-pity are contiguous, even though they are listed as dwelling at the antipodes, for they both lay the foundation for defeat. The man who accepts his present as the ultimate goal collapses quite as completely as the one who follows failure as though it were a prize.

Coming now to our service for others: let us be consoled with the fact that God brought us to the kingdom for such a time as this. There can come no good of pining over our genealogical misplacement. Of course one soldier with a machine gun and plenty of ammunition could have driven Alexander's army from the field. But there was no such a soldier then, and when he did appear, behold defense was apace of offense, and the modern soldier can show no better odds than the brave men of the past. There is no question that our day is evil. But as to whether it is worse than some days of the past or than other days that are yet before us, of this we cannot be sure. But even if we could tell, what good would such speculations do? Suppose the blind man's parents were to blame for their son's want of sight, what good would it do to settle the blame? The blind man did not care to know why he was blind. What he wanted was power to see. Perhaps I could have done good in the days when my father was my age; but granted that I could, what help is that to anyone? This is my day. I did not choose it. God gave it me. If it is an extra difficult day, then it is a compliment that God should give me a heavy task. Men are different now from what they used to be? Granted. I am different also from what those men were who tried to be good and do good in the days that are past. If there were not some useful place for me God would not have brought me and my day together. Now that He has done it, why should I speculate about the unchangeable? God is in heaven. Christ still pleads at the Father's right hand. The Holy Spirit is still in the world. No one in any age ever had greater resources than are offered me. So mine is to follow the example of the Master. He refused to accept either heredity or environment as explanations and excuses, but turned His hand to the healing of a man born blind. That blind man represents my task. Why should such a task be given me? No answer to that question can be of any service. The task is here and I am here, in any case.

But since we have drawn on the story from the Master's life for a basis for human responsibility, let us also draw from it assurance that the divine enabling shall not be withheld. The Master used the weak clay which He found ready at His feet. I, too, shall have to use weak instruments. But the infinite God touched that blind man's eyes on the occasion of the anointing With clay, and it was that divine touch that brought sight to the blind. And may there come in the moments of my efforts that touch of divinity that shall make my efforts useful in the difficult task to which divine Providence has appointed me! Following the lead of Phillips Brooks, I ask not for power to work miracles. Rather I ask that I may myself be a miracle. After that my works will be only such as might reasonably be expected of one so transformed as I shall be. This is the substance of my prayer, and from the example of the Master, I am encouraged to believe it shall be answered.

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Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal? (Ezekiel 18:25).

The people of Ezekiel's time argued that God is not fair. Some people, they said, got more than they deserved, while others were denied their proper reward. These people faced the problem more frankly than we are accustomed to do. Secondary causes did not enter largely into their thinking. Whatever was done, God did it. They might state an alternative, but when the decision was made, they said God made it. In an earlier period Jephthah vowed to give in sacrifice whoever should come out of his house first upon his return from victory over his enemies, and left it, as we would say, to chance, as to who that one should be. But to this primitive man chance was just another name for God. And after all, there is something valid in this form of reasoning. Solomon urged the people to believe that "the disposition of the lot is of the Lord." They drew articles from an urn, allowing that a certain color or a certain size should indicate the decision. They did this as we hold elections. But they did it religiously. They believed that a decision made that way was God's decision. This too is a good example for us, and will save us much worry, if we but learn to believe that the accepted way of making decisions will result in God's will being found. It is helpful to believe this, even when for the immediate moment there seems clearly to us to have been a mistake in judgment. We are not wise enough to see all the future, and that which seems for the moment to be wise may, "in the long run," prove to be very unwise.

David had something of the same difficulty as the people of Ezekiel's day. He cast about to see how much the wicked were distinguished from the just in matters of providential blessings. He found that there was not only no appreciable difference, but found that the advantage was frequently with the wicked. Good men were often poor, while their ungodly neighbors were prosperous. The righteous frequently suffered sickness and disease, while the plague passed over the houses of those who forgot God. Some people who were industrious were unfortunate in their choice of land and seasons, while many whose lives centered in selfishness were blessed with abundant harvests. To David the inescapable question came: Does it pay to serve God? Does God reward righteousness and punish wickedness?

A learned writer of our own times, whose name I do not call on account of his official standing which I have no desire to affect, says, "The accident of circumstance is far more important than deliberate planning in shaping individual careers. Two persons of equal ability and attainments obtain identical positions in the same organization, but in different bureaus or divisions. In one the turnover in the higher positions may be rapid, thus affording opportunity for frequent promotion; in the other, it may be negligible, bringing little or no opportunity for advancement. Again, unforeseen events may bring prestige to the one, leaving his equally capable colleague unknown. So the accident of circumstance plays its part, barring opportunity for one and opening to the other the pathway to success."

I think no one will question that this is a statement of facts, and that the observations are true to the experiences of life. But this is all in contradiction to the "walnut and beans," "pushing to the front" philosophy which has recently been so popular, and which is so complimentary to the successful, but so discouraging to those to whom worldly success is denied. But even this

"accident and circumstance" explanation gives no relief to the unpromoted. It does not particularly help one who is left behind to just tell him he is "out of luck." He is already aware that this is the case, but when he can find no reason within himself why his situation is not more fortunate, he has little left but just practical atheism which has all along had for its motto, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit."

There is no way for us to amend the facts. Facts, they say, are stubborn. We may reason that it ought not to be this way. We may conclude that the good should be healthy, wealthy and happy, and that the wicked should be sick, poor and miserable. But concluding it should be thus only serves to make it worse, for it is not that way. Of course we know that right living does have a tendency to make for good health. We know that industry and frugality have a tendency to lead to affluence. And we know that peace within the heart is a heritage of the most blessed and enduring sort. But we also know that the accidents of circumstance are often the determining factor, and these do not run according to a true course on the basis of the good and the evil. The effects of the good habits of the righteous man are often offset by hereditary weakness, by the exposure required by duty, by accidents involved in occupation and by what seem to us to be unrelated circumstances. The good man's business judgment is not infallible, and the circumstances of the lives of God's own people are often such as to necessitate heart burden, loneliness and unmitigated care throughout the course of much of life, and we would as well face the facts frankly. It will do no good to hedge and explain. The facts are there. What shall we do? Is God really fair? Does it pay to live the Christian life? Do the good have advantage over the wicked?

Summarizing all we have said: it is impossible to work out the promises of God in the realm of the material and the temporal. They just do not work out here, we frankly admit that. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." And yet Paul said, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God; to them that are called according to his purpose." How can this be, seeing we admit that the grace of God does not always give the recipient a "sixth sense by which he knows which calling to choose or which department to enter? And seeing being good does not imply that one will be wise in worldly matters, how can we say all things work together for good, when we know that the business and social choices of the most devout sometimes lead but to "blind alleys"?

There is just no way to work this problem out except by positing the realms of the spiritual and the eternal. If all that is good is what can be measured by a yardstick, weighed in a balance and computed in money, then the ways of God are not equal. If all there is of human existence is that which comes between the cradle and the grave, then we know God is not fair. For here, even to the end of life, the wicked frequently go unpunished, and the righteous die at the gates of the rich with no friends but the dogs. but the material is not all the real, and time is but a small contingency of existence. On the basis of the reality of the spiritual, we have to admit that we do not always know what is good and what is bad -- that is, what is fortunate and what is unfortunate. The rich may be poor and the poor rich. The sick may be well and the well sick. The happy may be miserable and the careful happy. Far from being an index to the real state, the outward circumstances may be entirely contradiction to the inner state and standing. of.. the soul. It was: thus with the rich man at whose gate the beggar lay. The real state of things was not revealed until death overtook the pair, but the state existed all along. Even while Dives dined in his costly apparel, he was in reality a pauper, and while Lazarus waited for the crumbs, he was rich in faith

and affluent in grace. When friends meet on the plane of earthly things, they are accustomed to ask only, "Are you well? How is business? Are you happy?" But answers to these questions touch only upon the surface. Yea, even more, they may be entirely misleading. The real question is, "Is it well with your soul?" If it is well with your soul, then it is well otherwise, even though the surface symptoms seem to dispute the assertion. If you have peace and inner rest you are well, no matter what the state of your health; you are rich, no matter how you stand with Dun and Bradstreet; and your state is fortunate, no matter how heavy the burdens you bear or how deep the sorrows you share. When you come to calculate in these values, you will find that God is fair and that He does give reward to those who serve Him. You will find that it does pay to be a Christian and that the advantages of the life in Christ are overpoweringly greater than all blessings besides, and that the inconveniences suffered by the Christian are indeed but transient, while the blessings are fundamental and abiding.

And death does not end all. This is the firm conviction of our hearts. There are arguments that prove to the unbiased that the soul is immortal, but I do not appeal to these. I appeal only to the inner conviction that we all feel. We feel that man is immortal because he ought to be immortal. There must be a future life to give meaning to the present life. With a judgment and an eternity yet ahead, there is time for evening accounts, and when this is done the wicked will get his deserts and the righteous will be properly rewarded. The shortsighted would take their good in this world. But those who look far into the future prefer to wait on their reward to the time when they can keep it longer. The worldly minded are anxious to collect their dues right away that they may have opportunity to spend them. But the righteous are solicitous to exchange everything possible into "New Jerusalem gold" that they may have it at the end of the present life, and possess its benefits forever.

The story has been often told, but perhaps there are some who have not heard it yet. It relates to a farmer who professed to be a skeptic, and who lived in a community served by a country newspaper the editor of which was a Christian. The editor regularly inserted articles relating to religion in his paper. At the close of a certain season, the skeptic sent the editor an article in which he told how he had proved to his own satisfaction that there is nothing but superstition in the idea that God rewards men who serve Him, and especially that there is no advantage in keeping the Sabbath holy. Said the skeptic, "I have a field which in fertility and general productivity is about the same as like fields belonging to my Sabbath keeping neighbors. But this year I made a test of it. I plowed that field on the Sabbath, planted the corn on the Sabbath, did all the cultivating of the corn on the Sabbath, and gathered in the harvest on the Sabbath. And when I made comparisons I found that I received a better yield on that field this October than was had by any of my Sabbath keeping neighbors." The Christian editor printed the letter from the skeptic just as it was received. But he added this one line of his own: "God does not always make full settlement in October."

Indeed God does not settle fully with any of us at the end of the season, or even at the end of the earthly life. And on this basis we again assert that God is fair. And on this basis, to be fair ourselves, we cannot well begrudge the wicked their advantages. I stopped one day to hear the preaching of an old colored woman who had gathered a crowd on the corner of the street in a southern city. Just as I stopped the colored prophetess said, "Some people do not believe there is a heaven or that there is a hell. But this world we are in now is both heaven and hell. It is the

sinner's heaven, for it is the best world he will ever be in. It is the Christian's hell, for it is the worst world he will ever be in." Nay, let us not envy the workers of iniquity any immunities they may have. Let us not envy them any passing blessings they may enjoy. On the other hand, let us not pity ourselves, if we are saved and right with God, for the sorrows of the present are but passing and the joys of the future will last forever. Let us not complain of our lot if it seems to be inferior to others, our equals, for they have their day now and we shall have ours later, and our day will be better and will last longer than theirs.

The Master remarked, "Wisdom is justified of her children." This means, I think, that the course of God with men is endorsed and approved by those who know God and love God. James asked Christians to count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations." Peter exhorted that we should rejoice that we are now partakers of the sufferings of Christ, "that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." Paul went even farther yet and suggested that our future joy will be estimated somewhat by our present sufferings. If there ever comes to us any suggestion that we are being forgotten, let us rather remember that God has our spiritual and eternal good in mind, and that whatever He sends or permits to come will contribute, by His grace, to our highest and most lasting good. "For we know that all things work together for good to them that love God; to them that are called according to his purpose." It is ours to love and obey Him, and it is His to transmute all the lead of our earthly estate into the refined gold of His glory to us. The battle is not always to the strong, nor the race to the swift. Even the young lions may suffer hunger, "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint."

We mentioned David's distress over the seeming indifference as between the righteous and the wicked -- observing that the advantage was often with the wicked. But the sweet singer of Israel later went into the house of God. That is, he became spiritually enlightened. Then he saw that the feet of the wicked are placed in slippery places, and that the righteous are weaned from this world by the roughness of their estate. Then he rejoiced because God has not smothered the good intentions of the righteous with earthly rewards, but has rather given them spiritual and eternal portions.

Socrates was but an enlightened heathen, living many years before the Christian era, but once he went into the temple and was overheard to pray, "Beloved Pan and all ye gods that haunt this place, grant me that my inner powers and outer demands may be equal, and give me no more of the goods of this world than the temperate can carry." Translated into Christian terminology, that is my prayer too. I would have grace as my day requires, and possessions only to the limit I may use them for His glory. And if there is any way to estimate spiritual riches in terms of money, then I ask that God may give me millions in grace to pennies in earthly fortune. And then I pray that my spiritual eyes may be so enlightened that in such a state, I may answer every doubter with the personal assurance that the ways of God are equal -- that God is truly fair.

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THE END

See more of Rustic Living in a Modern World. on Facebook. Log In. or. Create New Account. See more of Rustic Living in a Modern World. on Facebook. Log In. Forgotten account? or.Â Christian church. Spirit of the River Festival Inc. Community organisation.Â And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kindsâ€"livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. Genesis 1:24 ESV <https://bible.com/bible/59/gen.1.24>.ESV.