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COMMENTARY

REVIVAL MESSAGES

by B.H. Carroll

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REVIVAL MESSAGES'

*A Compilation of Pungent and Winsome Appeals
to Wanderers from God*

BY

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To My Precious Daughter

MABEL CRANFILL

*Who through all her life has given me her love and time,
and through her devotion and affection has aided me
in my literary and religious work, using her own
good eyesight, thus making my own long
time eye trouble easy to bear, this book
is affectionately dedicated by
The Editor*

FOREWORD

This book is the twenty-second volume of B.H. Carroll's works it has been my privilege to edit, and of all his books of sermons, the present messages may be justly classed as among his best. I am glad also that in terms of publishers this book is being presented by Zondervan Publishing House; it is the first one of Dr. Carroll's they have thus far given to the world. I am delighted with this new connection and hope it will bear fruit in many avenues of Christian activity.

It will always remain true that Carroll's *Interpretation of the English Bible* will rank first in the wide reach of its informative discussions and lofty interpretations of our Scriptures. This is a thirteen-volume set that covers the entire Bible.

The first volume of B.H. Carroll's sermons bore the title *Sermons* and was published in 1895. The other volumes, *Baptists and Their Doctrines*, *Evangelistic Sermons*, *The River of Life*, *Inspiration of the Bible*, *The Day of the Lord*, and *Jesus, the Christ*, appeared in due course and have enjoyed a wide sale and the hearty approval of the constituency for which they were primarily produced.

The twenty-first book of sermons with the title *Jesus the Christ* enjoyed a unique distinction. Having quite strangely and, I think, providentially come into possession of some funds, it was my privilege to give outright to every ministerial and training-school student in every Baptist institution in the South this marvelously fine discussion of our Savior and Lord. In addition thereto, I gave one hundred copies to the Southern Methodist University. In all two thousand seven hundred copies were thus distributed, and I am receiving echoes from them now and will receive them for years to come.

In all the task of producing B.H. Carroll's works, I have had the invaluable help of Professor J. W. Crowder, of Southwestern Baptist Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas. For long years he was associated with B.H. Carroll in the work of teaching the English Bible in that fine institution. Before he began his work as a theological teacher, Professor Crowder studied under B.H. Carroll at Baylor University, Waco. I delight to accord to him his full share in the presentation of this and many others of the volumes here listed.

To other audiences who have read B.H. Carroll's books my estimate of that great man is well known, but inasmuch as this work is to fall into the hands of readers who have not known B.H. Carroll, I express it here, as I have expressed it countless times before, that in my opinion B.H. Carroll was the greatest preacher of the gospel

of Christ who has lived since the Apostle Paul. Often have I quoted the words of a Georgia Baptist preacher who, in other years, wrote me that “B.H. Carroll could dig deeper to find God’s truth and climb higher to reveal it than any preacher that ever lived.”

The reader will form his own conclusions of the power and sweep of Carroll’s great messages. Here they are, and they tell their own story. He was a man after God’s own heart, who lived a lofty and conquering life. My fixed conviction is that these messages and his other works will live long after all of those who had part in their preparation and all of this generation who are now privileged to peruse them have passed into rest.

J. B. CRANFILL
Dallas, Texas

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REVIVAL MESSAGES

1. CHRIST SEEKS NOT YOURS, BUT YOU

TEXT: I seek not yours, but you... They first gave their own selves to the Lord. - ~~4724~~2 Corinthians 12:14 and 8:5

This theme is selected for an introduction to a protracted meeting. Its discussion is intended to show why it is our business to hold such a meeting what we seek to gain by the meeting, and to what end these objects are sought. First, why are we seeking? Second, whom do we seek? Third, to what end or object are these persons sought?

Paul says, "I seek not yours, but you." Why did Paul seek these people? What business was it of his? What authority had he in the premises? Under whose command did he go .out and attempt to obtain the persons of people? The answer to these questions is in the fifth chapter of the Second Letter to the Corinthians and twentieth verse: "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

Why do we in a meeting seek the souls of the lost? In behalf of Christ, as though God, by us, were beseeching you. We base our actions upon no other ground than that we are under orders from our Master, who said to us, "Go ye and make disciples of all nations."

It is not because church-members may claim any jurisdiction over those who are outside nor because they affect peculiar sanctity. All men start from a common standpoint of alienation from God. By nature all are children of wrath. There is no difference in themselves. Wherein they differ, grace is the occasion.

In seeking others, saved men have no option. A charge is laid on them. A solemn obligation is imposed. A duty is placed by the special and direct and irrevocable command of God upon His people to seek the salvation of men. And we cannot ask you to do anything in our name, nor in our strength, nor to further any private or selfish ends of ours. We stand degraded in our own sight and worthy of your contempt if we come before you in any other attitude than this: In Christ's behalf, as ambassadors of Christ, as though God were beseeching you through us, we entreat that you be reconciled to God. Whenever the church of Jesus Christ plants itself firmly on that position and never turns away from it for one moment, it goes before

the people in a manner to demand and to hold attention. God has a right at any time to the audience of His creatures. God has a right at any time to seek His people. And that is why we are seeking.

Now, let us pass to the next point. What is it we seek? If we make a mistake here, it is fatal. Paul says, "I seek not yours, but you." Just as sure as you church-members make the impression upon the minds of sinners that you are seeking what they have, that you are courting them that you are soliciting their attendance upon the service at your place of worship and manifesting an interest in their case because they may happen to be rich, or chance to occupy a high social position, or because their alignment with your particular congregation will give you social and financial strength in the community as compared with other congregations — just as sure as you make such impression on their minds, it is impossible for any right religious feeling to be excited in their hearts.

You must by all means come before them with this thought clearly in every word and deed upon your part: that you do not seek their money, their social position, that your mind is not on that, that you are giving no thought to it, that you are seeking them and not theirs, that you are seeking them as lost people, as not possessing in themselves anything that would recommend them to you or to God, that your object is the salvation of their souls and nothing beyond that. Until you can put it just that way, you may never expect to obtain a fair audience of outside people.

It must be put this way: That before they can rightly do anything for the church, before they can rightly claim the Christian name, before a dollar of theirs or any social influence of theirs, can be regarded as worth a nickel in the sight of God, they must first give themselves to the Lord.

I am glad to see in this congregation a continual development of that thought; that you do not go to those who are not Christians to obtain the money with which to build your house of worship, or with which to pay your current expenses; that you intentionally and with fixed purpose absolutely leave them out of all of these things, insisting as a fundamental thing in Christianity that they first give themselves to the Lord. That must be regarded as the primary law of religion.

As long as a rich man can assume an attitude of patronage toward the Christian religion; as long as one who occupies a high social position can flatter herself with the thought that she is conferring some kind of a favor or obligation upon a congregation by her attendance, it is almost impossible to make an impression on that soul that will even start it in the direction of salvation. First, then, our seeking is in behalf of and by command of Christ.

Second, we seek you, not yours. Now, to what end? What object have we in view when we invite a sinner to come to Christ? That we make no mistake as to the end in view, let us hear the Word of God. I read from the second chapter and ninth verse of the First Letter of Peter: “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation a peculiar people.” Some of the old-time people say that Christians should be peculiar — that is, odd in dress and manner. But that is not the meaning of the Word. You are to be a people for God’s own possession. That is, His possession is to be exclusive, peculiar to God. There is to be no division of authority. “They first gave themselves to the Lord.”

Now, when as a church we commence a protracted meeting, we must let it be understood in every song and prayer and sermon that the object that we have in view in seeking men is that they shall become God’s own possession. The one sought must become the Lord’s. God is to be his God, and he is to be God’s child. On his brain and heart and hands and feet and in the secret chambers of his deathless spirit is to be written one name only, and is to be imprinted one image only, so that the image and superscription will tell to angels and to men that this is God’s property. We do not ask you to give yours to us. We do not ask you to become our property. In seeking you we seek you not for any such purpose. But we ask you to submit yourself to God and to be unto God for a possession in body and soul and forever. That is the object of our service.

And being sought as a peculiar possession of God’s, to what uses are you to be placed, being so given over and surrendered to God? Let us notice the next Scripture to show what we mean by it. You will find it in the eighth chapter of Hebrews, where is cited a promise from the thirty-first chapter of Jeremiah: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt . . . for this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. . . I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.” Notice, if you please, that in becoming God’s own possession it is not meant in any external sense, as “the Jewish nation was God’s people,” for here is a contrast between God’s ownership and the Jewish nation as a people and God’s ownership of the people we seek for Him, and the distinction consists in this—that inside of the man, in the inner man, in his spirit, the law of God is to be put in his mind and written on the tables of his heart, and there is to be in the inward part a conformity to the nature and holiness of God.

You will see at once, then, in conducting a protracted meeting, that when we invite people to take an interest in it, or invite them to come out from the world and join the

church, it cannot be that they are to unite with the church in any external way merely; that no church of Jesus Christ has any authority, has any command, to lead into its membership, by any rite or ceremony, an unconverted, unregenerated, and unsaved man, but that we are to seek them for God's people, in that God shall reign in their souls and dominate their secret thoughts. That is what we mean.

This is further evident by another Scripture, the twelfth chapter of Romans, where they are commanded by the Apostle Paul to be not conformed to this world but to be transformed in the renewing of their mind, and thus transformed, to present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God. In reality it is presented in the Scriptures: "Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost? For He dwelleth in you. Therefore yield not your members unto unrighteousness." Therefore, in asking any sinner to come to Christ, to come out from the ranks of the world and to take a position with the people of God, we ask him to come only in the sense that is presented in these Scriptures.

Let us take yet another Scripture. In the fourteenth chapter of Romans, commencing with the seventh verse, we have the following which I wish to read, so that you may get it clearly before you: "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."

Many times that Scripture has been interpreted to refer to our influence over other men. By a deduction it may be so used, but it has a primary and almost exclusive reference to another thought, and that is that when one has been sought by the people of God to become God's own possession, to become God's possession inside, become God's possession by the transformation of his mind, that henceforward that man so belonging shall not live unto himself, but unto God, his owner, and that when he dies he shall not die unto himself, but unto God, his owner; that in every act of his life and in the hour of his death, never for one moment shall sight be lost of the supreme and fundamental thought that he is God's property. "The Lord knoweth them that are His." Upon His property He has set His seal, a seal man nor devil can break, and His property, purchased by the blood of the everlasting covenant, is to be used for His glory and to accomplish His purposes, and not the private wishes of the saved man. Thus in outline I have presented all that it was my purpose to say today as to the object of a protracted meeting.

Now let me apply the thoughts thus outlined, and then leave the case with you. Every one of you who is a member of this church, I take it, holds yourself ready, with some degree of consecration, to do what you can in this meeting. I would have you therefore definitely settle, by putting it upon an unshaking and unshakable foundation,

what you mean; that you are not to speak for yourself; that you are not to speak in your name; that you are to speak in behalf of Christ; that your sole office consists in representing Him here upon this earth in His absence; that what He did upon the earth with tears and entreaties and persuasion in endeavoring to lead men to Christ, you, in His behalf, in His stead, are now to do. Your model, therefore, is the record concerning our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. What was His attitude toward sinners? What earnestness did He manifest? What zeal, what persistence? What sacrifices did He make? In what discrimination did He hold men's persons? Did He look to the riches of a man or to his poverty? Did He look to the position of a man, whether king or peasant, or did He look upon all men as fallen, lost men, who were to be sought with a love undying and unquenchable, and by that love attracted to salvation? Now, that is to be our position. We can stand on no other.

Moreover, I would have you do now as I have seen you do in times past, make no discrimination in going out among the people; consider the rich and the poor as just alike, as standing upon a common platform; that the cultured and the uncultured, those higher in social position and those who are the dregs of society, are just one with you; that no matter what moral taint a person has inherited or has incurred by personal disobedience; no matter how far any woman has fallen, as lost sinners you are to seek them all. In Christ's stead seek them for a possession of God. Seek them for the salvation of their souls.

Continuing the application, I charge that you never allow the lost ones to rest one single moment in the thought that they can do anything before they first give themselves to God. Drive them away from that position. Do not let them occupy it one moment. Say to them in word and in deed, "Not yours, not yours, not your money, not your position, not your patronage, but yourself; give yourself first to God. You make no start in religion at all until you do that thing. You cannot buy salvation; you may not say, 'I will give the half of my goods to feed the poor.' You may not say, 'I will help to endow a college.' You may not say, 'I will help to pay the preacher.' You may not say, 'I will help to build churches.' No, that position is sinking sand. Yourself, yourself, to God, or you are lost."

Hold him right there. Impale him on the point of self-surrender to God. Shoot it into his heart as a burning arrow. Transfix him with it as with a dart hurled from a strong hand, that in bringing himself he must bring himself to be renovated by the power of God; that there must be an internal, spiritual change; that there must be regeneration; that the power of the Holy Ghost must brood over the great deep of his inner nature and bring life where darkness and chaos ruled; that he must be transformed into the renewing of his mind before he becomes God's possession. Stand right there yourself and hold him there.

If he says, "I do not swear; in morals I am better than a great many people in the church; I am a good husband to my wife and a good father to my children; I am a good citizen; may I not present myself to the Lord to be His possession in that capacity?" — do not let him rest in that position one moment. Say to him with a voice that never relaxes its pungency and emphasis, "You must be born from above, for not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but born of the Spirit of God, must be every child of God." If you would see a church that God will not bless, look at one that makes a breach in its walls where God made no gate, that over the ruins of that demolished wall may be introduced into the precincts of God's sacred camp unregenerated men and women.

Indeed, brethren, we must stand squarely and firmly on these points: That he first give himself to the Lord for the Lord to make him over; that he give himself to the Lord henceforward not to live unto himself; henceforward not to die unto himself; to be God's own possession; that from the time he gives himself to the Lord, then the Lord must be King in his heart. When this King says, "Go," he must go; when He says "Stay," he must stay, and it is no concern of his what hazard attaches to the going or the staying. It is no concern of his what suffering is entailed upon him, staying or going. It is no concern of his what alienation of family or friends follows his going or his staying. That is God's business. Let him say, "I am living unto God, dying unto God," and the Lord will take care of the consequences that ensue from yielding absolutely to His will. That is the true conception of a conversion.

I told you before to pray only and fervently that the will of God might be done. Are you willing to go into a meeting that way? Are you willing to take hold of it with the end in view that any sinner in this town, without any thought as to whether he is worth one dollar or a million; without any thought as to whether he is cultured or uncultured; without any thought as to his social position, in the upper crust or in the mud sills; without any thought as to anything that he could confer upon the church or detract from it; that you will go out as an ambassador of Jesus Christ, beseeching them to be reconciled to God?

Then this must be our voice: "We seek you. Jesus told us to seek you. We seek you not for ourselves. We seek you that you may be God's property. We seek you that you may be a temple of God. We seek you that you may live unto God. We seek you that you may die unto God. We seek you not that good may come from you to us, but for your present and eternal good: your salvation in time and eternity, and above all, for God's glory."

Suffer yet a few words of exhortation. There be some here today who are not God's, not God's own possession. They have not God's Spirit in them. They have

not God's seal upon them. God would not claim them if they were to die. And after their death, should the devil come to take possession of their bodies, God would not send the angel Michael to beat back the devil as He did from the body of His servant, Moses, saying, "That is Mine. Touch it not. O Satan, that body is Mine! The soul of Moses is Mine and the body of Moses is Mine. He lived unto Me. He died unto Me. Touch it not."

Sinner, if you were to die, what barrier could rise up between your cold, rigid body and Satan coming to fix his stamp upon it? By what right could anybody intervene when your spirit leaves the crumbling house it had discarded? By what right could a convoy of angels come down and bar the path of your lost soul in its downward flight to the pit? They could not do it because it is not God's, not God's own possession. No name of God on it; no seal of God's on it. Alienated from God, banished from God, you are of your father, the devil.

Remember the case of Judas! Jesus said, "He is a devil." And when he died it is said "that he fell from his office of an apostle that he might go to his own place." See how ownership governed here. He was in the office of an apostle, but not saved; not right inside; not transformed in the renewing of his mind; not an *internal* child of God, but occupying an external office. And the time came when Judas died and by his death fell; fell from his office that "he might go to his own place." That place down there had called him. Its chambers were prepared for him. They waited for his coming. His home, his eternal home, had sent an appeal to Judas, "Come home, Judas. Come down here. Come quickly to thine own place." Did God intervene? Did any angel leave the court of heaven to put himself between that man and Satan? As he passed out of sight, the words ring like a knell, like the sad notes of a dirge, "Better for that man that he never had been born."

Remember Judas while I press the question-Are you God's? If not, I seek you. I seek you in behalf of Christ. I seek you in tears. I seek you for God, to be His possession; that you may live unto Him and die unto Him; to be claimed by Him when the harpies of the pit, with beak and talon, would rend you in your dying hour. I want on you God's seal that will frighten them away and say to Satan himself, "Stand back, thou accuser of the brethren! Take thy shadow off of their hearts. Take thy beak out of their souls. Take thy shadow away from their dying bed, and let the spirit go home to God, whose it is."

Sinner, I seek you, not yours; you, and you for Jesus. May I find you?

2. A SERMON FOR ERRING CHRISTIANS

TEXT: If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. -

~~404~~2 Chronicles 7:14

Theme: Plain directions to Christians who are out of the King's highway, telling them how to get back into the way.

This text is God's answer to Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple. That prayer is remarkable for these three things:

1. A distinct recognition of the fact that all of God's people will and do sin.
2. That divine chastisement for purposes of correction will certainly follow every such sin.
3. A petition that God would accept and honor as adequate provision for the forgiveness of such sin, the Temple sacrifices offered by the Temple priesthood.

These three notable characteristics of this famous prayer are very carefully stated because they embody a great deal of doctrine. And doctrinal statements ought never to be loosely and incautiously worded. Because, therefore, of the vital and fundamental doctrines involved, let us elaborate somewhat on each characteristic of this prayer, by enlarged restatement.

Observe carefully that the first notable characteristic is not a recognition of the fact that some of God's people will sin nor the mere possibility that all of them may sin, but that all of them will and do sin - all of them, without one exception. Not one of them is without sin. If this statement be correct, it forever settles some things. It forever negatives as unscriptural certain modern doctrines touching sanctification. If it be urged as an objection that Solomon in his prayer continually said, "If Thy people sin," the "if" implying contingency only, or mere liability, the answer to such objection is obvious, conclusive, and crushing that he himself carefully guarded against such construction of his language. The possibility or liability expressed by the "if" relates only to the particular form of the sin and never to the fact that sin would come in some form. It may be a sin against a neighbor or one against God, a sin of omission or of commission. He foresaw no end to the variety of form or kind. The "if" was designed to cover any or all forms. It is as if he had said, "If it take this form or that,

whatever form it may take and some form it will take - then hear Thou in heaven and forgive.”

I say the proof of the correctness of such answer to the anticipated objection is obvious, conclusive, and crushing. Would you hear and consider some of this proof? Then listen carefully:

We have two inspired records of this prayer. In both records is express proof that the “if” is not designed by him to convey the idea of doubt or uncertainty as to the fact of sin. Here are his precise words, twice recorded: “If they sin against Thee (for there is no man that sinneth not)” (⁴¹⁰⁸⁶1 Kings 8:46 and ⁴⁴⁶⁶2 Chronicles 6:36). The full import of this broad negative as to the existence of sinless men is emphasized by its enlarged restatement by Solomon in another and much later connection: “For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Ecclesiastics 7:20). This, for the present, at least, is sufficient proof of the correctness of the first statement, that Solomon’s prayer distinctly recognizes the fact, not that some of God’s people will sin, nor that all of them may sin, but that all of them will and do sin.

The second characteristic of the prayer is that divine chastisement, for purposes of correction, inevitably follows such sin. There is no doubt here, no ambiguity. Every element of uncertainty is excluded. You, O Christian, do certainly sin. So, O Christian, are you certainly chastised. Chastisement is not the only inalienable and precious heritage of every child of God, but it is also a distinguishing mark to evidence the fact that he is a child of God. No chastisement, no child. What saith the Scripture?

*My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord,
Nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him;
For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth,
And scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.*

“If you endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth riot? But if ye be without chastisement whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons. Furthermore we have had the fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence. Shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure. But He for our profit that we might be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet; let that which is lame be not turned out of the way: but let it rather be healed.”

Now, do observe how this Scripture corroborates the first proposition that all God's people sin. "He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." All His people are partakers of chastisement. Any self-styled child of God who is without chastisement is a bastard and not a son. He chastises to correct some wrong, to heal some lameness. He chastises not willingly, but for love and for profit. And especially, mark you, that the object of chastisement is that "Ye might be partakers of His holiness." But our heavenly Father does not chastise the innocent. If you are chastised, you have done wrong. If you do wrong, you are not sinless.

There is no escape from the logic. You may impale any modern sanctificationist on the point of these questions: "Are you without a chastisement?"

"Yes."

"Then you are a bastard and not a son, for all His children are partakers (present tense) of chastisement."

"I take that back," says he; "I am not without chastisement."

"Then is your doctrine annihilated, for He never chastises except to correct wrong-doing. He chastens us for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. If already holy, why chasten?"

So to claim to be holy as God is holy is to claim that you have passed out of the realm of chastisement. But this earth and this life is the realm of chastisement and the claimant is here and not yonder. The school of discipline for the spirit ends only with death of the body or its glorification without death. Every stroke of the chastening rod of our heavenly Father laid on one who here on earth claims to be holy either proves that God is a cruel tyrant or that the claimant is a liar.

Let God be true and the man a liar. Death is the last stroke of discipline. With death all chastening of the spirit ceases. Seen after death they are at last "the spirits of just men made perfect." So testifies this same chapter that tells of the chastening (~~802~~ Hebrews 12:23).

The third characteristic of this prayer is that it petitions God to accept and honor the merit of the Temple sacrifices and the office of the Temple priesthood as the ground and means of forgiving such sins of His people. This third characteristic, like the second, wonderfully corroborates the proposition in the first, that all God's people will and do sin while in this life. Here is a Temple, and sacrifices, and a priesthood.

The argument is in no way affected, whether you refer to the Old Testament typical Temple, typical sacrifice, typical priesthood, or to the New Testament antitypical

temple, antitypical sacrifice, or antitypical High Priest. The doctrine is one. It is the doctrine of mediation. The sacrifice atones for sin. The priest is a mediator, daysman, or go-between. A mediator deals only between the parties at issue. When the issue is settled, the office of mediator expires by limitation, of necessity. After that the parties, now at one, deal with each other directly, face to face.

As long as the offender makes use of the Temple, or its sacrifice, or its priest, in dealing with the offended one, so long he acknowledges that he is a sinner. When he becomes wholly sanctified, or sinless, he no longer needs a mediator. There is no longer an issue to be adjusted. Hence the Bible teaches that so long as the mediatorial dispensation lasts men must approach God as sinners, through a mediator, and that when the mediatorial dispensation ends, there will no longer be either mediator or Temple.

As this proposition, if scriptural, grinds into fine powder the modern heresy of sanctification, let us carefully consider “the law and the testimony.” Open your Bibles and turn with me to ~~615~~1 Corinthians 15:24-28:

“Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For He hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.”

This Scripture unquestionably teaches that the resurrection of the bodies of the dead and the final judgment of all reunited souls and bodies constitute the climax and culmination of the mediatorial kingdom of Christ. All issues whatever, whether of soul or body, between the sinner and God, the Father, are forever settled. The saved sinner is now presented glorious, “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but is holy and without blemish.” The commandment being now fulfilled, “Be ye holy, as I am holy,” he no longer needs a Temple, or a sacrifice, or a mediator, or a “throne of mercy.” God, the Father, is all in all. And from this time there will be no Temple typical or antitypical.

Turn with me to ~~612~~Revelation 21:22: “And I saw no temple therein.” And to ~~621~~Revelation 22:4: “And they shall see His face.” The last two chapters of Revelation show us the universe after the mediatorial kingdom is ended. Now no Temple, no sacrifice, no High Priest, no mediator or go-between; they shall see His face. In mediatorial days, or days of sin, to see His face out of Christ was to die.

“No man shall see My face and live.” But now, being sinless in soul and body, they see His face, because the apostolic prayer is answered: “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

In the light of these Scriptures we may well inquire: Does any Christian living on the earth before death and the judgment get beyond the need of the Temple, its atoning sacrifice, the intercession of its High Priest and its throne of mercy? If he comes to that Sacrifice, he comes as a sinner for cleansing. If he comes to that Advocate, he comes as a sinner not daring to see God’s face. If he comes to that throne of mercy, he comes as a sinner to “find grace to help in time of need.”

But if he be now sinless, he has passed out of the mediatorial dispensation as well as passed out of the realm of chastisement. If for one single moment he becomes sinless here, he has effectually disproved the necessity for a high priest after the order of Melchisedec, for that necessity grew out of the fact that we could not be saved to the uttermost without a Priest “who ever liveth to make intercession for us.” But a sinner, though he be a Christian, needs a High Priest “who ever liveth to intercede for him” and who by that very ‘power of an endless life’ is “able to save him unto the uttermost.” But He never intercedes for the sinless. Hence the Apostle John’s threefold statement:

1. “If we say that we have not sinned [past tense] we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.”
2. “If we say that we have no sin [present tense] we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”
3. “And if any man [i.e., a Christian] sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.”

Therefore, does this third characteristic of Solomon’s prayer confirm the proposition in the first characteristic, to wit: God’s people will and do sin every day, and never more heinously than when they say “We have no sin.”

As this last point is a capital one, observe more particularly one of the facts already brought out incidentally. Solomon’s prayer connects every hope of Divine favor with the Temple, its sacrifice of blood and the intercession of its high priest. He does not ask God to meet the sinner anywhere else... “O Lord, let Thy name be here, and Thine eye be here, and let Thine ears be here, and Thine eye be here, and Thy power be here.” So God answers the prayer just that way: “My name shall be there;

Mine eyes shall be there; Mine ears shall be there; My heart shall be there; and My power shall be there.”

Thus God’s people must meet Him in Christ. Meeting Him in Christ, they meet Him as sinners. Committing any sin, and desiring to be rid of it, the way is plain; it is through a mediator, and in that way is no delay. The first step in that direction, God sees, for His eyes are there. The first trembling petition in that name, God hears, for His ears are there. The motion toward the Father through the Son awakens His love, for His heart is there, but not elsewhere, except as a consuming fire.

Whoever claims to be holy as God is holy should never approach a throne of mercy, should never ask anything for Christ’s sake. That throne is approachable by sinners only; that place is for sinners only. Whoever, living here on earth prior to death and the judgment, claims to be without sin, has passed beyond grace, beyond the realm of chastisement and discipline, beyond the mediatorial dispensation, beyond the necessity of the High Priest’s intercession, if what he says is true. But as the realm of chastisement ends only with death, as the mediatorial kingdom lasts until death, that last enemy, is destroyed, as the glorious condition set forth in the last two chapters of Revelation, where there will be no -Temple, no sacrifice, no need to see God’s face through a mediator.

I say, as this glorious state is after the resurrection and the final judgment, the man who here claims to be sinless does not tell the truth. Nor does the world believe him when he says it. He is less trusted and more suspected after he says it than before he says it. He is universally regarded as a misguided enthusiast, or the unwitting subject of a delusion, or a fanatic, or a hypocrite.

It was necessary thus to explain the text, which is an answer to the prayer. What then is my theme today? It is this: Plain directions to Christians who are out of the way, telling them how to get back into the way. The text contains the four simple directions. What are they? Listen while I number them as I repeat the text: “If My people, who are called by My name, shall humble themselves” (that is the first direction, humility), “and pray” (that is the second direction, prayer), “and seek My face” (third direction), “and turn from their wicked ways” (fourth direction), “then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin.”

There cannot possibly be a subject of greater practical interest to Christian people than this subject. There is more involved in it than I could state in one hour if I confined myself to the tersest wording of my propositions.

How far out of the way you are I do not know, nor do you. That you are, not all equally far out of the way is self-evident, but that every one of you is somewhat out of the way follows from the correctness of the positions already established.

Now, if you are, to any extent, out of the way, it is of importance coextensive with the degree of your departure from God that you get back in the way. Get back there for peace. Get back there for power. Get back there for strength. And, getting back, there is a revival. And a revival is a prelude to the conversion of sinners.

Now, then, how important it is to people who are out of the way, who are, for the time being, astray, to have very simple, very plain directions how to get back in the way, to know which direction to take, to know just what to do. In simple language, "What am I to do to get back in the way?" Here is God's answer to it. What is the first thing? Humble thyself. As soon as we come to this first direction, we are instantly put upon a definition. What is humility? The idea of a thing is often brought out by contrasting it with its opposite. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." Here are two things that stand over against each other and mutually define each other. "Humility," then, is the antipode of pride, just as light is the opposite of darkness and truth is the opposite of error. So that, when we come to define "humility" we may know that we have never gotten to the true conception of it so long as the ground occupied by our definition does not stand squarely opposite to the ground occupied by pride.

Let us get a little nearer to its meaning. What is the etymology of the word? It is from the word "humus," meaning the ground. Now, the idea of that word, derived from its etymology, clings to it always, and we have never given a correct definition of humility when we separate it from that basal, etymological conception—the ground. So that in that definition must be the conception of putting oneself low down, on the ground, next to the ground. To humble oneself then is not to be lifted up, which is pride, but to put oneself down onto the ground.

Let us get at it a little more closely. If I were to try to analyze "humility" I would state it somewhat in this way: That a humble man does not overrate himself, does not put himself too high. Now, see if that be true. Listen to this from the twelfth chapter of the Letter to the Romans: "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." Whoever, then, overrates himself, is not humble. Whoever thinks too highly of himself is not humble.

Let us see the next thought in the analysis: That he does not overrate his ability. The Scripture says, "Let not him that girdeth on the harness boast himself as he that

putteth it off.” So then, when you find a man speaking of something yet to be done, something yet an untried experiment, using great swelling words of vanity, overrating his ability, priding himself upon his power, that man is not a humble man.

But we shall proceed in the analogy: *When he overrates his possessions*. Listen to this Scripture, in the third chapter of Revelation, and this is about professing Christians, and is what Jesus said to these professing Christians: “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” Now, when a man overrates his possessions, he underrates his needs correspondingly. If he says, “I am rich,” that means, “I therefore need nothing.” But if it be true that he is poor and blind and miserable and naked, in order for him to get a conception of his needs, he must put himself down where he belongs. Get down on the ground! Get down! Get down! Lower, lower yet. Get down until you touch the ground! Humus - humility.

Now, it is of vast importance that you notice this point: In analyzing humility you need not ask a man what he glories in. Watch him and you will see what he glories in. If he glories in himself, in his power, in his possessions, in his achievements; if you can see self-complacency stealing over him, you may know that he is not humble. But if he glories in the Lord, he will say, “I am well, but I glory in Him that made me well. I am clean, but I glory in Him whose blood cleansed me. I am rich, but I glory in Him who became poor that I might be made rich. I did this and that, yet not I, but God who was with me; yea, in all things good, by the grace of God, I am what I am.”

In that sort of way, you can get at the true conception of humility. But mark, if humility is analyzed by looking at the rating whether it be overrating or underrating, you must know that when you use the word “rate” you necessarily imply a standard. Where there is no standard you can have no rate. Suppose I were to measure a goblet by itself, what has been gained? If I measure it by itself, it is utterly impossible to detect any defect in it, because nothing measured by itself will reveal a defect. If I measure it by another goblet which is also imperfect, I never get at a correct result. There must be some fixed standard by which both of them are to be measured.

And so, when a man begins to rate himself in order to determine whether he be humble, he must not measure himself by himself, nor must he measure himself by some other imperfect person, but he must measure himself by the true standard, which is God. And whenever you can get any man, however proud and conceited, however envious of superiors or contemptuous of inferiors, though his complacency is as deep and wide as the ocean, to come and stand by the standard of God, you will see him get down on the ground. He will humble himself before God.

Take Job. How he did lift himself up when Eliphaz and the other two men discoursed with him! How he did maintain his integrity! But when God Almighty spoke to him out of the whirlwind; when the Lord came, Job said, "I have heard of Thee with the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and I repent in dust and ashes." He got down; he struck the ground that time. Humus - humility. That is rightly rating oneself when placed by the side of holiness and purity.

Take Isaiah. He was a saintly man, a long way in advance of his contemporaries. And yet one day he saw the Lord, whose train filled the Temple, and when he saw the Lord, he fell as if he were shot. He struck the ground, and, striking, he said, "Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" Now, here you get the true conception of humility rated by the standard (which is God). It means putting yourself right down on the ground. That is humility.

Now, the next point is also essential. It would seem that it is not necessary to discuss it. If there were not so many delusions; if the most intelligent people did not deceive themselves; if the most intellectual people did not allow others to deceive them; if they did not permit deceivers to come up openly and hoodwink them in the broad light of day, it would not be necessary to discuss this next point.

What is it? That humility is not a matter of words or of dress. Did you ever read Dickens' *David Copperfield*? Did you ever listen to Uriah Heep? There is humility in words. Uriah and his mother were the humblest people in all the world. They would crawl at your very feet in words; they would absolutely get down on the lowest place they could find and flatten themselves out in words, the fawning, cringing hypocrites, masking the pride and hate of hell under the word-garb of humility.

Did you ever read Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*? Look at Mark Antony. He apologizes for his very existence. See how humbly he stands there: "I did not come to praise Caesar; I merely came to bury him. You certainly will let me bury the dead. I did not come to make any complaint against those who slew Caesar; they are honorable men; they are all honorable men." Oh, how humble! And yet, under those words of humility he proceeded to stir the stones of Rome to mutiny. I never knew Shakespeare's genius to fail in but one thing. He should have represented Mark Antony on the battlefield of Philippi, standing with a long face of mock-sorrow over the cold body of Brutus, Rome's last patriot, whom he had hounded to death, distributing certificates to prove that he had always said that Brutus was an honorable man! No, my brethren, humility is not a matter of words.

Take another case. There is Amasa, whom the king has received into favor, and here comes Joab. What does he say? “Amasa, my brother, art thou in health, my brother?” and, while so speaking, he stabs him under the fifth rib. Now, my point is, did the words, “my brother,” did the inquiry, “Art thou in health, my brother?” keep that deed from being foul assassination?

Yet take another case. Yonder in the garden is Jesus, and His enemies are coming, and at the head of them is Judas. Look at Judas before he gets to Jesus. Hear him, while he obsequiously bows: “Hail, Master!” See him kiss Jesus! Did the “Hail, Master!” and did the treacherous kiss prevent that act from being foulest treason? Did not Jesus pass upon it when He said, “Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?”

Now, listen to what prophecy foretold about that. I read to you from the fifty-fifth Psalm, which describes the very transaction. It is the Lord Jesus Christ speaking through the prophets of that transaction. Here He tells who it was: One who had taken “sweet counsel with me and walked into the house of God in my company.” O Spirit of Prophecy, O Bible, God’s manual of parliamentary law, how do you decide the point of order as to his words? Hear the divine ruling: “The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords.”

What I want to impress upon you is that humility is not a mere matter of words. What is it then? “Serving the Lord with all humility of mind.” Then humility is internal. It is not a matter of dress. A man is not humble because he puts on a poor dress. He may be as proud as Satan and yet be dressed in homespun. Or he may be an humble man dressed in broadcloth. He may be a proud man and yet cringe and fawn in his speech, like Uriah Heep. He may be a traitor when he obsequiously bows and says, “Hail, Master!” Humility is internal. It is of the mind, and it is of the heart.

It is unnecessary to elaborate more. What are we after? We started out with the proposition that all of God’s people will sin. You do, and you know you do. And the second proposition is: For such sins God will certainly chastise them. And then, with the third proposition, that God has made adequate provision for the forgiveness of the sins of the Christian and that in this text are the directions, clear and simple, that tell you just what to do to get back into the way of the Christian.

The first direction is: Humble yourself. That is the first, and, let me tell you, there is a relation between the first direction and the second, an essential and vital relation. I do mean to say that you cannot take the second step first and that you will have to take the first step in order to take the second. What is the second? “Pray.” Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire. Now, if the man says, “I am rich, I need nothing,” how can he

ask God for anything? How can he? Will you tell me how he can? But if humility has put him on the ground and he realizes in his heart, “I have sinned; I am needy; I am wretched,” that need suggests the petition that follows, and therefore, the second direction: Pray.

In the great convention at Marshall one day, when everybody else had left my room, I locked the door; I humbled myself. I got down on the ground in my spirit — right down on the ground — and there I felt a need, and that need was transmuted in a prayer to Jesus, and never in my life have I known a prayer to be answered sooner and more certainly than was that prayer.

Now you brethren want another revival. I know what you want. I know that this church wants a revival of religion. And I am giving you the directions as to how to get it. First, humble yourselves. Do not say you know not how. See that Pharisee and that Publican. Look at them, first one, and then the other: “God, I thank thee that I am not as other men. I am not an extortionist. I am not like this miserable Publican.” Now the other: “God be merciful to me, a sinner!” There they stand right over against each other — pride and humility. You want no other instruction. Look at the picture. That Publican felt his need; he got right down on the ground, and then he prayed: “Mercy, mercy, mercy!” Oh, how sweet a prayer that is! I never knew of such a one, nor did any man ever know of such a one, who failed to reach the throne of God.

I do not care how far off you are today, O Christian; it makes no difference what may be your guilty distance from God, if you get down on the ground in your spirit, in your mind, in your heart, and not in mere words, and, being humble then pray, I tell you, you are nearly back already!

What is the third direction? “Seek My face.” You know when a man has committed a sin, he generally does not want to see the one against whom he sinned. When Adam sinned, he hid in the garden when he heard God coming. It is the nature of offenders to skulk out of sight of the offended. But here comes this direction of God to the offender: “Seek My face.” Do not run from it. You never will settle it by going away. You only add to the distance. If you want to be fully right, being now humble and praying, get up and go to your Father, seek His face, turn toward Him, and keep on going until you meet Him. Look at that prodigal son. There is the whole thing illustrated. “And when he came to himself [there is the humility] he said, ‘I will arise and go to my father.’” Just look at it!

But where do you, a sinner, seek to find God’s face? You would seek God’s face directly if you lived on the other side of the mediatorial kingdom. There is no go-between between you and God after that scene described in the Book of Revelation.

To seek God's face then would be to seek the Father direct. But you cannot seek the Father directly now, because you are a sinner, and, being a sinner, if you thus seek His face, you die. "How, then, can I seek His face?" You must seek His face in the Lord Jesus Christ, the glory of God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ: "I and the Father are one." "Show us the Father and that sufficeth," said Philip. "Have you been with Me so long a time, Philip, and have not known Me? Whosoever hath seen Me hath seen the Father." So then, when you would seek His face, seek it in Christ. You must come to the substitute. Seek His face in Jesus.

And now, what is the last direction? "Turn from your wicked ways." Do consider this matter carefully. What has made this issue between you and God after you became a Christian? What was it? Sin. What is the matter that now concerns you? To get forgiveness for that sin. Well, now, can you conceive of being forgiven for sin and yet retain it? "Can a man be pardoned and retain the offense?"

Dare you ask God to put you back in the way by forgiving your sin and let your sin go back there with you? You want to go back. You say you do. And you want to humble yourself and you want to pray and you want to seek God's face in Jesus Christ; then, my brother, what are you going to do with the offense that made the issue? What is your purpose? Would you sin the more that grace may abound? Now, meet that squarely. Here is a sin that you have committed. God's Word says, "Turn from it. Let him restore that steals, and steal no more. Let him that is drunk sober up, and get drunk no more." Shall a man with maudlin speech ask God's forgiveness for drunkenness?

But, you say "Your whole sermon proceeds upon the assumption that a man cannot be perfectly sinless." That is true. But where is the difficulty in that? You must turn away from that sin with your heart. In your heart you must hate it. You must turn away from it by putting it on Christ, and that you do by faith. You must say, "Lord, here is an offense; I committed it after my conversion, and now, O Lord, in my heart I turn away from it; I know my liability to commit the same offense, but I hate it with all my mind. I serve God in my mind, and I turn away from it, and I take up the offense itself and I lay it right over on the substitute, Jesus Christ." Cannot I turn from it that way?

How do I know that I have turned away from it? If I have, by faith, put that offense on Jesus Christ, then its burden cannot crush me, for a thing cannot be in two places at the same time, and if it is on Him and crushing Him, it is off of me, and I am free. So you can turn away from it and yet retain liability to future sin. Put it on the Sin-bearer, brother; then the burden of that offense will be gone, and it will be on Jesus;

by faith it will have been put on Jesus. The love of that offense will be gone; in my heart I will hate it.

That is what God means by turning away from sin. He does not mean that you never will in this life sin again. The whole theory of redemption is directly to the contrary, and the provisions of it are all coexistent with the mediatorial reign, and just so long as that sacrifice and that High Priest remain, that long will you need the application of the blood and the intercession of the High Priest. But let us suppose that you have gotten to the point where you are sinless. What follows? If yesterday you reached a sinless point, then yesterday you used up all that you needed of the Priesthood to intercede for you; then so far as you are concerned, you do not need a priest after the order of Melchisedec, i.e., an eternal priest. You only needed a priest who would live and intercede until you became sinless. The sanctificationist virtually denies the prevalence of the mediatorial kingdom, and he antedates the picture in Revelation, in which after the resurrection and the judgment, then, and then only, there shall be no Temple.

Now, brethren, I leave this matter with you. I do know that I would be ashamed to give you directions that do not apply to myself, and I apply them before ever I bring them to you. Let every one of us hearken to the four directions: humble yourselves. Get down! Get down! Get down in the spirit. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Get down to the ground. *Humus*. Brother, get down today. Oh, humble yourself before God. Lie down there: lower, lower, lower. Now, brother, pray, "God be merciful to me, a sinner; O God, I need many things. Help, help, help!" And when you pray, seek God's face in Jesus, and then in your heart turn away from sin. Turn from it in loathing. Put it on Jesus: leave it there by faith and walk away from it forever. So comes forgiveness, and so comes the revival you desire.

3. CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS IN SOUL-WINNING

DOUBLE TEXT: Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch, who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord. - ⁴¹¹²Acts 11:22-24

Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee. - ⁴³¹¹Psalm 51:11-13.

Upon these two passages of Scripture I wish to set forth briefly some of the qualifications and characteristics of either preacher or layman who is likely to be successful in leading souls to Christ. It is said here of Barnabas that he possessed four of these qualifications, or characteristics:

First, he was glad when he saw evidence that Gentiles were converted at Antioch. There was no envy excited in his heart by the display of the divine power toward the Grecians, although it contravened all his race prejudices. Yet being sent there to look into that very matter and finding from the Christian experiences related by these Grecians that they had the same evidence of God's forgiveness that his own people in Jerusalem had, his heart instantly rejoiced. I put this, then, as one of the first things - the kind of a spirit that rejoices, that is glad at the display of the divine power in the salvation of men. I am sure that it is impossible for anyone to be influential in leading another to Christ whose entire heart is not made glad by the display of the divine grace in the conviction and conversion of sinners. Usually the young convert possesses this qualification in a very high degree.

It is one of the evidences by which he becomes convinced that he is a Christian himself. When contrary to his past experience, to his past sensations and emotions, he finds himself rejoicing if anybody expresses an interest in the salvation of his soul, it is strong proof that he is himself a subject of divine grace, especially if he finds himself more rejoicing if that interest culminates in clear evidences of a personal regeneration.

We may examine our hearts upon this point and may measure our readiness for a work of this kind by asking a question: Would we be glad tonight if God should

commence a work of grace in this house, or would we regard it as so great an inconvenience to us that we could not take pleasure in this display of the divine power? I am sure that if such beginnings of God's mercy should find you unready to welcome it, the first thing you would need to do in order to efficiently lead others to Christ would be to ask God to put you right on that point. Your heart is out of tune with God's heart. There is not a proper degree of correspondence in sentiment and in feeling between you and the divine benevolence, if you cannot, offhand, just as the case comes up, instantly rejoice over the salvation of sinners.

The second characteristic possessed by Barnabas, as stated here, was that "he was a good man." I shall never attempt to set a limit to the means employed by the Spirit of God in dealing with men, but may say this: That unless a man is a good man, unless he has the reputation of being a good man, unless in the estimation of people that are without he is what is ordinarily called a good man, he cannot be very efficient in leading them, through any influence he may bring to bear, into an interest in the Christian religion.

I understand the word "goodness" here to be used in its ordinary sense. What constitutes a good man in this ordinary sense might not perhaps be agreed upon by all people, but the following things are evidently comprehended in the term: You would not count a dishonest man a good man; whether he were actually dishonest or not, if his conduct had been such that in the esteem of the community in which he lived he was put down as dishonest, unless he could in some way efface that impression, by some means reverse the popular verdict, I do not see how any effort that he might put forth would be likely to be beneficial in impressing that community with favorable views of the religion of which he claimed to be a sample and exponent.

Moreover, the term "good man" must comprehend truthfulness. I mean that the man must not have among the people with whom he associates the reputation of being a liar. It is impossible for anyone to exert a deep personal influence for religious good upon a community unless they have confidence in his veracity. If what he says is questionable in their judgment, if the report goes out about him and fastens itself upon the mind of the people that his word is unreliable, he may be gifted, he may be eloquent, he may possess every other natural accomplishment necessary to do good as a public speaker or as an exhorter, but I do say that if there attaches to him the stain of falsehood, then until he removes that impression, his influence for good is at a minimum with that people. The term, "good man," covers the whole ground of moral action, in the common acceptation of that word: veracity, honesty, kindness, mercy, and all kindred qualities.

Now, Barnabas, in any community in which he ever lived, certainly did make the impression that he was a good man. Unfortunately there are many professing to be Christians who do not make that impression. They do not create in the minds of outsiders the thought, "That is a good man." They say he is a professor of religion but they do not call him good.

The third qualification possessed by Barnabas is far more important: "He was full of the Holy Spirit." In the beginning of Gospel times, when they selected a preacher or deacon, they not only looked to his moral character, not only insisted on his being a manly man among men, but they required that he should be "full of the Holy Spirit." That this insistence was by divine direction and meant to apply to all ages, appears from the pastoral epistles of Paul to Timothy and Titus.

But what means the phrase, "full of the Holy Spirit"? It does not mean that you should be a converted man, though that is implied. It means far more than that. A great many genuinely converted men are not full of the Holy Spirit. Many converted men are backsliders. Many other converts are as yet babes in Christ, but when we say that a man is full of the Holy Spirit, that means that the divine indwelling governs his actions, furnishes his motives, giving him his power, as when on the day of Pentecost they ere all filled with the Spirit and so endued with power.

His fourth qualification is thus expressed: "He was full of faith." This, though implying it, does not refer to personal, saving faith, for every Christian has that faith who personally receives and appropriates Jesus Christ. To be "full of faith" means something more than and different from that. In the present use of the word one may have little faith. He may believe in Christ as his Savior and yet at the same time his faith in the promises of God may be so feeble that his hold on them is as shaky as the grip of a paralytic, or his faith may be so enlarged that God's promises to him seem brighter than any star shining on the face of night.

One "full of faith" fully assures his heart that what God has spoken He will surely bring to pass, and so sets his mind and stays his soul upon the promises of God that you cannot scare him, you cannot shake him from his foundation. And so with great confidence and assurance he goes out into the world. For instance, there is the promise that God will bless His Word faithfully preached to the people. Now, you know that your own faith in that is not the same degree at all times. Some days, when you came to church, if the question were suddenly sprung upon you, "Do you believe God's Word is going to be fulfilled today?" you would say in your candor, "I have not thought much about it. I am not taking hold of it with the grip that I sometimes do. I am not praying about it. I am not expecting to see the Word fulfilled today."

To be “full of faith,” then, means that every word of God is not only “yea, yea, and nay, nay,” but that you see it to be so, and you feel it to be so, and you would risk your life upon its being so. Indeed, you so go out and do things in your confidence that to the unspiritual world you appear to be a fool. To the devotees of fashion, pleasure, politics, and money, you appear to be a crank, an enthusiast, a bigot or a madman. So when the zeal of Christ was eating Him up, His kindred and friends sought to restrain Him by a writ of lunacy. To Festus, Paul was crazed by learning. As the servant is not above his master, the man full of faith today must expect to excite the scorn of all the worldly minded. In all sincerity, from their standpoint, they will inquire, “How can you do that?” But with you it is all right. You are full of faith. You believe that what God says, He will do.

Such being the character of Barnabas. what followed? The record declares the consequence. He had these four qualifications:

- (1) He was glad at a display of the divine power in the conversion of men even when it crossed his prejudice;
- (2) he was a good man;
- (3) he was full of the Holy Ghost; and
- (4) he was full of faith. Following right after that, stated as the most natural consequence in the world, it is said that “much people were added to the Lord.”

Our second Scripture, the one from the fifty-first Psalm, presents the negative aspects of our case — the disqualifications. It assumes that at one time in your life you were a good man, in the ordinary acceptance of good; that you were moral in your thought and in your life; that you did regard the rights of other people and respect them, and that you did have respect for God’s moral government over your own soul. It implies that you once were of that kind.

It also not only implies a genuine personal faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior, but that there was a time when you were conscious of the presence of the Holy Ghost with you. And then it implies, not that you had forfeited your salvation, but that by slight and imperceptible divergencies from the right path or by the commission of some great sin under the sudden power of temptation in a moment of weakness, you had forfeited the joy of salvation, the strength of Christian power, and the sweet consciousness of the divine Presence.

It may also suppose such hardening of heart, such blunting of the moral perceptions, as leaves you in profound ignorance of your loss. The Laodicean church furnishes a classic illustration: “Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and

have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

As an individual illustration, let Samson serve. When the source of his strength had been removed, he got up and shook himself and went out as at other times and “wist not that the Spirit of the Lord had departed from him.” I do not mean the spirit of conversion. I mean the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, that presence whose companionship makes up your joy in religious life. Now the Holy Spirit was gone from that man in that sense. As a consequence his heart became hardened. He was insensible to the fact of his sin. He did not think about it. It did not wound him. It did not grieve him. But he jogged along, going through the forms of religion as he had been accustomed to do, and all the time “attitudinizing,” not only before the people, but absolutely before himself, as a deliverer of the former time.

It is a hopeful sign in a backslidden Christian when he notices that his power over sinners is gone, notices that his joy in the salvation of God has departed, when he not only will not say that he enjoys religion like he once did, but he knows he does not; when he is sure that there is no melody in his heart as he comes up to the divine service. Although he may not have expended one single thought in order to connect his lack of power and his lack of joy with that sin or series of sins committed, yet at the same time he does know that the joy is gone and the power is gone.

Now, if that man is disqualified from teaching transgressors God’s way, how much more one whose eyes are not opened at all! He stands spiritually disqualified from leading souls to conversion; why? What is it that ever enabled you to teach transgressors the way of God? What is it that ever gave you the power to lead a soul to Christ? Unquestionably the presence of the Holy Spirit in you and with you. Now, as that Spirit is withdrawn, how can you do that? There is no power in you that will reach men. You may get up and talk at the prayer-meeting. You may go through all the forms of religious service. You may honestly try to say impressive things. You may study out a speech or exhortation or sermon and try to throw yourself into it with the old time vim and unction, but deep down in your heart you know that you are not reaching the people. Your zeal is affected; your tears are pumped.

You may not have analyzed your condition to see just why you have no power, but there comes a time when God, who converted your soul and knows you to be in a backslidden condition, begins to stir you up. The first thing by which you may know that God is knocking at the door of your heart is that this part of the Scripture is fulfilled: “My sin is ever before me. Two weeks ago I thought about my business. I could even go down and teach a Sunday-school lesson and never have any particular thought about any offense that I had committed. But now something has

come and is the most important thing within the range of my vision. That which outlines itself with the greatest distinctness, that which rises up like a mountain in a plain, is my sin. It is all the time before me. I see it when I go to church. If the preacher preaches, I see my sin. If the brethren pray, I see my sin. If they sing a good song, I see my sin. If I go up-town, I see my sin. If I lie down at night, even after I shut my eyes, I see my sin. My sin is ever before me.”

Now, you may be sure that a loving God is dealing with You when that is the case. When He can keep your mind from everything in the world but the offense you have committed, you may be sure that bitter, distasteful, mortifying, and humiliating as is the experience through which He is leading you, that God is near you. He is breaking your heart. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit and a contrite heart. Brother, you cannot help, you cannot do much, you cannot inspire others, you cannot muster up the right kind of enthusiasm, you cannot take hold of the work of saving men with that unforgiven sin resting upon your heart.

What more? If God is dealing with you, He will make you see the relation of that sin to Him. “Against Thee have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight.” That is quite different from remorse. Remorse looks to yourself. It looks to the evil consequences as they affect you and your family; but when God’s Spirit is dealing with you and convicting you, if it is a genuine case, then you may rest assured that the most troublesome thought in connection with that sin in your mind is that it is against God. “Against Thee have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight.”

Again, if God is dealing with you, the next thing will be this: You will begin to pray, and it will be such praying as you have not done in a long time. This fifty-first Psalm will express your sentiments: “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: blot out all my transgressions. . . Hide Thy face from my sins. . . Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. . . Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. . . Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Let not the passing of the Spirit from me be an eternal one.” As if every bone in you were broken, as if all the moisture in you were dried up, as if you were nothing but kindling wood set on fire by hell, does your deep contrition seize you with its pangs and burn with its flames.

If God is dealing with you, there will come into your mind this thought - and this is the closing thought in connection with this part of the subject — which also establishes its connection with the main point I am discussing, that one of the deep and abiding sources of your sorrow is: “I have put myself in a position where I cannot be useful as a Christian. I not only see that I have sinned against God, but I

see that by sinning against God and carrying this sin unconfessed in my heart, I have divested myself of power to do good to other people.”

As soon as you see that, an entirely new motive rushes into your heart, like a messenger from heaven. It furnishes you with a new incentive to pray. What is it? “Not only, O God, have mercy on me and blot out my transgressions; not only restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, but, Lord, do this for the sinner’s sake. Do this not for my own miserable sake, for I have not deserved it, but do this so that I may be able to teach transgressors Thy way and that sinners may be converted unto Thee.” So that even in the depth, the deepest depth of your sorrow and trouble, that unselfish thought comes in, that thought that looks to the case of others.

I imagine Samson must have felt something of this; indeed I see not how he could escape it when he was grinding in the mills of the Philistines, when his eyes had been put out, when they were mocking, as he trod his weary round, slaving in darkness for the enemies of God and his people, surely the thought, the most poignant thought that ever afflicted his soul was: “I once could see. I once had power. I once had strength that nobody could withstand, and God gave it to me that I might do much good. I have wasted it. I have been deprived of it on account of my sins, and now, oh, the wretchedness of my condition, not so much that this slavery is painful to me, not so much that I have lost my sight, not so much that I have been derided and jeered at by my enemies, but because there comes to me on every breeze the wailings of my people and the clanking of their chains. Blindness nor night hides from me the invaded homes, the desecrated hearths, the maidens given to shame, the gray hairs dishonored, the young men under the lash of taskmasters—the general widespread demoralization and bondage of my people. I hear the cry of the maiden in the grasp of a ruffian, ‘O Samson, help, help!’ I hear old age appealing to heaven: ‘O God, didst thou not dower Samson with strength in our behalf?’”

Now, if he had any such feeling as that, what must be the feeling of a genuine Christian when he can look back to the time when he was a happy servant of the Lord Jesus Christ and enjoyed all of the communion of God’s house; when the spirituality of the hymns and of the prayers were precious to him; when once he could with an upright face and a beaming eye and a glowing cheek and a confident heart, go up and take hold of the hand of a sinner and say to him, “Come to Jesus.” Now his head is hanging down: “I cannot do it. I wish I could. Outside of the wretchedness that is my own, outside of the pain and shame that I carry with me wherever I go, more than all that is the bitter thought that one of the lights of God has been eclipsed. It is not shining, throwing a radiance upon the pathway of the lost. ‘O God, restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me,

and then will I teach transgressors Thy way and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.””

You will observe that the simplest, most familiar thoughts suggested by the text have been presented. I do know if you have committed any sin about which your soul has not been convicted and do not see it all the time before you, if you have committed any sin that has shorn you of your strength and hardened your heart, then the first thing for you to do is to pray David's prayer. That is the road to a revival of religion; therefore pursue it with undivided attention: "O Lord revive, revive!" Do not wait. Begin now. When you have felt that sin, and confessed it and carried it to God with humble contrition and earnest prayer, and there comes to you a sense of the divine forgiveness so that your heart has put off its cypress and crape and its windows have been thrown open, and its chambers illuminated with joy, the joy of salvation, then you will work, and you will work with power and you will work impressively.

It cannot harm us to restate these points: To be glad at the display of divine power in the salvation of men; to be a good man; to be full of the Holy Spirit; to be full of faith. Or if you have backslidden into any sin, seek the restoration of the joy of your salvation. Then are you ready to lead sinners to Christ and may expect that much people will be added to the Lord.

These are the steps toward success and revival. The searching part, the part that touches the church, to that part the old-time preachers invariably addressed themselves in the beginning of a meeting. Go back as far as records or tradition may extend, you will find it so. The biographies of the long line of good men shows this clearly — that they distinguished very clearly in their thought and in their preaching between a revival of religion and the conversion of sinners. They made the one the sequence of the other.

The church is the agency, and I do venture to say that it is the only divinely appointed agency for the salvation of men, and the church's power in publishing the gospel of Jesus Christ is dependent upon the purity of her garments, upon the brightness of her light, upon her fidelity to Jesus Christ, and upon the degree of her fervor and the fullness of her consecration.

Why wait for a meeting, then, to commence this preparatory work? Let each begin with himself and over against his own house. Examine your heart, determine for yourself whether strength is with you; whether there is conscious power with you when you talk to sinners. If you have it not, will you just take your eyes off the sin of every other man, woman, and child in the world? Take them off. I tell you that when God's Spirit deals with your own case you do not then say, "The sins of my neighbors are ever before me." You do not then raise an outcry against the offenses

of other people, but you are so absorbed, so wrapped up in the thought of your own vileness, your own distance from God, your own guilt, that this is all that you can see, and as a cloud, commencing no bigger than a man's hand, comes nearer and gets larger and expands its borders until the whole heavens are blackened and every light in the sky is shut out, so it is with your own soul when you see your own case as you ought to see it, for any sin unconfessed, unforsaken, unpardoned, interferes with your usefulness in the salvation of sinners.

I preach this sermon to myself. I preach it to every deacon in the church. I preach it to the choir. I preach it to you, brethren and sisters. And I say that this part of it we can take hold of and go to work on at once. Are you ready to do it? Are you ready to look into your own case? Or linger you yet in that dreadful condition, that condition of David when for nearly a year his conscience did not hurt him and his sins did not rise before him? He was going on defiant before the people and before the mirror of self-esteem, as one who loves God and hates iniquity.

Will you do what I ask? If you will, whatever else may be the result, in your case there will be a revival. Have you ever seen a garden or a field in which everything was dried up? The soil was deep and rich. It had been cultivated with great painstaking. The owner had spared neither labor nor skill, but it did not rain. A drouth came on and his field or garden was parched and dried up. Is it that way with your soul? Then you need a visit from on high. You need to pray, "Savior, visit Thy plantation. Send us, Lord, a gracious rain." You need to pray that there should be an outpouring of the Spirit upon your heart, for I tell you that on the land of God's people there come up thorns and briers until the Spirit is poured out from on high.

The way to bring about a revival is to commence yourself, and commence with your own case. There are Samsons in the church, but the question is, has Samson been shorn of his locks? Have the eyes of Samson been put out? Is he working in the mills of the Philistines? Is he working along, unconscious of the fact that the Spirit of God has departed from him and he has not the strength of other days?

Bear with my urgency and plainness of speech. You may be the most modest woman in the land, the most virtuous, the most faithful. You may be everything that, touching human affairs, is most excellent, but God knows that if your heart turns riot to the salvation of other people, if your heart is out of tune on that subject, you are backslidden. There is something wrong. There is some kind of a sin committed. I leave you to find out what it is. But I do know that often, from causes that seem to be too slight for recognition, there plant themselves roots of bitterness, occasions of strife, occasions of alienation. There fastens upon the heart an envious or jealous or an unforgiving spirit, and so, when we stand praying before God our own heart being

full of bitterness and censure of others, perhaps of our brethren and sisters, we cannot pray - we say the words but there is no power in the words.

I appeal to you as the church of God to let us look at these matters in their relation to the salvation of sinners. That is why we are here. May I not even become personal, urging the questions: Do you lack faith? I mean, have you much faith? Can you take hold of God's promises? Is the sense of the Holy Spirit with you? Do you feel the Spirit filling you? Do you stand before the community as good men and women? Or are you backslidden, with sins unforgiven, separating between you and God? How is it? Let us get the stumbling-blocks out of the way. I commend you to God, to the word of His grace, and especially to the inquisition, the searching inquisition, of God's Holy Spirit.

4. "I HAVE SINNED"

TEXT: I have sinned. - ^{<OLD>}2 Samuel 12:13

"I have sinned." The whole emphasis of this sermon today is on the past tense. I am asking you to consider that he does not say, "I sin," but "I have sinned." And the first thought of the text is embodied in this question: Why did David have to wait so long after the event to recognize it as sin? Why did he not see it was sin when it enticed him? Why did he not see that it was sin when committing it? Looking at it in another person, as presented in Nathan's parable, he readily perceived its iniquity and promptly decided it to be worthy of death. Did no voice speak to his own soul: "Is it right to murder a man? Is it right to murder your friend? Is it right to murder your friend who is engaged in actual 'service away from home in your behalf? Is it right to take advantage of his absence on your service to do him the greatest wrong that can be done to a man?"

So, my first point is this: Something hid from that man's sight the iniquity of his offense when it came before him as a temptation. Something blinded him in its indulgence. And this blindness must have been a total eclipse of moral vision, because he waited so long a time to say, "I have sinned." Why did not he say it sooner?

It is inconceivable that a good man like David, if at all himself, should deliberately plan to commit a series of horrible crimes — adultery, hypocrisy, lying, murder, and rebellion against God. Evidently sin to him at the time did not appear to be sin. It did not appear to be prolific — hypocrisy, lying, murder, and rebellion, the hideous progeny of lust, were surely not in sight at first. Surely only one bird of the covey was visible. Surely the rest were lurking under cover. Surely he could not expect to flush so full a flock of obscene and hideous birds of night at one time. But yet, how strange when one after another arose before him till "the air was dark with their pinions," and it did not startle him.

Before passing judgment on David, look honestly a little closer home. You are bound to see, if you have ever studied your own case, that your recognition of sin committed by yourself is almost always in the past tense. It is when you look back at it that you say, "I have sinned." Why didn't you see it at the time? And, as the experiences of others coincide with yours, it is evident that sin, to the man who commits it, does not, at the time, appear to be sin. But as it is intrinsically a very heinous thing, as any man will admit who will consider the particular offenses under consideration, and as ultimately it never fails to seem as bad as it is, how great must

be its deceitfulness at first when such a sin as adultery, or as murder, can put on itself such a coloring and come in such a guise when it is a temptation, and even when it is a fact, that the man who commits it may sometimes wait till long afterward, and only when he looks back at it, before he can say, "I see now; it was sin."

The next thought does not follow the first but stands right over against it, as Cape May faces Cape Henlopen at the mouth of the Delaware. Since, as a temptation and long after it became a crime, it did not appear to be sin, who revealed it? What power had been brought to bear, that in looking back at it, his eyes were opened and he saw that it was sin? The two thoughts stand over against each other. There was first something in the sin that disguised it and that for the space of a whole year obscured it from his sight. Now, at the end of the year, something came in that unveiled it before his eyes. What is that power?

Here are two things worth considering: What or who unveiled David's eyes? What, or who, pulled off the veil? And both of these thoughts are suggested by the past tense, "I have sinned. I did not see it then. Why did I not? Why do I now see it?" Now, whenever you push those two questions far enough, the answer to the first will be "The devil." The answer to the second will be "God."

Let us now, having the clue, pursue the analysis to something far more important than the mere recognition of sin. David said, "I have sinned." And he so said it that it was evident he felt it to be sin. There are tears and groans in his confession. He not only recognized it, but he felt it. The question recurs: Why did he not feel that it was sin when it was offered as a temptation? When committed? When continued so long? Why did he afterward feel it to be sin? How do you account for that lack of sensitiveness in your own soul in the first place, and how do you account for it when it afterward comes?

Here stand two stupendous effects. Effects have causes. What is the cause of the first? The devil. What is the cause of the second? God. Why is it that a man of ordinary intelligence, a man whose general discernment is accurate, will allow a month, a year, ten years, to pass away before his soul becomes sensitive to the most enormous offenses committed by him? Have you not heard men even when old, when they were so old that the fires of passion had burned out, and the spice and flavor of sin had disappeared-have you not seen such hoary-headed sinners looking back over offenses committed long ago, and trying by varied reproductions of the events through the kaleidoscope of memory, to invest an old sin with its original false coloring and to reawaken the sweetness of the morsel that they rolled under their tongues long ago, and fondly talk of their delinquencies with evident self-admiration,

glorying in their shame? While they say, “I have sinned,” they have not yet felt, “I have sinned.”

Let us advance to the next point. “I have sinned.” Sin is an error. Sin is a mistake. Sin does not pay. When David saw that he must pay for that offense, he recognized that it was folly. Consciously he did not commence to pay for it until one year after its commission; unconsciously, it had already cost him much. The first known installment was the death of his baby, more precious in his sight than his own life. Second, he saw the point of a sword directed against his house forever. Third, he brought upon himself public exposure and humiliation. And more was to follow. Heavy pay for a secret, temporary pleasure! He now began to balance his books: “What has it profited me? I have sinned. Oh, fool that I was, to make such a bargain!”

And on this feature of profit and loss the relentless question recurs: When the sin offered itself as a temptation to him, he, being a man of more than ordinary intelligence, God having endowed him with exceptional reason, why did he not see at first the awful folly of such an investment? Why didn't the loss rise up in his mind and overbalance the profit in it when it was a temptation, and why so long after it was a fact? The devil. Why did he now so clearly recognize the loss, why now so keenly feel it? God.

Notice again in the analysis: “I have sinned, that is, I have done an irreparable injury; I have done that which it is utterly out of my power to replace. I cannot give back a woman's honor. I cannot give back Uriah's life. I see now the cold body of my friend lying mangled in front of the wall of the Ammonite city where, in my service, and under my special direction, he was placed on the field of death. When I look at that body, cold and rigid, and remember how many times he had bared his own brave heart in my defense, that heart so pulseless now — O Uriah, my friend, my comrade, I cannot call thee back!”

Why didn't the irreparable nature of the offense strike him when it was presented as a temptation, when he said to Joab, “Put him in the front of the battle and withdraw from him and leave him to perish and let him die by the sword of the children of Ammon”? Why didn't he see, not only murder, why did he not see that he had done a wrong that if he were to live ten thousand years he could never repair? And you have seen men clasp their hands when anguish, with an iron stylus, drew the tracings of quenchless and ceaseless pain on the face, when it gathered clouds dark and horrible over their heads as they looked back into the past: “Oh, my past life! My past life! Can I live it over again? Oh, opportunities that have fled, and whose flight, like birds through the air, has left no trail behind! Can I not reverse the tide of

events? Can I not grasp the wheel of time and roll it back until my past has become my present and repair what once I ruined?" Never, never, forever! The pitiless question comes: Why didn't you see that then? Why do you see it now?

But David had not yet faced all the balance-sheet. Let us proceed in the analysis. In referring to this event he says, "If You, O God, will do a certain thing, then I will teach transgressors Thy ways." You once could teach transgressors the way to God; you confess that you cannot now teach transgressors the way to God. Therefore, between that "then" and this "now" a loss of power has intervened. You see now the loss of power. You feel now the loss of power. Why didn't you feel it and see it then? What is there in sin that makes it appear not to be sin? Oh, from what hallucination of the devil comes the rose-coloring, comes the glamour of sin? How great the magician who, by waving his wand of enchantment over so foul and defiling and iniquitous a thing as sin, makes it appear to be light, to be good, a thing to be desired! Who hath bewitched you, O sinner? Who shut your eyes? Who closed your ears? Who made your heart insensible?

See Samson with his head in the lap of Delilah. See, while he sleeps, the shears of fate clipping the locks of strength, and hear the rasping nip as they pass over his head. Then see him as he rises up and shakes himself and walks forth as had been his wont, "wisting not that his strength had departed from him." Why didn't he know it? Was there no symptom of weakness? How noiseless is the flight of God's Spirit!

Why does not enticement wear on her brazen forehead the inscription in capital letters of fire: "Whoever welcomes me loses power"? And why wait some men so long to know that their power is gone? Samson is now but another man, weak as another man, and knows it not.

David has now no ability to lead sinners to Christ, no power in prayer, no communion with God. The sweet singer is dumb, his harp unstrung. His right hand has lost its cunning and his tongue cleaves to the roof of his mouth. And yet he knows it not. Others will see that he is fallen. They know his prestige is broken. But he, while miserable and poor and blind and naked, keeps repeating to himself: "I am rich; I have need of nothing."

Who creates such foul illusions for fools, and whose is the power to break the spell? James Fenimore Cooper relates in one of his romances a horrible device of the Iroquois savages, who, after killing from an ambuscade a few soldiers and one poor woman left to guard a post in the Thousand Islands, arranged their bodies before they became rigid in such postures of life and expectation that their returning friends should see them, and, thinking all well, fall into the same trap of death. Some stood on parade; one was fishing, holding the rod in his cold, dead hands; the poor woman

stood in the doorway, the wind swaying the strings of the bonnet that hid her scalpless head.

We read also in Oriental fable of an enchanted castle whose occupants were turned to stone in that posture as the enchantment found them - some sitting, some standing, some lying down, some lifting an arm, but all still and cold and as passionless as marble, while Time sifted the dust of centuries on the castle roof and mantled its crumbling walls with ivy, and they sleep on sleep as they are in the attitude and semblance of life, until One comes mightier than the evil magician and blows a trumpet blast that breaks the cruel spell and awakens all the sleepers.

“I have sinned.” the only way a man ever does say it. He doesn’t say when he picks up the wine cup, “This is sin.” He waits till his debauch is ended and he looks back at the cup and its adder and says, “I have sinned.”

Now, what is the last point in the analysis? There must be, it would seem, in man some kind of proneness or susceptibility, more than his pride will admit, to warrant such an effect, and hence, when David stands a year afterward and looks back at his crime and tries to account for it, all at once a hitherto latent factor, a hitherto seemingly undiscovered factor in the result, rises up and says, “I had something to do with that.” What was it? “I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me.” “O heredity, inherited depravity, I never saw you before! I see you now. I see that at the very beginning of my life something was wrong. I see that now. The foundation was corrupt; I was born in sin.”

Go back, back, back, back! Yonder was Paradise; there no predisposition; not then, but after the fall, always. Because Adam begat children in his likeness - fallen, fallen, fallen - I do say today, without the fear of successful contradiction from the skies above or the depths below, that no man can account for the enormity of the offenses sometimes committed and leave out the thought of total depravity. The fact of depravity was there before; why didn’t David see it before? Why does he see it now? Here comes light that reveals that murder is only a symptom of a preexistent disease. Here comes light that traces sin back to David, the boy, the unborn babe, David’s father, David’s grandfather, David’s remote ancestor, David’s first fallen progenitor. Now, that is the analysis of the past tense, “I have sinned.”

First, I did not recognize it then: I do recognize it now. Second, I did not feel it then: I do feel it now. Third, I did not see its folly then: I do see its folly now. I did not then see its irreparable ruin: I see it now. I did not see the loss of power in it then: I do see the loss of power in it now. I did not then see the depravity back of it: I do now see and feel the depravity back of it.

That being the case, the man whose eyes are now open so he can take in the whole case and take it in without false coloring, and take it in its remotest antecedents and consequences, can take it in all the height and breadth and depth and poison of its enormity, can now see how foul a thing is lust and how awful a crime is murder, and how unending its consequences - that man whose heart is now melted by a Power that makes it sensitive, so sensitive that the defilement of it is loathsome and repulsive, and the guilt of sin is horrible, and the consequences of sin are awful - he is bound to pray.

Well, that is the second division of the subject, which need not, however, be treated at length. I shall quote the prayer that he⁷ prayed, so much of it as is necessary - the prayer that he prayed about this very thing. It is found in the Fifty-first Psalm, and the caption of the Psalm is: "A Psalm of David, When Nathan the Prophet Came unto Him After He Had Gone in to Bathsheba." Now, having seen what I have described, here is what he prays: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me." Why could not he have seen it that way before?

"Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me."

There is the author of the sight and the feeling and the knowledge of the folly, and the knowledge of the loss, and the knowledge of the defilement, and the knowledge of the guilt, and that sensitiveness of the heart that feels it and melts under it. Oh, if this be so, great God, take not Thy Holy Spirit away from us! Oh, take not from this people Thy Holy Spirit! Who, then, would wake the sleepers? Who, then, would give them recognition of sin? Who, then, would make them feel its slime and its guilt? Lord God, take not away from us Thy Holy Spirit! But let us end our prayer to hear David's, "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; . . . then will I teach transgressors Thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee."

Do note three things in that prayer: "Lord, I am unclean; cleanse me. Lord, I am guilty; pardon me. Lord, my heart is hard; renew a right spirit within me, so that

hereafter sin may appear to be sin and that I may loathe it and hate it"... Cleansing, pardon, and a new heart.

Well, that is a grand prayer. That is better than to ask for riches; that is better than to ask that your fingers may be clasped in the neck of your enemies; that is better than to ask for long life. Oh, cleansing, cleansing! You give a man a sense of defilement, that consciousness of slime, his heart sensitive to it, held up and held fast in an exposed place where the pure light of heaven shines in its holiness all around him, and he defiled, defiled, "O God, wash, wash me and make me whiter than snow. Cleanse me. I can't stand in this light and remain defiled. Lord, take away the light, or else cleanse me. When it shines I see my spots. When it shines I see the den I am in; I see slimy things that crawl about me; I hear the hiss of the serpent; Lord, if Thou wilt continue to pour Thy light on me, Lord, make me clean enough to stand in that light."

That is the prayer for the unclean. Now, here is a part for the guilty: Thou adulterer, thou despoiler of woman's honor, thou murderer, thou betrayer of thy friend, listen! You hear that muttering storm? Do you see it coming? Do you see the whole heavens gathering blackness? Do you hear its thunder? Do you catch the glare of its lightnings as thunders jar it? And do notice that it is coming and gathering right over your head, and God's wrath, like a pitiless hail, is about to fall on your head. Thou art guilty, thou art condemned to death. The penalty is death; "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." Now, listen. "Pardon, pardon!" It was cleansing, cleansing; now, pardon, mercy, O God; stay that bolt of wrath. "O Lord, suspend that penalty. Reprieve my guilt soul. Pardon, pardon, pardon!"

Hear the third part: "Lord, I sinned because it did not, appear to be sin. There was a glamour over it. I was seduced. O God, give me a heart that I can feel. Let me hereafter have spiritual discernment. O God, let me see it right on its first appearance. Oh, give me a heart that will instinctively hate sin, loathe it in any guise."

Such is the threefold prayer. I want to show you now to whom he prayed. Here it is. Let David himself tell of Him to whom he prayed in that dire extremity:

"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy: He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger forever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust."

I am glad that the One to whom the sinner prays is such a God; that He is a father; that He is compassionate; that He is merciful; that He remembers our frame, that we are dust. And, if it were to choke me to say it, I am glad that He is a just God.

And this leads me to the last point. Being a just God as well as merciful, such offenses having been committed, how can He look upon sin with any degree of allowance? What can He, with all His compassion, do with such sins as those? Shall murder go unrebuked? Shall adultery be treated as if it were holiness? Shall such a sinner as that escape punishment? How can a sinner be just before God? How can God be just and justify the ungodly? Let David answer again (Psalm 32)

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.” Then he says, “I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found.”

Now, mark the language with which that Psalm commences: “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered; . . . unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.” The apostle Paul takes that and gives us the explanation of it. He cites it in his Letter to the Romans and shows how that an offense of the deepest dye can be covered, can be forgiven, and yet the justness and holiness of God remain intact — by imputation. Now, if this man is forgiven, he must be forgiven by not imputing to him the offense he committed. But if He does not impute it to him, it must be charged to some other; it must be imputed to someone else. If the charge is not entered against him, the books of God must show that it is entered against someone else, or else those books, when they are balanced, will never make God just.

Then by faith, by faith in the Substitute, by faith in One whom God accepts as a substitute, are we justified. I repeat this declaration, referring to Jesus Christ, “Whom God set forth to be a propitiation for sin.” God sent Him forth to be a propitiation for sin, and here comes this sinner and says, “Lord, forgive me. I committed the offense, I did it. It is enormous and heinous; I did it. It deserves hell. I did it; but, Lord, charge it not to me.” To whom? “To Him whom God set forth to be a propitiation for sin; charge it to Him.”

Since the offense was punished as to its eternal effect, in the Lord Jesus Christ, who took the place of man; since the offense against high heaven found its victim, certainly the man can be pardoned. But there remains something for time. What about that? What about here and now? God says, “I will not put that on the Substitute; I will put that on you, because you have made the enemies to blaspheme in that you did this

thing. I will never take the sword from your house. I will put away your sin; I will save you from the second death. I will deliver you from eternal perdition but for example now, and for righteousness now, I will chastise you with a rod, but it will be a father's punishment visited upon his child."

Now then, you have time's part of it and eternity's part of it, met and provided for in the grace of God. And that is why David so submissively bore the chastisements God put upon him. You remember when Shimei threw rocks at him and cursed him in his sad flight from Jerusalem, and Abishai said, "Why should this dead dog curse my Lord, the King? Let me go over and take his head," David replied, "So let him curse because the Lord hath said unto him, 'Curse David.' No, no, let him throw rocks. I am not guilty as toward him, but I have been a guilty man. Who can tell but the Lord has sent him to strike at me, to humble my heart? Let him hurl his rocks. Let him curse."

You have read a record you know to be true - I refer to the book of human experience. At the time a sin comes before you as a temptation, you do not see nor feel its enormity, nor do you recognize its folly or feel it, nor do you realize the loss of power that it will bring unto you, nor do you recognize the irreparable harm that will be done, nor do you recognize at that time that there is a susceptibility in you, coming from an inherited source, that makes you at all times prone to sin, but you do know afterward when you look back and say, "I have sinned."

Then recognize this thought today: That sin is deceitful; it comes disguised. It never did come in the presence of a man in its own naked deformity; it always comes as an angel of light. It always hides under some mantle of righteousness, and more than that, you know from that book that there comes a time to men when they feel a time of shame, a time of anguish, a time when they recognize their folly and say, "Oh, what a fool I was! Oh, how guilty I was! Oh, how awful is my record, and how dreadful the thought that I must meet it in the light of heaven! That hidden thing, brought out in open day, spread out on the canvas of the skies where men and angels can read the tracing of each secret thought and foul desire and evil fancy and imagination! O mountains, fall on me and hide me from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne!"

I tell you that if your soul is not forgiven as was David's; if your sin is not covered, hell is your portion. Therefore, come to the fountain open for sin and uncleanness, a fountain filled with blood, the blood of the Substitute. Come and wash in it and be whiter than snow.

See the Substitute on the cross, receiving into His own heart the point of the sword of vengeance. See the Substitute as the wrath is poured out on His head. "Jesus paid

it all; all the debt I owe.” Come to the cleansing; come to the remission, the pardon; and come to the new heart; come to the sensitiveness; come to the reawakening of the moral powers; come to clearer discrimination; come, I pray you today, into that state where sin shall be made to appear sin, for your own sake, and for the sake of all with whom you have to do.

Therefore, in the daylight of this hour, I shall call for an expression here this morning. And any man who has not the manhood, when the light shines on him, to confess that he is a sinner, is not a man worthy of the name of man. And any woman, when the light shines into her heart, that has not the true womanliness to say, “I am a sinner,” is not a woman worthy to be called a woman. And if you have the right thought in you about sin, you would put your name down publicly as a sinner.

Let your heart say this: “Yes, I am one; I know it. You may put my name down. I confess that I am a sinner. I confess that I want to be washed from the defilement of sin. I confess that I want to be delivered from the guilt of sin. I confess that I want a heart that will make me loathe and hate sin.”

If your heart so mourns, come and have pronounced over you this benediction of heaven: “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

5. “COME AND SEE”

TEXT: Come and see. - ~~406~~ John 1:46

Theme: The experimental, the only practical test.

THIS sermon is designed to introduce a revival. The text selected is an expression from the forty-sixth verse of the first chapter of John, “Come and see.” The first thought of the context is a shepherd finding a sheep. Jesus is the Shepherd and Philip the sheep. Jesus finds Philip.

It is a wonderful thing when Jesus finds any of us. He came to seek us out, to find the lost. It is His great office as the shepherd to find that which was driven away, to find that which was lame; to seek it until He finds it and then to bring it home again healed and saved.

Such finding is an event. It is an event of a lifetime. When He finds us, it seems to us as if we had found Him; and when we tell about it, we do not say, “Jesus found me”; we say, “I found Jesus.” That is as it appears to our consciousness. Speaking from our experience, we state it as if Jesus had been lost and we had found Him. While history will say, “Jesus found Philip,” Philip will say, “We found Him.” And you can understand how that is.

If a child should lose himself in the woods, trying to find his father who had gone out hunting, and the father, returning home, should ascertain that the child was lost and go out to seek the child and search until he struck the trail of the little wanderer, and followed it until he at last discovered him, the true account would be that the father found the child. But the child would say, “I have found my papa at last.” Both had been seeking. They had been seeking each other. But in the experience of the child it would be as if he had found his father.

So, when Jesus finds a lost soul that lost soul, who also has been searching in an aimless kind of way, searching and desiring, will look at its own experience and say, “I have found the pearl of great price. I have come upon it at last.” This paradox of experience runs all through our religious life - human consciousness appearing to contradict both doctrine and fact.

Two parties, God and man-God working, man working - God seeking, man seeking - God finding, man finding. If you should stand on the God - side of it and shut yourself up entirely to that, you would preach some very hard, but true, though one-

sided doctrine; and if you should stand on the man-side of it and shut yourself up to that, you would preach some very unsound doctrine.

Now, when Jesus finds any one, and that one realizes that he is found of Jesus, then what? If Jesus has found you, and if you, looking at it from your own consciousness and experience, have found Jesus, then what? O Christian, what? Here is the answer: Everyone who has been found of Jesus must become a finder for Jesus.

You can remember it, stated in that way; that is, just as soon as Jesus finds Andrew, Andrew finds Peter for Jesus. As soon as Jesus finds Philip, Philip finds Nathanael for Jesus. Whoever is found of Jesus becomes a finder for Jesus. What, then, must a Christian do? Find people for Jesus. Surely any little child here can understand that. Is there anything hard to comprehend about that? Everyone whom Jesus finds becomes a finder for Jesus. Have you been at it? Have you been working at it? Have you understood that this is your mission? Have you regarded that as your chief business?

Well, having settled it that our mission as found ones is also to find others for Jesus, now let us see if we can also learn as a church, as a congregation, as Christian people and in the simplest possible form, not only that we are to do this, but how we are to do it. And not only how we are to do it, but when we may know that we get to the end of our duty, let us seek to find the limit of human endeavor and stop when we get there and not try to go beyond that. You have done much when you can ascertain the limit of human effort, and then do not try to do what you cannot do and what you never were required to do. Therefore, to find out the salient points of Christian duty and the limit of human endeavor is to settle a great many things.

What is it then? As soon as Jesus found Philip, Philip determined somebody else should know about Jesus; so he exercised his mind. He reasoned within himself: "To whom shall I go and tell this? I must make a selection of somebody. I must begin somewhere. Well, there is one man I think about just now, a man named Nathanael. I will go and tell Nathanael about it." So he proceeded to Nathanael and commenced with the following clearly and comprehensively stated proposition: "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write. We have found Him to be Jesus. We have found Him to be Jesus of Nazareth reputed to be the son of Joseph. He is in Galilee. He is in Nazareth of Galilee. His name is Jesus. We have found that this man Jesus that lives in Nazareth is the one of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write."

Now that leads to the next point. When you go to find people for Jesus, what kind of an argument had you best employ in endeavoring to get them to come to Jesus? This argument: "We have found Him." What is the import of that argument? That

argument is your Christian experience. “Nathanael, we have found Him.” It is a very simple argument, but it is very convincing.

Now, suppose Philip had said, “Nathanael, you ought to seek Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write.”

“Where is He?” Nathanael would very properly reply: “Do you know?”

“No.”

“Do you know His name?”

“No.”

“How, then, are you going to guide me, since you are just as ignorant as I am?”

Please notice this point: Whenever you go to find anyone for Jesus, whatever power you may have will be based upon the fact that you, yourself, have found Jesus — your Christian experience. “We speak that we do know; we testify that which we have seen.” We come to men, not with speculations, however fine-spun, not with theories, however plausible, not with reasonings, however cogent, but as witnesses of a fact, saying, “Here is what I have experienced. I have felt this myself. I have tasted of this myself. I have touched this. Thus, I speak of something I am qualified to speak of. I know whereof I affirm. I have found Jesus.”

The mightiest argument that the apostle Paul ever employed in his preaching was his own Christian experience. Whether he stood before Felix, Festus, Agrippa, or the Sanhedrin, his answer was one: “I will tell you what happened to me. I was on my way to Damascus on a certain occasion,” and then detailed how he found Jesus and how Jesus found him.

I want to illustrate this in a way that you can get hold of it. Suppose there had been a tradition that in a certain section of a State, in the mountains somewhere, was a wonderful cave, that the opening of it was hard to find, but inside of it there were marvelous things to see. Many people had for a long time been trying to find it. Many very wise people had set up very plausible theories as to its locality. Each confident theorist had dogmatically insisted that it ought to be and must be where his argument placed it. But in the midst of their disputations an ignorant Negro appeared and said, “I know it is not at any of those places, because I have found it and have been in it.” And suppose that each learned disputant should demand that he should answer this argument locating it elsewhere. Would not the Negro say, “Master, I know nothing of argument, but I do know where the cave is. If you won’t believe me, come and see.” I venture to say that crowd would follow the Negro.

If I had heard of a wonderful cave, or a gold mine, or any strange thing, and desired to see it and a man should come to me bearing honesty and frankness in his face, and say, "I have found it; I have been in it myself," that would make an impression upon me. But if he were to say, "I want to present to you a line of argument to show you about where it must be," that would not make much impression upon my mind. He would be theorizing. He would be doing no more than I might do; than ten thousand others have done. But whether he would be a rustic or city man, a scholar or a boor, if he came with an honest front and said, "I have found it," that would make an impression.

What is your chief business? Finding people for Jesus? What is your chief argument in inducing people to come to Jesus? Testify that you have found Him yourself - the power of your own Christian experience. Speak of a fact within your personal knowledge; speak of the precious thing within your own heart. There is your power in dealing with the world.

Now, as soon as you begin to tell about finding Jesus, you will strike a difficulty. What is it? Some preconceived opinion in the mind of men to whom you speak is an obstacle in the way; some preconceived opinion, and it does not make an atom of difference what it is, for if it is not in one thing it will be in another. Take, for example, this particular case. "We have found Him of whom Moses wrote." Nothing wrong there. "We have found Him of whom the prophets wrote." Nothing wrong there. "We have found Him to be Jesus." Nothing wrong there. "Of Nazareth" - ah, of Nazareth! "Now, I have a preconceived opinion about that." What is that preconceived opinion? "No good thing can come out of Nazareth."

Now, you see what an awful thing that preconceived opinion is. If you can establish the main point first, the character of the person - "such as Moses wrote of, such as the prophets wrote of" - and if you can find the person Himself - Jesus - why will you allow a preconceived opinion about locality to keep you from accepting Him? But there stands that preconceived opinion: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Now, the most ingenious device of the devil is his use of proverbs, either lying proverbs or proverbs so misapplied that they are made to be lying proverbs, and that was one of them - that no good thing could come out of Nazareth.

The Old Testament does not mention Nazareth, nor does Josephus. Its bad reputation is to be gathered from the New Testament. There are two instances in the New Testament history that tell about its bad character - the incorrigible unbelief of its inhabitants and their cruelty when, first, they not only refused to hear Jesus, but sought to slay Him by casting Him over the face of the precipice, and then their later rejection of Him causing Him to change His place of residence. So He left Nazareth

forever and moved to Capernaum. They were a hard lot of people; that much was true. And now Nathanael says, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

The place a man has lived has a great deal to do with his opportunities of usefulness in after life. The reputation of the place clings to him. But if he be in himself strong and true, and there be real power in him, he will be a man and make his mark no matter where he hails from. But there was that preconceived opinion now. If it had been rightly considered, that objection was one of the demonstrations of the Messiahship of Jesus Christ; that objection was one of the arguments in favor of Him. The prophets had declared that He should be called a Nazarene. I do not mean that any prophet had specified Nazareth as His home, but more than one of the prophets had described Him as "One who is despised," and the word "Nazarene" was a term of contempt and reproach and is so used in the New Testament repeatedly. Yet that name, which was a term of reproach, became a name of glory. It was inscribed upon His cross—"Jesus of Nazareth," and He Himself avowed His connection with Nazareth after His resurrection, and "the sect of the Nazarenes" took, the world.

The Apostate Julian, when dying, is reported to have said, "Thou, Nazarene, hath conquered." But you will meet some preconceived opinions in every man you approach who is outside of Christ. He will spring some little point of objection. The ground in his mind is occupied, the preconceived opinion stands in his way. In other words, he has accepted a certain premise as established, and that premise being established in his mind, it keeps him from accepting any conclusion not deducible from it. Now, what are you going to do when you strike a difficulty of that kind? Well, one thing you are not to do. Do not argue with that man; he will argue with you until doomsday. You need not scold. That will not do any good. But propose to him this practical and experimental test: "Come and see."

He has affirmed that no good thing can come out of Nazareth. Instead of arguing about it, put the matter to a personal test: "Come and see." You approach a man on the street and you tell him about the revival-meeting, and you say to him, "I am not here to argue with you; you may be a good deal wiser than I am, and you may know a great many things of which I am entirely ignorant; but I do want to talk to you about something I know about. I am a Christian. Jesus found me, and God for Christ's sake has forgiven my sins, and it is a very precious experience, and I want to lead you to Jesus."

"Yes," says he, "but you understand there is a difficulty in my way; there is a certain premise that I have accepted as fixed, and, that premise being true, Jesus cannot be God. That is my trouble. Get that out of my way first."

Don't try it. Urge, rather, the personal, practical test.

Following the illustration, keep insisting: "I tell you I have found the cave that so much was said about, and you say it cannot be there because your argument is against it, and you call on me to answer your objection. But I don't propose to argue with you about your objection. I say, 'Come and see.' 'Come and see.' Now, if it is not where I say it is, nothing is lost; if it is there, what does it amount to that this premise of yours has been very logically stated and is supported by many great names? What does it amount to? Let ten thousand air-castles fall from their baseless foundations, and let the bubbles of theory burst. Here is an immovable rock of fact. Come and see if it is not true."

So, as your business is to be a finder for Jesus, your argument must be that you have found Him yourself. When any sort of a preconceived opinion is given as an objection, your remedy for that preconceived opinion is the simple invitation to put the matter to a personal, practical test: "Come and see." I do not know any shorter nor more efficient way to settle all doubt. It should not make any difference to you what is the character of any man's objection to the Bible, what is the character of his objection to Jesus Christ as the Son of God, what is the mental difficulty or moral difficulty in his way - if he will only put it to a personal practical test, you may have hope of him, and none under heaven unless he will.

What is the next point? When you bring a man to Jesus, that is the end of your work. That is, you cannot convert a man. That does not rest with you; that is not a part of your duty. You have reached your limit when you have brought him to Jesus. He will attend to His part of it. And yet how many of the human family have been devoted to doing God's work! Men try to make Christians of other men and give formulas for it, prescribing rites by which it is to be accomplished. A certain form of words is to be pronounced.

Your limit is reached when you have brought that man to Jesus, and the sooner you find that out, the better. God alone can forgive sins. It is blasphemy for any man to claim that power. When you take up a bed on which a man with the palsy is lying, and when you use your efforts to get it through the door and cannot, and then climb up on the house and take up the tiles of the roof and let him down before Jesus, your work is done. You cannot cure the palsy. Bring him to Jesus and stop. That is the limit of your work.

Let us restate. The points are very simple. If you have been found of Jesus, then your chief mission is to be a finder for Jesus, and your chief argument in bringing people to Jesus is the fact that you have found Jesus yourself, that is, your Christian experience; and as a remedy against any objection' in the way of preconceived

opinion on the part of the one you are trying to lead to Jesus, you are to use no argument, no scolding, but simply, "Come and see." "Let him that heareth say, Come." The invitation, based upon the fact that what you invite a man to you have found to be precious yourself, should be given. The power of such witnessing cannot be attained by any sort of argument in which you might be pleased to indulge.

Now, I want to reason with anyone who is desirous to come and see; who is, himself, on a search. He is seeking someone. Some of you may recall a touching poem in McGuffey's old *Fourth Reader*. It tells a sad and tragic story of a bride who, in all the loveliness of youth and beauty, just after the marriage ceremony, turned for a moment from the happy bridegroom and, looking back with eyes full of love's sweet light, disappeared through the doorway, never to be seen again. You will recall the poet's description of her father, representing him as one always looking for and never finding his missing child; looking in every room, over all the grounds, the suddenly demented mind always searching, never finding. So is the sinner. There is an unrest, an anxious void, a felt need of obtaining something, he knows not what, for which he is ever seeking but which he has never found - something that will give peace to his soul.

Now, in coming to Jesus, O sinner, here is what I want you to observe: You are coming to One who sees you even before you start. "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." Before that church-member went out on the street and notified you to come to church, Jesus saw you. He had found you. No matter when your consciousness dates the finding, nor where your experience locates it, before that date and at another place he had already found you. Now, I want you to remember that - that you are dealing with the omniscient One, who is acquainted with every fact of your past history.

Let us look for a moment at that fig-tree incident. It is not clearly stated *why he* went out to that tree; but it is very clearly implied that this was a private place - a man sitting under his own vine and fig tree, secluded from the world, perhaps in his garden, where, sheltered from every eye, he could be alone. Out there alone, he knelt down to pray and express his wants and give voice to his desires and manifest his unrest and the longing of his soul. No human eye was on him. He was alone. But the eye of Jesus was on him. That was the very thing that made Nathanael believe that He was the Messiah; because, hidden from human observation, in the secrecy of his most private devotion, here was One who read every thought of his heart and registered every index of his character.

"Whence knowest Thou me? How knowest Thou that my heart is sincere, without any guile?"

“I read your heart, Nathanael, when you were praying alone.”

So He sees you in the privacy of your closet when the door is shut. He knows whether you are in earnest or merely affecting an earnestness you do not feel. He knows when you come from curiosity, when you are talking merely for argument, when you seek only entertainment.

How readily He discovered to Ezekiel the character of his hearers: “Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord. And they that come unto thee as the people cometh, and they that sit before thee as My people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not.” Such discernment of the heart is within the power of God alone. It convinced the woman of Samaria at the well that Jesus was the Messiah. So it satisfied Nathanael, evoking his ready response: “Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel.”

Mark you, whoever comes without guile, comes with a true and worthy purpose, comes to find why, will believe on the very first clear proof. And, after all, when any man is convinced, it is but one proof that convinces, and indeed, you never need but one good reason for anything. One good proof is sufficient.

So now let Him see that you are not a hypocrite, that you are not coming because some others are coming, that you are not moved by any unworthy motive. He reads your heart. Forget it not. I would have that fact impressed upon the sinner. Come with sincerity; come with an honest purpose. The eye of Jesus is on you; under the fig-tree; in the house; in the schoolroom; in the privacy of your chamber, knowing every motive of your mind and every thought of your heart. Then, when you come, accept the first good proof; one is enough.

And now here is my last point: While it is true that one who comes without guile, not to argue, not to satisfy curiosity, not to be entertained, but conscious of need, desiring to find a Savior, finds it easy to believe, and while one proof satisfies the soul, yet he does not suffer that faith to rest always on that one proof but ever confirms it by new and greater proof. So reads the context: “Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see even greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” “There shall come confirmation of your faith

mightier than this proof upon which you heard and trusted in the Lord. From henceforth you shall see an open heaven and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.”

I do ask you to notice that this is not “you shall see heaven opened.” It has long been open. But “you shall see an open heaven.” It is not that it is now to open, but that it has been open, and he did not heretofore see it. You accepted as proof of my divinity that I could read the heart. Here is proof mightier than that proof that reaches from high heaven down to earth, proof that reaches from the very throne and heart of God, proof that says, “Angels coming down on Me; therefore I am divine. Angels ascending on Me; therefore I am divine. There is a way from Me to heaven; therefore, I am divine. This way connects earth and heaven; therefore I am divine. I am the Messiah, the One who brings heaven and earth together. My right hand is on the throne; My left hand is on the sinner. You shall see it, if, without guile, honestly coming, you accept the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God.” Yes, heaven was already over sleeping Jacob in the beginning of his religious life and over dying Stephen before he fell asleep in Jesus.

Here I am a witness, and not a theorist. To me, by faith, has that open heaven long been visible. By faith I have seen the angels ascending and descending upon the Son of God. It is no distempered fancy, no freak of the imagination, but a sweet and substantial reality. Like Jacob. I have seen that gate of heaven and found in lonely places the house of God, and in my travels have met the “hosts of heaven,” and when, like Stephen, I come to die, whenever and wherever and however that may be, I, too, will be able to “look up steadfastly into heaven and see the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God” to receive and welcome my spirit.

Yes, God will confirm our faith by even greater proofs. Angels will come down to us in our sorrows. They will minister to us as heirs of salvation. And when, like Lazarus at the rich man’s gate, our bodies die, they will catch away our parting souls and convey them to our heavenly home.

Yes, let me repeat and emphasize: God will confirm it to you. He will make it stronger to you all the way; when you are alone, when you are sad, when you are far from earthly comforts and earthly friends and your head is pillowed on a rock and it is a dark night, how sweet to see an open heaven and angels ascending and descending! And when all earthly supports have failed, when you realize that you have come to the terminus of this life and are about to take that leap into the dark, oh, then to see an open heaven and angels ascending and descending on Jesus! Angels coming down on the divine Son of God to take you by the hand and hear you away!

Oh, brethren, brethren, you have a work to do! Found of Jesus, you are to be finders for Jesus. Finding for Jesus! Stand on your Christian experience: "I have found Him. He is my Savior. God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven my sins." And meet every objection with the simple challenge: "Come and see." Come and test it. Come for yourself, and you will say, like the Queen of Sheba: "The half was never told of life divine, so wonderful; the half was never told." Come and see! Come and see!

6. MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY TO GOD

TEXT: What is that to thee?... To his own master he standeth or falleth -
~~4322~~ John 21:22 and ~~4544~~ Romans 14:4

The most familiar Scriptures in the Bible are the most important. Their very familiarity often keeps us from realizing how much they signify. I shall quote two or three such passages of Scripture. The first is a paragraph of the third chapter of John: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life... He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Now the part of this that I want to impress upon your minds is: "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Here you see that present, future, and eternal justification are dependent upon simple faith in Jesus Christ, and that present, future, and eternal condemnation are based upon the rejection of Jesus Christ.

Just now I am not asking you to consider the' fairness of this compound proposition, but simply the fact that God's Word teaches that to disbelieve the Son of God entails present, future, and eternal condemnation; hence that it teaches the moral quality of belief and that a man is responsible for his belief. Connect with the foregoing ~~4548~~ John 16:8-9: "When He [the Comforter] is come, He will reprove the world of sin... because they believe not in Me."

The next Scripture is only two lines from the fourteenth chapter of the Letter to the Romans: "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth." Next is one paragraph in John's Gospel, near the close: "Jesus said unto Peter, Follow Me," and John also followed: "Peter seeing him, saith to Jesus. Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him. If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me."

Next, from the First Letter to the Corinthians, the fourth chapter, a very short paragraph: “With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but He that judgeth Me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.”

The last Scripture I shall quote is from the Letter of James, the fourth chapter: “Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law. But if thou judge the law thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?”

Now, having quoted these several passages of Scripture, I wish to take as a double text these two expressions: “What is that to thee?” and “To his own Master he standeth or falleth.” I understand these two Scriptures conjoined to afford two propositions of worldwide importance. The first is that a man is not responsible to another man for his opinions and his faith: “What is that to thee?” Second, that a man is responsible to God for his opinion and his faith: “To his own Master he standeth or falleth.”

I have a special reason for calling your attention to this subject. Many years ago a number of hurtful theories were entertained upon the subject of a man’s responsibility for his faith and his opinions. In the time of the Reformation, even by such men as Martin Luther, Melancthon, and indeed all of these reformers, including Calvin, Knox, and Zwingli, one of these hurtful theories was: “Whose is the government, his is the religion.” That is, when a man was king of a country, it was his prerogative to define the religion of that country. The Lutherans held it as well as the Roman Catholics: “Whose is the government, his is the religion.”

In other words, they taught man’s responsibility to man for his religious convictions, and the only difference between them on that point was that the Papists said, “You are not responsible to your king, but to the Pope.” That was the only substantial difference. Hence, holding such a theory, it followed just as naturally in a Protestant country as in a Roman Catholic country that men were persecuted for opinion’s sake. John Calvin did it; John Knox did it; the Puritan fathers did it, and only recently have all of the persecution statutes been repealed from the State governments of the United States.

That theory has been very successfully exploded. The thought now prevails over the greater part of the civilized world that a man is not responsible to his fellow-man for

his faith. What is called “the right of conscience,” “the right of private judgment,” the right of each man to worship God according to the dictates of his own heart and reason, is very generally conceded in some form. “What is that to thee?” “Who art thou that judgest thy fellow-man in a matter of this kind?”

But in spreading that glorious thought, an error was fallen into more hurtful than all the persecutions that preceded it, and that error was that a man is not only not responsible to his fellow-man, but he is not even responsible to God - not even to God, and that all that is necessary to justify a man is for him to cry, “I do not believe that. If I believed the Bible, there would be some obligation resting upon me to obey its precepts, but I don’t believe it.” In other words, he claimed an exemption from responsibility on the ground of unbelief.

I want to state the case clearly: Whether the Bible is right or not, it certainly teaches that a man is responsible to God for his belief, for his faith, and that the greatest responsibility he has on earth is the responsibility to God for his beliefs, and that right belief is the only foundation of right actions; that righteousness in life is predicated on righteousness in faith. This is a declaration of God: If you do not believe on His Son, you are condemned. If you do not believe on His Son, the wrath of God abides with you. If you do not believe on His Son you shall never see life. Now, whether it be right or wrong, that is the teaching of the Bible. Over against that teaching is the theory that a man is not responsible even to God for what he believes on the subject of religion. Not only is it prevalent but it has encased itself in the very heart of the most beautiful poetry in the world. It has lodged itself in the most plausible philosophy. It has been commended as a fundamental principle in leading reviews, that no man is responsible to anyone for what he believes, and the reason assigned is that (I shall try to state it fairly) a man cannot be held responsible for his belief, since belief is utterly disconnected with volition or will - that belief is involuntary; that a man can’t help believing what is proved, and that it is not a question of his will at all; that if you put evidence before him sufficiently strong that a thing is true, he cannot help believing. He involuntarily believes it, and his belief being disconnected from his will, therefore, whatever actions of men do not proceed from his will are actions for which he is not morally responsible.

It would follow, of course, from this theory that there is neither merit nor demerit in what any man believes. If he believes in God, it is because the evidence forces him to believe and he, involuntarily, upon that evidence believes it: if he believes there is no God, his unbelief is involuntary, not connected with any will on his part, and could not be connected with any will on his part, and therefore there is no demerit in it. I think that this is a fair statement of it. Let us put it in other words: That error is

morally harmless; that there cannot be any sin in believing a lie; that truth is morally helpless; that there cannot be any virtue in believing the truth. That is the proposition.

Before I show you where the fallacy in the theory is, I want to give you a hint to prove to you that there is a fallacy in it, and then we shall seek to find out where and what it is. What was it that led to the adoption of this theory? The fact that men were persecuted and persecuting each other for opinion's sake. Here were men burning each other at the stake, confiscating each other's property, walling up each other alive, subjecting their bodies to the most excruciating tortures, and all on account of a matter of belief or unbelief.

Now, men abhorred such conclusions, and their minds turned from it, and to this theory: That a man should not have control over the belief of his fellow-man and that it was a great wrong for anyone to persecute another for his opinion's sake. But if it be true, as the more extended theory just now stated claims, that belief of any kind, no matter if it is fallacy, is harmless, and a man is irresponsible for it, then the persecutor stands justified by that theory; that is, persecution develops the correct principle of man's irresponsibility to man for his beliefs. But this principle is irrationally based on the predicate that belief is without volition and therefore without moral quality, and hence without any accountability whatever: then this last conclusion reestablishes and justifies persecution.

Paul verily thought within himself that he was doing God's service when he persecuted the church. That was his opinion, his conscientious conviction. It seemed to him to be the right way. Now, if that theory be true, and there is no accountability, no moral accountability, for belief, since it is involuntary and not the result of will, therefore Paul was innocent of any wrong, and if persecution is innocent because conscientious, it is as wrong to abridge the liberty to persecute as it is to abridge the liberty of its victims. So there must be a fallacy somewhere.

It was not right for John Calvin to consent to the burning of Servetus. It was not right that Bishops Ridley and Latimer should be burned at the stake. It was not right that Obadiah Holmes should be publicly whipped for teaching what he conceived to be the teachings of the Bible. And something in man rose up and affirmed that was wrong; that it violated some law.

What law did it violate? It violated this law: That no man is responsible to another man for his opinion or his faith. It violated that, but if a man is not responsible to God even for his belief, this second proposition destroys the first and restores persecution.

Now, I want to point out to you what the fallacy is. I think that it will suggest itself to you, and it is so very important. Just let me read over a part of that first Scripture to you, and see if you cannot find out for yourself what it is, and just what there is wrong with that theory: "He that believeth not is condemned . . . and this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light." "Light is come into the world." There is evidence. Why was it non-convincing? "Men loved darkness rather than light." They preferred non-evidence. Why prefer non-evidence? Because their deeds were evil. "For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they were wrought in God."

What element does that introduce into faith? It introduces the element of affection; that what a man believes is not proportioned to the evidence; it is not proportioned to the degree of light: but it is proportioned to the right disposition of his heart, to see and properly weigh that evidence, and if there be in him culpable things that prevent him from discerning the truth and giving proper credence and weight to the evidence, and if, on account of these culpable affections or state of his heart, he does not believe what has been presented to him, then he becomes morally responsible for that belief.

Suppose there be evidence presented sufficient to convince a rightly disposed mind of the truth concerning a certain person, and yet here is one who looks at all this evidence as it is presented and will not believe? It cannot be said that he has failed to believe because the evidence presented is insufficient, for the very terms of the proposition suppose that the evidence is sufficient to convince a rightly disposed mind. Why, then, did he not believe? There is a prejudice in his mind - in his heart - that keeps him from believing. There is perhaps a business in which he is engaged that keeps him from believing. If that be true then his deeds are evil; he loves the darkness rather than the light. There is the condemnation.

It grows out of the fact that in the faith which the Lord requires of men there is an element of love and trust demanded, and that it is not with intellectual difficulties of belief or unbelief at all, but it is with the state of the mind and the heart, with the attitude of that heart toward God, that this condemnation has to do. And if a man's mind is filled with evil things, so that he is unwilling to give them up, and if it is filled with a prejudice against the good, that prejudice against the good will modify his belief, whatever may be the evidence. So you begin to see where the fallacy comes in: "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world." God never condemned any man upon the earth for refusing to believe without evidence. Faith is based upon evidence; otherwise it would be credulity; but "this is the condemnation,"

that after evidence came, “men loved darkness rather than light.” There is the condemnation.

Now, let us take a little case and analyze it. One man is avaricious. He loves money. Another man has money. If the moneyed man were dead, the avaricious man would inherit the money, say a hundred thousand dollars. The avaricious heir communes thus with himself: “If he were dead, I would have that hundred thousand. I wish I had that hundred thousand dollars. I wish he were dead, so I might have the hundred thousand dollars. It would be a good thing if he were dead, so I might have the hundred thousand dollars. Then if death to him would be a good thing, why may I not hasten it?” So he kills him.

Now, here is murder and you need to look at the moral quality of that action. You arraign him, and he says, “The killing of that man resulted entirely from my belief—my strong belief that ‘it was right to kill him, and I am not responsible for my belief. Beliefs are involuntary. There is no moral quality in a belief: therefore, how can you hold me responsible for killing him?” I ask you, how could that belief be harmless, since it was not the product of right thinking but of lust for money? There was the evil state of the heart back of it that brought about the conviction.

Take the case of Eugene Aram. He did not love money, but he did love science. Perhaps no man ever lived that cared more for science and less for money than Eugene Aram. He was very deeply absorbed in a scientific problem that, in his judgment, if properly solved, would be of incalculable value to the human race, and he was staying at the house of a worthless man — a man no good to the world - a man who would have left the world - better off if he had been out of it, and this man had some money. Eugene Aram didn’t want the man’s money for himself; he wanted it for science. “I need that money; the world needs that money; the world needs that this problem be solved.” So he persuaded himself until he came to believe that it was the right thing to kill that man, Clark, and take that money and use it as he desired. Now, do you say he was not responsible for that belief?

You are not responsible for anything on the earth so much as your belief. No wonder God has hinged salvation upon belief, or faith. Last week I saw a man who could not walk straight. I do not suppose he has been able to walk straight for five years; could not take hold of anything, his hands would shake so. He was blear-eyed; the signals of dissipation and the omens of death were flying all over his face. He was absolutely drinking himself to death, and yet, as he explained it, he was “drinking for his health,” persuaded in his mind that it was for his health that he should drink. Now, is there any accountability for that man’s belief?

Let us consider a case outside of the Bible. You see fruit hanging on a tree. It seems to be very luscious fruit. You pluck it and eat it; it is poisonous; you die. There was fruit that seemed to be good, but the end thereof was death. Was the fact of the poison in the fruit in the slightest degree affected by your opinion of its wholesomeness? Has not God made us accountable in the laws of nature? I am not now discussing the Bible; I am talking about the laws of nature. Isn't there an obligation of nature requiring every man to believe the right thing about what he eats and what he drinks, and if he does not believe the right thing, no matter how sincere he may be in believing the wrong thing, does he not pay the penalty? Shall we expect to find God different in the world of morals from what He is in the world of physics, as to the binding obligation of laws?

Take man's experience; that is a big book. It is a big book if you confine it to one man's experience. You would have as voluminous a book as is set forth in the starry skies, should you take the experience of all men. What is human experience on this question? First: In a man there is a witness that it is important to have the right views; that it does not pay a man to have the wrong views; that he is responsible and must pay the penalty for his errors and mistakes of judgment, no matter how sincere he was in forming that judgment. In the experience of men you will find a higher truth, that a man is responsible for what he believes about the future.

Now, you may throw it off if you choose by saying, "I do not believe there is a hell. I do not believe the Bible is inspired. I do not believe in Jesus Christ, and, as I do not believe it, I am not responsible." You are responsible for the state of your heart on that very subject, and if there is light enough on the subject — evidence enough to convince one who is rightly disposed — then you are guilty before God if you reject that evidence.

Let us illustrate that case. A preacher went to a certain city to hold a meeting, and in that meeting a man believed intellectually, believed simply, as you would believe a demonstration of mathematics. He believed that Jesus was the Christ, and he was baptized upon that belief. But such belief did not save him, because of the absence of that very quality on which responsibility hinges. Peter says to him: "You have no part in this matter; you have no lot in the case. You believe, and you have been baptized, but your heart is not right in the sight of God."

God doesn't send a man to hell for intellectual dullness, nor to heaven for intellectual brightness. It is for the moral attitude of his soul toward God. You need never waste a moment's time in discussing intellectual difficulties in the way of believing the Bible. There is not a man on the face of the earth today who is an unbeliever on that account, not one. His unbelief has a darker background than that. His unbelief

grows, not out of any smallness of his mind to perceive the truth, nor on account of the paucity or scarcity of the evidence. It grows out of the fact that he loves sin.

I knew a case once where a man had actually persuaded himself into the position that he thought he ought to be complimented on his infidelity on the score that his intellectual acumen was so great that he had discerned troubles in the way of accepting the Bible and Jesus Christ not perceptible to ordinary minds. He couldn't help being smart. His unbelief was involuntary. He saw too many objections and difficulties in the way; so he thought of himself; whereas every other man acquainted with him knew that the real seat of his hostility to the Word of God was that he loved money as his god, and the Bible taught doctrines about the use of money that he was unwilling to obey. He had persuaded himself that there were intellectual difficulties in the way of his belief in the Bible, when it was simply a beastly and ghastly idolatry—the love of money — and he posed as an intellectual giant perceiving difficulties in the way of Bible truth.

I knew another noted case. The evidence I got second-hand from a veracious source. A preacher in a certain town in Texas held a revival-meeting. The wheels of it were clogged for about two weeks on one man's case. This man, himself, was always taking the position that he, himself, was anxious to believe; that he would give anything in the world if he could, and that he was trying as hard as any man in the world could try, and therefore, as he wasn't to blame, and the Bible or the church wasn't to blame, God was to blame about the whole matter. He stalled them right there. One day a certain John the Baptist sort of man went to him and said, "I'll tell you what's the matter with you. You will never forgive me for telling you, but you are going to lose your soul right here, just on one point. I will tell you what is the matter," and then he put his finger on it — on a direct sin that that man was habitually committing, living in it and nursing it, and that he would not turn loose of, and all the time claiming that intellectual difficulties were keeping him from accepting the truth. That faithful friend said to him. "If you will put away that woman, you can be converted in five minutes." But he resented it and was lost.

Why, I shall never forget how I wrestled with a man's soul once. There were many reasons for my interest. There were family reasons. There were reasons growing out of friendship connected with other people. And he had many excellent characteristics. It went on and on until at last I knew just as well where he was lodging as if ten thousand suns were shining right on him, and he did not deny it; and that was, to accept Christ meant to quit the business he was in and he wasn't ready to quit the business. There it was. He said to me, "I'll tell you, if I were free of this business, I believe I would be converted in ten minutes." I stood and looked at him. I said, "My dear sir, if that business were ten thousand times as great as it is, sink it to

the bottom of the ocean if necessary, but do you first seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness.”

No man is exempt from responsibility to God. “What is that to thee?” Nothing to me. I cannot rule over another man’s opinions and faith. I am glad that no thumbscrews, no faggots, no chains, no dungeons, and no other instrumentality of torture can be allowed to thrive in this land, and so far as my jurisdiction over him is concerned, he is free to love God or the devil; I cannot compel him one way or the other, but to his Master he either stands or must fall. I cannot judge him. There is one law-giver - God - and to God who made him he is responsible for all of his thoughts and imaginations, for all of his beliefs, for every one of them; and let him beware when he seeks to evade obedience to God on the score of unbelief. Let him beware lest some prejudice, some love of an evil thing, some unwillingness in his heart to let God rule over him, be not back of his unbelief as the cause of it. Just as sure as you can locate in his affections, in his prejudices, in any of his moral dispositions, any cause for that unbelief, that man is responsible to God and will be sent just as soon to hell for that unbelief as if he had committed ten thousand murders.

Now, the last thing I have to say is this: God looked down upon a lost world, and He so loved that world that He sent His own Son to come and take upon Himself the nature of man, and as a man to keep His perfect law, as a man to die and pay the penalty of violating this law. “That whosoever believeth on Him -” What! Believe an abstract proposition? No, religion is not a question of abstract proposition, but it is a trusting - a loving and trusting reception of a Person who is the embodiment of the divine love. That is faith.

If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema; if any man love not Jesus Christ, let him be accursed when Christ shall come, and the foulest thing today, fouler than murder, is the rejection of the Son of God. Whoever rejects Him is condemned already and “shall not see life, and the wrath of God abideth on him.” Why? Because this is the condemnation, “That light is come into the world.” The evidence is there, and “men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” Why? If they bring their deeds to the light, the light will make them manifest and reprove them; therefore, “We will not have this man to rule over us.”

There is no sin like the sin of unbelief, because it is against evidence and it is not “involuntary. It is voluntary. The will does enter into it. “I will not have this man to rule over me: I will not look at the evidence except through distorted vision; I will not look at the evidence except with the gangrene of suspicion. I will not look at the evidence, because I do not want that light to shine into my heart and expose my thoughts and arraign my life, and require me to surrender things which I am unwilling

to surrender,” and so, to his Master, he falleth, falleth, falleth forever, on account of his unbelief, and rightly so.

So you see how shallow is that idle thought about belief not being voluntary and that therefore man is not responsible for it, and therefore error is harmless and truth is helpless. And yet there are men who claim to be intelligent who will try to present that as sound philosophy and think that they have said enough when they say, “Well, that is all right for you, but I don’t believe the Bible; therefore I am under no obligations to obey it. I do not believe in the Christian Sabbath; I do not believe in going to church. I do not believe in hell. I do not believe in the resurrection. I do not believe in a judgment. I do not believe in eternity. I do not believe that God will punish men forever, and because I do not believe it, and because belief is dissociated from volition, there is no moral quality in it and I am as good as you are.”

That is the thing I wanted to speak to you about. You thought the fruit was good. Your thinking that didn’t change the fruit an atom. It had the poison in it. You ate it and died. Look again at natural law. See how inexorable it is. A little child is certainly irresponsible. A child puts its hand in the blaze of fire — what then? A little boy rushes out after a doctor for his sick mother, just at dark. The bridge over which he has to cross was all right when he last saw it. Since he has passed over it someone has taken up a plank, and as he dashes across, the horse’s foot goes down in that hole. He is thrown; he is killed; the doctor does not come: his mother dies. There is nature.

A thousand times more relentless in its decision is the imperiousness of law in nature than in morals, because in morals God’s grace intervenes. You do not go to nature to find out about heaven. You go there to find out about hell. It teaches hell. You do not go to the Bible to find out about hell, but you go there to find heaven, to find grace, to find some escape from a law that has been violated. There is where you go — to the Bible — to find out about salvation, and that tells you that God Almighty, out of pure mercy and love for you, a vile sinner, seeing you alone and helpless, did give His Son to die for you, and offered you eternal life upon your loving reception of that Son, and you say: “No, I don’t believe it; I won’t accept it, and the reason that I won’t accept it is that He tells me to do things that I do not want to do, and do not intend to do. He tells me to make certain sacrifices that I will not make. I will not.” There is your voluntary act. “He calls upon me to walk in a certain path that is too narrow. I want more space; I will not walk in it, and I will not believe, because I hate it. I hate it!” So his heart determines his faith.

There never was a case of intellectual infidelity. A man may know that the Bible is true. He may know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He may know He is holy.

He may know whoever believes on Him will be saved. Intellectually he may believe that way, but he trembles while he believes it, because he does not love Jesus Christ. He hates the fact because it is true.

Now there is where the condemnation comes in. You are responsible to God more for your faith than for anything else in the world. There is nothing in the world in which your responsibility is so great. God help you to see the faith of the Bible, which being absent causes the soul to be lost. Believing is with the heart, in which the affection takes hold. That is the kind of faith that saves a man from hell.

Come to this much of a resolution: "Hereafter I will distrust lying proverbs." Do you know that millions of souls are lost by them? The devil fixes up a short formula and holds that out: "Now here, you want to be justified in rejecting Jesus Christ? You want to be justified in not working for God? You want to go on making money, loving money, loving lust, loving the things that gratify your appetite? Now here, I will fix you up a little recipe that will be as an opiate to your conscience. Here it is: Belief is involuntary, because dissociated from the will. Man must believe or reject according to the evidence; therefore he is neither better for believing, nor worse for rejecting. There is no moral quality in it, and if you do not believe, you are not to blame. If you do believe, you have no credit, and as you don't believe, therefore you are not blameworthy for that." There is a way that seemeth to man to be right, but the end thereof is death. O! Lord God, in mercy touch the heart whose tongue is apt in quoting the devil's proverbs!

I would impress only one other thought. The Bible teaches that no man can have faith without the Holy Spirit; that the Spirit alone can convict of the sin of not believing in Jesus. If, then, the difficulty in the way of faith is intellectual, we would expect the helping Spirit to impart either some new faculty to the mind or some increase of power in such intellectual faculties as we have. But in regeneration there is neither a new intellectual faculty bestowed nor an old one increased. We are physically and mentally the same after regeneration as before. The Spirit's work is a renewal of the moral nature. He changes the heart and not the intellect. Therefore we know from the Spirit's work that there is no such thing as intellectual infidelity.

8. “THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS COME NIGH UNTO YOU”

TEXT: Notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. - Luke 10:11

Before discussing the text I shall make a very brief explanation of some of the things in the whole paragraph that need to be explained. The first is the occasion that prompted our Savior to send out disciples. That is more forcibly expressed by Matthew than in this connection.

It is therefore said, in the ninth chapter, just before He selected the Twelve Apostles, that when He saw the condition of the people as sheep without shepherds, He had compassion on them and selected men to go out and shepherd them. It is enough to excite the compassion of anyone who has the spirit of Christ, seriously to look at the religious condition of the masses of the people. Their ignorance as to the teachings of the Bible is very profound. They are exposed to a great variety of temptations. It is pitiable when you mix with people, to see how dark is their spiritual condition. It ought to move any heart to offer this prayer to God: “O Lord, see this flock without a shepherd! See these poor people, these lost people, with nobody to instruct them and lead them in the way of life. O Master, send shepherds unto these.”

Now, as that was the occasion of the selection of the Twelve Apostles, so it was the occasion of the selection of seventy others also, and so it has ever been the occasion for the Lord to call out from among the people men here and there who would turn their backs upon every other business and devote themselves exclusively to the work of the ministry.

The next thing that needs a little explanation is this: “Salute no man by the way.” The salutation in the Eastern country took up a great deal of time. Travelers who have witnessed the formality of these salutations wonder how the people ever find time to go through all the postures and prostrations and bows and delays in merely expressing one single idea, “How do you do?” When He said, then, “Salute no man by the way,” He meant to express just this idea: “I send you out on a great and pressing mission in which time is precious. You are as one appointed to carry the mail, the post, from one place to another. You are not an ordinary traveler. You must ride fast, or walk fast. You do not stop like other people and chat and take up your time in conversation on unimportant matters by the way. ‘The king’s business requires haste.’ You are carrying a message, of life, or reprieve, or pardon to some doomed criminal whose execution is at hand and may be over before you arrive.

Going out on such a mission as that, don't stop to go through with the ordinary forms of salutation as you meet men by the way. Remember why you are sent and let all these trifling things that pertain to an idle life alone." That is what it means.

Next: "Go not from house to house." In the twentieth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, Paul, in speaking to the elders of the church at Ephesus, whom he had invited to meet him at Miletus, showed them how, when he was among them, he did go from house to house for the space of two years, and how they ought to do the same thing in preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.

The question then is, why, in this connection, "Go not from house to house"? The context explains. He said, "And in the same house remain eating and drinking such things as they give." "Go not from house to house. Go from house to house to preach or to heal or to comfort, but go not from house to house to eat and drink, to be feasted yourselves." That is, in prosecuting a work of the Lord Jesus Christ in a community, one thing the preacher must ignore - frequent social dinings from house to house. Attend to your work.

You cannot carry on such a meeting as that if you accept an invitation to a big dinner at A's house today and another at B's house tomorrow. It will destroy your spirituality and take away your power. Remain in the house where you first stop. Eat the things that are set before you with thankfulness, asking no questions. It is a very small matter anyhow. Concern yourself with your mission and not with eating and drinking. However proper it may be on other and more suitable occasions to participate in social dinings, it is not in season when you are sent out upon this mission.

It is quite proper to salute men by the way ordinarily, but carrying a message of life and death, you ought not to stop to go through with the elaborate forms of the salutation. And so, while it is a good thing in its place and at a proper season, to attend to social dinings and eat good things of this world and to thank God for them, and to appreciate them if a friend invites you, yet a man who is sent out on the mission of carrying the gospel of salvation to the lost should not go about from house to house, being entertained. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." That is the explanation of that part of the subject.

Now we are prepared to look at the text itself: "Notwithstanding, be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come nigh unto you." Here are several thoughts making natural divisions of this text. First, what is meant by the kingdom of God? Second, what is meant by the kingdom of God coming nigh unto people? Third, what is the force of the "notwithstanding"?

It is a difficult matter for anyone to realize how much is involved in the phrase, “The kingdom of God.” We learn things by contrast. You better understand day by the contrast of night. There is a kingdom of Satan, a kingdom of darkness. In that kingdom the subjects are the slaves of man’s chief enemy. It is the object of the kingdom of God to turn men from the power of Satan unto God.

The whole of the thought is presented in the commission of Paul, where God said to him, “I send you to the Gentiles.” For what? “To turn them from darkness to light. To open their eyes, to turn them from Satan unto God, to give them an inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith that is in Me.” So that the condition of the subjects of Satan’s kingdom is one of privation. First, they are orphans. They have no home, no inheritance. Otherwise the kingdom of God could not offer them an inheritance. They are deprived of an inheritance. And what is the next deprivation? They are blind. Blindness is the deprivation of sight. The mission of the kingdom of God is to open their eyes. It is to confer spiritual vision upon them, to enable them to see and to discern their true relations to God, to see and understand the things that make for their peace and in what their best interests are concerned. To be under the power of Satan is to be deprived of God, of God’s presence; the kingdom of God is to deliver them from the thralldom of Satan.

The kingdom of God means more than this. It includes the amelioration of all big physical troubles. This context says, “As you go, heal the sick. Give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf.” It is a very great mistake that the kingdom of God is ever oblivious of the physical sufferings of the people. It is a modern proverb that missionary work is to preach the gospel only and let alone the poverty and sickness of the people. The proverb is anti-Christian. It is always an argument against the pretensions of any religious organization claiming to be the church of Jesus Christ when it shuts its eyes to the physical wants and necessities of the people. Certainly Jesus Christ never did. A great part of His mission here upon the earth had to do with the illness, the wants of the body. He fed the people. He gave sight to the people. He removed their difficulties of hearing. He supplied clothing to them. And it is a sign and evidence of the kingdom of God in a community where the people who are able and who have means are, through Jesus, using their means for the amelioration of suffering.

A characteristic of the Christian religion is the establishment of orphanages, of asylums, care for the destitute without any regard to the church relations of the destitute. It is the anti-Christian philosophy of evolution that says, “Let only the fittest survive. Let the weak, the wounded, and the decrepit perish.” But the main thing was that the kingdom of God in coming to a place was to announce to them repentance

toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, by which present and eternal salvation would be secured.

Second, if such be the meaning of the kingdom, then what is meant by that kingdom coming nigh? It certainly means that all its blessings are accessible; that God's offer of eternal life is not only sincere but is then and there "come-atable" and available. Let not any distorted view of election cause us to charge God with insincerity. All the words and all the life of Jesus Christ, all His invitations and wooings, demonstrate His good faith. "Nigh unto you" means present opportunity to receive and enjoy all the blessings contained in "the kingdom of God." It means that when the kingdom of God reaches a community, accessible to that community is an open door that connects directly with God and heaven. Whether they saw it or not, it meant an opportunity; it meant that there had reached that community a privilege, an opportunity, an open door, through which it was lawful for them to enter, and which they were sincerely invited to enter, and which, if entered, conferred upon them blessings of such inconceivable excellence that no words could describe them.

Third, what next, is the import of "notwithstanding" in the clause, "Notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you"? What is the force of the "notwithstanding"? Here was a community visited by men sent out by the Savior, and this community had rejected their testimony and the offered life. This community had refused to receive the blessings of God's grace that had been freely offered to them. They had turned their back upon them, and by their rejection all of these blessings were lost to them. Now, here is the text, "Though you do not see it, though you derive no benefit from it, though it has been to you as if there were no heaven and as if there were no escape from hell, yet to you, lost, I come with this announcement, that at that period in your life the kingdom of God had come nigh unto you.

"It was there. You walked close by the open door. You could have reached out your hand and touched the fruit of eternal life. You were near enough to the water of life to stoop down and quench the burning thirst within you. You were so close to salvation that in the depths of hell the bitterest memory that can ever come to you will be this, 'Oh, what might have been!' Looking back at it now, you will say, 'How blind I was! To think that God once placed right at my door this way of life, this offer of free pardon and salvation; to think that once, yonder in time, the Savior rang my door-bell and spoke to me and my house and said, Life, life, I offer unto you, if you will accept it.'"

Now, our text says that you may be sure of this. There are things about which you may have doubts, but you may be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come nigh. I do not know a subject that suggests to the minds such strange, such bewildering, such sad thoughts as this.

Let us take the case of one who is now lost, from whom the opportunity has fled, whose day of grace is ended, who is lost forever. You say to that man, "Be sure of this, that the kingdom of God once came nigh unto you." It did. There was a time when it did. Though you shut your eyes to it, though you refused to receive it, though you treated it as a light matter, yet, O banished one, O child of eternal sorrow and of punishment, O sufferer of unbroken despair, O eternal sufferer, be sure of this, that the kingdom of God had come nigh unto you.

Notice yet the "notwithstanding". Notwithstanding what? Notwithstanding that the one who brought it nigh to you was a man, a human being just like yourself. One of the grounds of the rejection of salvation through Jesus Christ is the messenger He employs to carry that salvation. The objector says, "If Jesus Christ would come Himself to me, or if He would send an angel, I might accept. If He would in some other way approach me than by a faulty man a man like myself, I would accept it. But that preacher - I know him. I live in the same town with him. He is a man of like passions with myself. Why should he be the means of bringing the kingdom of heaven nigh unto me?"

This questions the wisdom of God's appointed methods of sending salvation to the lost. Paul says that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and now he says, "He hath committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation and we do beseech you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God." We men, in Christ's stead, in His place, beseech you to be reconciled to God.

This ministry of reconciliation has been committed to us. Salvation for the lost, salvation for the world, salvation for every creature, how shall it get to them? Who shall bear it? And selecting twelve men he said, "I send you there." He selected seventy others - "I send you yonder." And He gathered His disciples about Him on the mountain of Galilee, and said, "Go ye therefore and preach the gospel to every creature." The means appointed for bringing the kingdom of God nigh unto men is the employment of a ministry of men.

Says the objector, "The kingdom of God came not nigh unto me because I never saw God. I never heard God. I never rejected God." This paragraph closes thus: "He that heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me." So that notwithstanding the character of the messengers employed by the Lord Jesus Christ in bringing the

kingdom of God to the world, notwithstanding that, you may be sure that the kingdom of God, did come nigh unto you.

You say, “Why did God do this? Why put such a treasure in such a vessel? That vessel is earthen, sometimes very earthen. Why will not God explain to me His reasons for putting that treasure in that earthen vessel?” The Lord answers you: “That the excellency of the power may be of God and not of men.” No one should be able to boast. If angels had been commissioned to bring the power of God nigh unto you, then the man unto whom the message was brought might stay his gaze at the angels, and might say to Gabriel, “Thou art my God”; might forget to look beyond such a glorious messenger. But if the messenger is manifestly without any intrinsic worth or inherent power; if he is evidently just such a one as you are yourself, of like passions with you, if it is perfectly evident that he has no power to convert your soul, that he cannot charm you into the gates of God’s glory, then God will be glorified and not the messenger.

If you put the Almighty upon the witness stand and catechise Him, if you demand that God authenticate His Word and justify His methods at the bar of the creature’s judgment, then this is God’s avowal: Though men preach - men just like you - and though these vessels are very earthen, notwithstanding you may be sure of this, that the kingdom of God had come nigh unto you.

How easy a thing it is to despise a man, to scorn one who is human, to have contempt for him, to justify oneself in the rejection of God’s gospel on the ground of some prejudice in the mind or heart against the preacher! Why, there never was a preacher living but had more actual faults than the ‘people saw. Doubtless all of them have been free from some faults that prejudice had charged against them, but in the sight of God and in one’s own humble estimate of himself, there is always a depreciation of self that says, “Why, brethren, of course I am full of faults. I am a sinner as you are a sinner. I am myself a subject of the divine grace. You are not to judge of the treasure by me. You are not to estimate the merit of what is offered to you as food for the soul, and clothing for the soul, and everlasting life for the soul, by my merits. I have not a thing in the world to commend me. You are not to receive it because I can eloquently tell it, because I can theoretically illustrate it, because I have a method of saying things better than other men can say them.”

In no sense does the excellency of it depend upon the rhetorical declamation of the preacher. The demonstration of the power is in God. And notwithstanding it is a poor preacher who brings you the message, you be sure that “the kingdom of God has come nigh to you.”

Well, what other objection does the “notwithstanding” refute? Here it is, right here in the context. Sending out these men he says, “Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes. The laborer is worthy of his hire.” Not only is the man employed as the messenger of God’s salvation, but this man is compensated for his services by a support. Here is the thought: See how Paul discusses it in the ninth chapter of the First Letter to the Corinthians: “My answer to them that do examine me is this: Have we not power to eat and to drink? Have we not power to lead about a wife? ... Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? Or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? It is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? ... Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.”

Now, says the objector, “I could stand a man’s bringing me the message. I could get over that part of it. I am willing to dispense with the angel and I will receive the treasure in the earthen vessel, but the part that causes me not to see that the kingdom of God is nigh is that this preacher of the gospel must be paid by the gospel. It is the missionary’s salary. It is the pastor’s salary. Oh, this everlasting expense! It is what it costs that is my objection.”

How heart-sickening, how heart-breaking this everlasting and degrading objection about expenses! How it clogs the wheels of progress! How lamentable every now and then, when some worn-out, threadbare character poses as a reformer, crying out, “Expense! Expense!” To which of the text replies, “Notwithstanding, be you sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.”

It is the ordinance of the Lord Jesus Christ that men shall be selected to do this work, and though it may be repugnant to you that in entering into this work the man is not to furnish his own purse, not to furnish even an extra pair of shoes, nor to take his own scrip, though this may be repugnant to you, notwithstanding be you sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come nigh unto you. Now, that is the precise thought of it.

Unquestionably, there are vast numbers of people who refuse to see that the kingdom of God has come nigh unto them because it is only a man that has preached the gospel to them and because that man is by the ordinance of Jesus Christ compensated for his services as a laborer. Can you be an instance? Are you aware of any prejudice in your own mind on the subject? Do you not know of people who have turned away from heaven’s offer of eternal life solely on the ground that those who bring to them the message of life are by the ordinances and requirements of God taken care of as to their physical wants while they do this?

They put Paul on trial on these points: "Here, we will examine you on this. How do you answer on this?" He says, "My answer to them that do examine me is this, that I have a right to eat and drink. I have a right to marry as other men." And a preacher ought to marry; he ought to marry and be the husband of a wife. No one questions this in other public affairs of men.

Here a government says to a man, "I want you to be a soldier."

"Well, if I am a soldier, can I farm?"

"No, we want all your time."

"Well, if I am a soldier, can I be a merchant?"

"No."

"Well, if I am a soldier, can I be a lawyer?"

"No."

To be a soldier is to surrender your time and your person and your service to the government. Well, says Paul, "Who goeth to warfare at his own charge?" Who does?

He uses then this illustration: Here is a flock of sheep, and the necessities of the case require that somebody should shepherd that flock. I am speaking of actual sheep now. Somebody must attend to them. They cannot take care of themselves. Somebody must lead them into green pastures. Somebody must defend them from the wolves. Now, says Paul: "Who feedeth a flock and eateth not of the milk of the flock?" If you shut your eyes to the fact that the kingdom of God has come nigh unto you, either because a man brought it or because that man was compensated as a laborer for bringing it, you only injure yourself. Notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come nigh unto you.

But did not our Lord afterwards revoke this ordinance? Only for the period of His death. Just before He died, when, for the time being, death was to prevail and the hour of the power of darkness had come, He said, "When I sent you out (referring to this occasion right here) didn't I say take no scrip?"

"Yes." Why?

"You were in My employ. It was My business to feed you and clothe you." But now that Jesus is to die, now that the employer Himself is to be out of the way for three days and nights, now in that time, "if you have a sword, take it."

In other words, if your Savior is a dead Savior, you look out for yourself. Fish, farm, practice law, defend yourself, take your sword. But when He arose from the dead, when this period passed away, He pointed back to the ordinance of this text. He pointed back to the time when He had ordained that they that preach the gospel should live by the gospel. And by virtue of the fact that He is not now dead, though He was dead, but is alive and to die no more, but to live forever, and able therefore to feed and clothe and take care of those who serve Him, this law is reappointed.

And it is just as certain as anything can be in the world that people who hold to the theory that a minister should not be fairly compensated for his services do by that practically say, "Our Savior is dead. He is dead. There is nobody to take care of His laborer. Let him take care of himself. If he has a purse, let him take it. If he has a sword, let him take it. He goes out as the representative of a dead God."

Unquestionably that is the teaching of this Scripture and the passage with which I have connected it. But the lost man still objects: "The kingdom of God only appeared to come nigh me. Really I had no chance." The context refutes you and puts you to shame. Do hear it:

"And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again" (~~2015~~ Luke 10:5-6).

I do wish I could get the picture before you of what I see in that. Just imagine men like Peter and John, men of no very great social position in the world, not riding in carriages, walking along the road, the dusty road, and coming to a house, and without any attempt at justifying what they say, but as if God Almighty spoke through them, spreading out the hands of benediction and saying, "Peace be to this house."

Now, mark how it distinctly teaches that the peace of God does actually pass over. It leaves them and passes over: "And if a son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it." Now, supposing a man and his house turn from it. Then what does God say? "If not, it shall turn to you again." Now, if that man is lost, be sure of this, the kingdom of God had come nigh unto him. The peace had gone out and it came back. What a thought that is about peace returning!

People who are in hell today, people who will be in hell it will be true that a light had shone that "lighteth every man that cometh into the world." It will be true that while Jesus Christ judges no man but the man unto whom He has preached, it is a fact that the gospel has been preached to them, which is the only predicate of the judgment. "To whom He preacheth, them He judgeth." No other. And to every lost soul in hell

it will be true that peace had gone out and it returned. It returned. Be sure of this, that the kingdom of God had come nigh to you.

Suppose one is in a house; that house is on an island; that island lies low, subject to overflow in certain extraordinary risings of the tide; not ordinarily, but occasionally. One is in there sleeping, sleeping soundly, dreaming of peace and rest and life, when suddenly a thundering sound awakens the sleeper. He looks up. He looks out. The storm has burst. The mad waves are beating against the frail structure. The sands are sinking. And he says, "Here I have been left to perish. Oh, did nobody think to warn me? Did nobody love me enough to come and knock at my door and say, 'Wake up, wake up! The tide of death is coming'?"

God says, "You may be sure of this that Somebody did come. You may be sure that He did knock at the door. You may be sure that a boat from the shore put off for your special benefit. It came right up to your door and the Messenger did knock and knock and knock, and stood there and said, 'Behold, I have knocked, but you sleep right on,' and finally His boat returned. The peace returned. His boat returned, but you may be sure that the kingdom of God had come nigh unto you."

What a thought! Oh, shall we because of any prejudices in our mind about the preachers or about the teachers or about any facts connected with their support, refuse to bear? Shall we dismiss the peace of God that comes to our house? "When you enter into a house, first say, Peace be to this house." Did He ever say that to a lost house? Did the peace ever go out and have to come back because it could find no welcome? Did it go and was it refused an entrance and did it have to return? Yes. You may be sure that had God brought right up to the very door of that man, life, eternal life, he would not; he would not!

What an awful thought! Go to the jails, go to the penitentiaries, go to the graveyards, go to the prison houses of eternal despair, and as you look at them, these whose liberty is restrained, these about whom the walls rise up, these over the portals of whose door is written, "He who enters here leaves hope behind," to every one of them you may say, "Be sure that the kingdom of God had come nigh unto you."

I cannot, to save my life, keep from shivering when I think of that peace going to a house and then having to come back, having to come back, finding, like Noah's dove, no place where its feet could rest. When a man is lost, God says to His Spirit, "Let him alone. Come back. Come away from him. My Spirit shall not always strive with men." He says to His people, "Let Me alone. I have heard you often. I would hear you now, but He will not." Notwithstanding that, the kingdom of God has been nigh to that man.

Now, I have only this last thought. There is a feeling in the world that the kingdom of God is a long way off, that God Himself is a long way off. And yet God says, as Paul expresses it in his sermon at Athens, that He is not very far from everyone of us. He is not very far from any of us. Perhaps we don't know it. We don't realize it, but He is not very far from any of us. God has commanded that we should seek for Him if haply we might find Him, and along our path of life, though that path leads down to eternal death, there is a place, one anyhow, maybe one hundred places, where there is absolute contact between heaven and this life, where the juxtaposition is such that they actually touch. Looking back, the lost one will say, "Yonder was the place. It was right at me. There was the door and the door was open, only I was looking the other way. I walked by the open door and saw it not, because I was looking the other way. Just as I got nearly to it and might have seen it, where it seems I could not help seeing it, the devil, not wishing me to be saved, and not wishing me to look that way, came and said, 'Look over here. Look at this pleasure. Look at this ball.' And I stood there staring at the things to which he called my attention, and so walked by the door that was open and never saw it, and he did it on purpose. That was his object. It was to divert me."

The kingdom of God, the kingdom of life, the kingdom of salvation for the body, the kingdom of salvation for the soul, the kingdom of eternal light and blessedness, the kingdom of peace that flows like a river, peace that passeth the understanding, the kingdom of joy, the kingdom of eternal communion with God, the kingdom that will ultimately deliver us from all pain, sickness, sorrow, and death - it had come nigh to you.

Oh, let us pray that God will wake us up; that God will cause us to see where that opening is and not pass it lightly and not turn away from it because a poor man like ourselves comes to tell of it. And let not these little prejudices come in to interfere. Why, I have known some men who would not commune because they happened to see someone in the group against whom they had a prejudice. The earthen vessel, what is that to you? The kingdom of God has come nigh unto you though the means employed are earthly means.

I want us to offer a prayer here. It may be that some soul has come right up to the line today, right up to that border-line, and while we go to dinner he may pass that point. He may lose the opportunity. While he is heedless, the opportunity may slip by. It may escape while he is busy about other things. The opportunity of the past may be gone, but right now and, here it may be that in God's grace he has come again to that door and the door is open and the voice speaks to him and he hears it and it touches his heart. Come today. Today, if you hear His voice, harden not your heart.

I want to pray that any soul here today who feels that he is on that thin line - oh, how slight a line between salvation and damnation - the soul that feels that today by the weight of a feather, by the breadth of a hair, the scale may turn to the right or to the left. O soul, I pray for you that it may never have to be said about you that the kingdom of God had come nigh unto you in vain.

8. “NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION”

SCRIPTURE READING: The Great Supper (Luke 14); The Marriage Feast (Matthew 22).

TEXT: Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. -
^{<2445>}Luke 14:15

It is quite important to note, concerning the introductory Scriptures just read, that the Parable of the Great Supper recorded in the fourteenth chapter of Luke and the Parable of the Marriage Feast recorded in the twenty-second chapter of Matthew are not variant accounts of the same transaction by two independent witnesses. Having some general resemblances, they differ widely in occasion, time, place, circumstances, and meaning.

The Parable of the Great Supper was a somewhat private lesson given on a Sabbath Day some months before His crucifixion, most probably in Perea and certainly in the house of a Pharisee with whom our Lord was dining. But the Parable of the Marriage Feast was part of a public discourse delivered by Him in the last week of His ministry and in the court of the Temple. While, therefore, the two sessions are not to be confounded, yet there is a deeply significant relation between them that will be emphasized in this sermon.

You will have observed from Luke's account of the facts leading up to the text that while dining with the Pharisee He healed a man afflicted with the dropsy, taught an important lesson concerning the Sabbath Day, rebuked the bad manners of His fellow-guests in matters of etiquette, and instructed His host as to the quality of guests one may most profitably invite to a dinner.

These facts disclose striking peculiarities of our Lord manifested here, and many times elsewhere, in dealing with invitations to people's houses, or in participating in more general social events that ought to teach His people a solemn lesson, because He is the only model for their imitation. These peculiarities make our Lord the most remarkable personage in the annals of time in His bearing toward the world's politics, civil government, business maxims, and social customs.

Often have I felt constrained to bring these peculiarities to your notice and do now pause before opening the text to emphasize the deep and far-reaching significance of one proposition including them all.

Never, for a moment, did He allow the transitory excitements and complications of earthly politics, business, or society to overshadow and subordinate His interest in and attention to His divine mission - the salvation of lost men.

For example: First, He never accepted an invitation that did not include His disciples. He and His people were one, in His mind. A would-be host ashamed of the poorest of His followers could not have Jesus for a guest. Ah, me! That we should go where Jesus would not be welcome! Second, He would accept no invitation that estopped His teaching. Who would not hear His doctrine could not have His company. Do we ever frequent places whose character or etiquette would close the mouth of testimony for Christ? Third, He would accept no invitation that barred access to Him by the needy and perishing. As if He had said, "O Pharisee, I will dine with thee provided the woman who is a sinner may approach me even at thy table; provided this afflicted man may come and be healed even as I eat." Here is persistent devotion to one great life-purpose. Christ's people should be imitators of Him.

The four facts cited previously, the healing of the dropsical man at a Sabbath feast, the consequent lesson on the proper uses of that holy day in works of mercy, the rebuke of the proud or selfish guests who, unsolicited, took the chief and best places at the feast, the great lesson to the host suggesting the invitation of guests who could not reciprocate the favor - these constitute the prelude to our text.

One of the guests, feeling the unique presence and mysterious power of the Great Teacher and feeling called upon to say something in response to such unusual doctrine, which he never intended to accept or obey, sought to present himself in the unmeaning platitude: "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!" But not for one moment did it hide him. Quicker than echo responds to the original sound, our Lord exposed his cant and swept away his glittering but unmeaning generality by the Parable of the Great Supper.

What! Did Jesus rebuke a man for repeating a proverb axiomatically true? Was not this man's mind turning from an earthly dining to the heavenly feast in the kingdom of God? Ah! Do you hear him, how piously and unctuously he says, "All this talk is about an earthly dining on gross viands that perish with the using, and unimportant invitations thereto, but I say, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God."

Let us study this interesting man somewhat. He is a type. He represents a large class. When you analyze him you may classify a multitude in every generation. The analysis is not difficult. You may delineate him with one stroke of the pencil. Balaam is his prototype. Hear wicked Balaam and understand this man: "Let me die the death of

the righteous and let my last end be like his!” Why not rather say, “Let me live the life of the righteous, then will my last end be like his”?

In other words, when our Lord persistently urged immediate acceptance of the gospel and conformity to it now and here, this man sought to evade present obligations in this life by a compliment to the blessedness of the life to come. Evidently so, or there would be no pertinence in the Parable of the Great Supper, which constitutes our Savior’s reply to the platitude. In that parable, on various and slight pretexts, those invited to the gospel feast decline to come now. Is it possible, then, that in every generation, multitudes evade home thrusts on immediate and personal religion by resorting to vague compliments and glittering generalities? It is not only possible, but is an every-day occurrence.

From what definite source it came, I cannot now recall, but I have surely heard or read what purports to be a true story of a worldly-wise old man advising his son after this fashion: “My boy, be careful of your attitude toward religion, for it is a power in the land. Be neither so foolish as to oppose it outright, nor to become a servant of it. By compliments and glittering generalities you may evade obedience to it in heart and life, leaving the brethren always hopeful that you are near the kingdom; and by praising any of its given enterprises you may dodge all its calls for contribution by regretfully objecting to some detail of plan or method.”

It is a great pity that many church-members are largely following this wicked old man’s advice to this wicked son, and I doubt not that, being imbued with the same spirit here on earth, they will gravitate toward the same destiny in the next world. What, then, was the value of this cheap exclamation of the fellow-guest of Jesus? It had no appreciable value. It was a miserable subterfuge, justly obnoxious, and meriting the scathing rebuke of Jesus. Let it serve our present purpose as the basis of three thoughts, the first and main thought is

NOW OR NEVER

Your predilection for heaven, your desire to be saved hereafter, your willingness at the end of the world to be counted among the saved, amounts to nothing in the world except to expose the shallowness of your heart, unless you are willing to take the kingdom of God now. Let us illustrate. When Paul reasoned of righteousness and temperance and judgment to come, “Felix trembled.” He saw the end of the wicked; he saw the outcome of a wicked life; and that outcome was unpleasant to him: he trembled. And if it had been said to Felix, “Do you want your last end to be that of the wicked, do you want to reach the terminus of the road that you are now on?” his reply would have been: “I tremble to think about it; I do not want to get there.”

Now, mark: He said to Paul, “Go thy way for this time. At a more convenient season I will send for thee.” Paul might well have rejoined: “If you are unwilling now to turn from your evil ways, if you are unwilling to be a Christian, if you are unwilling just at this very moment to place yourself in alignment with God’s cause and His people, in all human probability you will be unwilling at the judgment and are sure to stand in this class. ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you that none of them that were bidden shall taste of my supper.’”

Now, I conceive this to be the most important lesson deducible from this Scripture. So, if one reprobate in life shall say, “I am saved by grace and the grace of God brings salvation and that salvation means future eternal life,” to him I quote the Scripture, “The grace of God that bringeth salvation teaches us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world.” And, indeed, whoever is not willing now and here, now in youth, now in middle life, now under the difficulties which are on us, to take heaven, will not have heaven then.

I do wish you could get that thought in you as I see it, as I feel it. Take you just as you sit before me this morning - if you say to me that you would like to be a Christian hereafter, that you would like to enter heaven, that you would not like to make your final home in hell, but yet do not want to be a Christian now. I say to you, you will never be, and that you will be in hell unless before God’s day of grace passes you have repented and taken an entirely different position from the one that you now occupy. And I say unto you that until you do change, you have not one single promise of God to which you can lay any claim, not one.

Still more, all the while you wait to change, the place you occupy is one of absolute and utter exposal to eternal death. Young you may be, beautiful you may be, talented you may be, rich you may be, with many friends you may be, amiable in disposition you may be, but you are occupying a position unlighted by any promise of God and with every moral probability that you will spend eternity in hell. That is the first thought in this lesson. Let it sink deep in your heart. The second thought is

DELAY ON ANY PRETEXT IS IDOLATRY

It places some creatures above the Creator, as appears from the frivolous excuses in the parable. The reason men assign, or the reason in their hearts for not accepting Christ and heaven immediately, thoroughly demonstrates idolatry.

Let us look at the reasons assigned here: “I do not want to take heaven just now, because for the present my mind is more interested in my oxen; my mind accounts as more pleasurable, more important, the social relations of life, the pleasures of life.”

If you count anything, no matter how lawful and innocent in itself, like industry, like having or acquiring property, like marriage or giving in marriage; if you count anything at this moment more important than reconciliation with God, then not only is it probable that you will forever so count them, but it reveals this state of your heart, that you don't know what a sinner you are, and you don't realize what kind of a sinner you are. You have dethroned God and placed a creature over Him, even over God, who is blessed forever. You do say to Him that you esteem yourself more than Himself and give precedence to a farm, a yoke of oxen, a wife, a husband, a daughter, a brother, a sister, or a friend. You do, for this moment, deny the priority and paramount nature of God's sovereignty. And that is why, right after this lesson, that the Lord says: "If any man would come after me and hateth not his father and mother and brother and sister and wife, he cannot be my disciple."

It simply means this: That if you, just as you sit before me and hear me today - if you do not want to be a Christian now, if a different kind of life is more pleasurable to you, if some other business is more enjoyable to you, it shows that you are in an attitude of open rebellion against God. It shows that in your secret heart you deny all the application of the first and great commandment. In showing that you are putting the creature above the Creator, who is blessed forever, it also shows that if the whole world occupied the position that you occupy, then God would be dethroned throughout the world in the minds of men.

Now, what is the third thought of this lesson? We gather it from a comparison between the revelation of character in the Parable of the Great Supper and the more developed character revealed in the later Parable of the Marriage Feast. In the first, those who refuse to come occupy a polite attitude toward religion. They render excuses more or less plausible and indulge in complimentary platitudes toward the outcome of religion: "Blessed is the man that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." Nearer the crucifixion all pretenses laid aside and the objector not only becomes abusive and are hostile, but murderous. Read, compare the two parables, and See. This leads to the third thought:

THE MOST POLITE EXCUSE HAS IN IT THE GERM OF SUBSEQUENT HATE AND MURDER

I do not affirm that the subject is conscious of it. Like Hazael, to whom the prophet foretold his future crimes, this man of platitudes and polite excuses might sincerely say, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" But character evolves and tends to fixity of type. You do not believe this possible now because you cannot realize it. But it is true nevertheless that your present polite refusal to accept Christ's invitation has in it the germ of murderous, malicious, and eternal hostility to heaven:

all it needs is time for development and occasions for display. Just as sure as these men who in the Parable of the Supper occupy a polite attitude are guilty in the later parable of killing the servants of Jesus Christ and murdering Christ Himself, so that will be the attitude of your mind. Do not forget it — that will be your attitude. You are on the road that goes to that place. You are under the guidance of principles that by an irresistible tendency will take you right there. You are under the power of a law more imperious than the law of gravitation that will drag you to the deeper and darker depths. You are in a current, or tide, bearing to that destiny that increases in its speed, volume, and momentum and ever thus increases in power and weight so as to necessitate that you shall go right there. Now, is that true?

Let me illustrate a case. I shall put it in an extreme form. Take a very intelligent, bright, pleasant, amiable young woman, and if that young woman today, right now, at this very moment, does not wish to be a Christian, she is in that current that I speak of. There will come a time when she will knowingly hate God and will love to hate Him. There will come a time when there will be in her heart the most murderous and malicious hostility to the gospel of Jesus Christ. It will come. And though you are unconscious of it, it is there now. The potentialities of it are there. You only need the favorable opportunities for its development; it is there.

Should we shut our eyes to these facts? Why should we blind ourselves with excuses? “Verily I say unto you that none of those who were bidden shall taste my supper.” The thought of this presses on my heart. The question rises in my heart: Is it possible that we can get the young people of this day to see the significance of just this one fact? “I do not want to be a Christian right now, but I do want to get to heaven at last.” “Blessed is the man that will hereafter eat bread in the kingdom of God.”

O dear friends will you ever realize this: That heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people, and that the preparation of those people does not take place hereafter? It does not take place at the judgment. It will be too late then. Repentance will be too late then. Knocking at the door will be too late then. Calling for mercy will be too late then. The hour of decision will be past then. Heaven is a place for a prepared people, and the people who enter heaven are prepared for heaven here on this earth, in time, and nowhere else.

I say again to you what you have heard me say many times, and I expect to keep on saying it as long as I live: That the most important question on this earth is the settlement of your relation with God. That takes precedence over every other thing, and there is nothing to be mentioned in comparison with the settlement of this question. And you can settle it right and be as happy in the married life, and happier;

you can settle it on your farm and be as happy, and happier, on your farm. You can settle it and enjoy any form of honorable industry, and enjoy it more, but it claims precedence, this relation with God. We are to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and then the lesser blessings will be added. And that is what the gospel says, and I echo its voice now - "Come, for all things are now ready." Come now, or never. Not to come now is to be shut out forever. Now, may the Lord impress that on your mind!

I want us to pray about that very thing. I want every Christian heart to join in the prayer that the souls of the unprepared may be made to feel this: "No matter what I may desire about the outcome, no matter how much I may hope to enter heaven and shun hell, unless I am now ready, now willing, now anxious to take hold of eternal life, I cannot take it then." "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near." There will be a time when He cannot be found. There will be a time when prayers will not avail.

I see before me the picture presented in the Bible, a man who had a birthright and who despised it as a profane person. We think of a profane person as one who curses, but here profanity means lack of esteem for sacred things — things that relate to God, to hold them in slight esteem. Now, says Paul, "Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

Is it possible that some here in this house, whose faces we see, whose person we esteem—is it possible, dear friends, that at the coming of Christ we shall see you, the tears running down your face, horror in your heart, unspeakable anguish exhibited in your every feature, standing at the gate of heaven and knocking, standing, and praying, "Lord, Lord, open to me; it is dark out here; O Lord, open to me," and hearing the awful words, "Ye cannot enter now; too late, too late"?

I tell you, the question is not decided there and then. It is decided now and here. And how will you decide it? What measure do you propose? If not ready now, when will you be ready? What possible help for you is there in procrastination, irresolution, and inaction? While we pray for you, why will you not also pray? Say to Him, "Lord, I come now. I do not stop for a more convenient time. I act today. I throw down my empty pretexts and excuses, and, just as I am, here I come, right now, and I say, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner.'"

9. THE CONQUERING WORD OF GOD

TEXT: What is the chaff to the wheat? Is not my word like as a fire: and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? - ~~23:28~~ Jeremiah 23:28

The context just read in your hearing helps very much to understand the primary import of the words in the text. God brings a charge against the religious teachers of the ancient land of Israel. His charge consists of several specifications. The first is that they have stolen His Word from the people. The second is that they have substituted for it a counterfeit Word, having the form of godliness without power; that is, all shucks and no corn. The third is that they have forged the name and the seal of God to this counterfeit. The next is that this Word so presented to the people was unprofitable. It not only did them no good, but it created a very hurtful delusion in their minds, which delusion was this: That a man can sin and not be punished; that a man can be stubborn in his own way, rejecting the way of God, and yet have peace.

These specifications lead up to the text, which asserts the superiority of God's Word over man's inventions and sets forth its potency by a happy illustration. The excellency of this Word the text affirms by two interrogations: "What is the chaff to the wheat?" That is the first one. And second, "The Word of God is like a fire and a hammer." We are now prepared to look into these two comparisons for their import. What is the chaff to the wheat? The chaff is the husk, the shuck that envelops the grain of wheat and serves an exceedingly useful purpose.

But this object, the design of its creation, is simply that it shall be useful to the wheat it contains. If it is simply a shuck, if there is no corn in it, then it serves no good purpose. It is the form. The other is the power. There is a form and there is a power of God's Word. The form serves a very useful purpose, but when it is only a form, then it serves less than a useful end, since it deceives by a seeming life and value where there is none.

A farmer understands the illustration. There has been a blight or a drouth. There is the straw. There stands the waving wheat in the field with only husks instead of heavy heads of grain. It looks like it is good wheat, but the thresher reveals the true story. On the other hand, one must see and acknowledge the excellency of the chaff in protecting the tender, juicy grain unto maturity. All farmers have observed occasionally an ear of corn that has no shuck on it, coming out on the tassel perhaps. You never saw an ear of corn of that kind that was any account. An ear of corn that has no husk is itself no good.

These facts of nature suggest two parallels in the spiritual world. There is a class of people who in their zeal against forms, ceremonies and organizations demand the production of naked wheat. These are the people that say it makes no difference what you believe about the church. Any church will do, or no church will do. It makes no difference what you believe with reference to ordinances. Ordinances are mere forms and you can do without them.

Well, you can do without them just as the ear of corn can do without the shuck. I never saw one of these who despised all form, all organization, whose religious life did not resemble that aborted, smutty ear of corn on the tassel. And as there never was one of them yet fit for the garner or the mill, so I don't think the world ever did produce a profitable Christian who ran on the independent line, despising form and organization. There must be the form and there must be the power.

However, the charge here is that the teachers have counterfeited a form. They have had a seeming message from God. They have taken a vision of their own heart and have stamped upon it the imprimatur of Jehovah. Now, He says with reference to that, "What is the chaff to the wheat?" What is a counterfeit to the true dollar?

Let us see if we can understand the next illustration: "My Word is as a fire and a hammer." The reference is unquestionably here to a form of metallurgy. As that is a big word, I shall explain. It means the science, or art, of extracting metals from the crude ore. It is one of the first arts ever devised by man. Tubal-cain, you will remember, sixth in descent from Cain, was an instructor of all artificers in brass and iron. Job, in that oldest book, reveals the antiquity of the art of extracting metal from the ore. He says, "Surely there is a vein for the silver, and a place for gold where they find it. Iron is taken from the earth and brass is molten from the stone."

Often, in both the Testaments is God's dealing with His people compared with this smelting process: "He shall sit as a refiner of silver," and "your faith shall be as gold tried in the fire."

Now, when it is said that the Word of God is as a fire and a hammer, let us see what is its significance. There are yet in existence old mines that were worked about the time that Jeremiah prophesied, in which the fire and the hammer were used just as he describes it here. The metal being in the rock and the rock being very hard, the first thing done was to build a fire around it. That fire expelled all volatile constituents. After roasting it with fire, then they struck the rock with the hammer and so more easily broke and pulverized it.

There were three fire processes under what is called the roasting and the reducing and the refining of gold or silver. In the first instance the fire made the huge rock

brittle, while the hammer reduced its bulk into usable fragments. By another process the metal was separated from the rock fragments, and by a third it was refined. Isaiah refers to one or, the other of these processes as does Malachi and a number of the other old prophets, showing the agency of the fire or hammer.

Now, when God says, "My Word is like a fire and a hammer," we easily get its import, for up to the present time, with all the inventions that men have made, in one form or another, metallurgy still requires the fire and hammer. The modern quartz crusher is only the hammer breaking the rock in pieces. So, in any metal taken from the earth, you may trace from its original state to its last and most delicate formation, whether of the iron, steel, brass, tin, gold, or silver, the agency of the fire and the hammer. You cannot dispense with the furnace. You cannot dispense with the hammer.

In referring to the spiritual condition brought about by the processes of God's providence, our Lord speaks to Isaiah to this effect: "I have tried you as for silver. I have tried you in the furnace of affliction." And it is said with reference to our Savior when He comes, "Who can abide the day of His coming? For He shall sit as a refiner of silver. He shall purify the sons of Levi."

We now have before us the import, the symbolized import, of the two illustrations, that as far as leading men away from death and unto life, as far as purifying them from sin is concerned, the potent or only efficient instrument is the Word of God. That is wheat, containing the seed of life, while any device of man is but chaff. That is the fire and hammer as compared with man's naked hand in crumbling the granite mountains in search of precious metals.

Now, let us look at the application. There comes a religious teacher, posing as an instructor in ordinances, setting himself up to be an expounder of the spiritual destiny of man. How can he as a teacher do other than harm when he turns aside from the Word of God, and when he speaks of sin as if he had an itching ear, saying to the people, "I have a vision. I have an impression. I have a dream that you may despise God and go unpunished; that you may sin and yet have peace"? The world is full of just such teachers. They come in more shapes than Proteus assumed, frequently in the guise of science, falsely so called. They underestimate the Word of God. They steal away the Word of God from their neighbors.

How is that done? That you may understand the process of stealing away the Word of God from the people, I will take you to the starter of it, the first thief of the Word of God, the original robber. Our Savior tells about him in a parable. A sower went forth to sow and some seed fell by the wayside and the birds of the air came and devoured them. What means that parable? It means that Satan comes and takes

away the Word that has been preached, lest the people should retain it and be converted. That is stealing the Word. Satan was the first robber of God's Word.

Now, these false teachers, who substitute the visions of their own hearts, the vagaries of their own imagination, or the misty speculations of their philosophy for the Word of God, commit two evils. One is, they rob the people of the most priceless and inestimable gift that God has ever given to man His revelation. The other is that they substitute for it a shuck that never held an ear of corn. Chaff! Chaff! Chaff! A field of a thousand acres of it would never produce one grain of wheat. Yet it takes on the semblance of wheat in order to deceive, hence, counterfeit, and then forges the name of God to it in order to make it pass current among men, saying, "Thus saith the Lord. This is the teaching of God. You may sin and have peace. You may rebel against Him and never find hell. You may go on in deceit and robbery. You may go on in lust. You may go on violating natural and moral and spiritual laws, and God's love will see at last that you come out all right." And so they cry, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace."

And so they come to people who are awakened upon the subject of religion, take out the clapper of the alarm bell, lull them to sleep, rock and fan them while *they* sleep, in order that there may be a dream of false peace instead of the startling and awful reality God's Word reveals. "Awake, O sleeper; arise from the dead and Christ shall give you light!"

Let us make the application here. The first remark I wish to make is this, that never in the history of the world have there been so many teachers trying to get the ear of the people on questions of morals and religion, the effects of whose teachings is this: Dispense with the Word of God. Turn from that light. Stealing the grain of wheat, they offer the man the empty chaff, taking away the fire and the hammer and telling him to go to adamantine mountains with his naked fingers and dig out the precious metal of truth.

Do you suppose that men could wish such indifference as to the result, could, with such mental equipoise, violate the most capital and cardinal points of the moral law, and smile and look up without dread to heaven, and live unterrified by the approach of death, and have no apprehensions concerning the judgment, if by some false teaching received in the heart, some empty counterfeit truth, they have now beguiled themselves with this delusion - Death is not the wages of sin?

The boys have it. The girls have it. The young men and the young women, the older men and the older women, go through life and say, "No revelation; no Word of God." That has been taken away and in the place of that we have Spiritualism as one husk, or we have science as another shuck, or we have political economy as

another, or we have public instruction. We look to these for the regeneration of the world and leave out the Word of God. And in one mad, mazy whirl they dance on down, down to the edge of the precipice, which yawns at the terminus of life, and over which they fall into an infinite and bottomless pit, which is filled with the wrath of God.

That man is an enemy of truth in any of its forms, an opponent to the well being of society; he undermines the foundation of the social and political fabrics; he is a murderer of moral and spiritual hope, who will say to the people by his example or by any form of teaching, "God will acquit the guilty. Peace! Peace! There shall no evil come."

So said the first preacher of this doctrine when he whispered as a tempter in the ear of the first woman: "Surely ye shall not die." God hath said, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." "Nay," says Satan, "eat and be wise. No harm can come to you. Despise God. Turn from His Word. Live upon your lusts and your chance is as good as anybody's. Believe what you please. It makes no difference what. Lay aside all fear. Give up the life and take the shell."

I repeat that any such teacher, in the language of God, stands indicted, first, of robbery. He has stolen God's Word from the people. He is indicted as a counterfeiter in that he has held up an empty form, a seeming entity, in the place of the wheat. He is indicted as a forger in that he has affixed God's name to this vision of his own heart. He is indicted as an enemy of his race in that he has taken away the means of life and left only darkness and delusion in its stead. Go back to the martyr days of our Anglo-Saxon fathers in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, when priestly mummeries and lying traditions and empty forms exiled God's Word, and you have a fine example.

Hear the story as told by the modest but gifted President of Wake Forest College, one of the sweetest spirits now moulding the youth of the South. I quote from a recent article in the "Religious Herald":

"In the year 1353, several young Irish priests came over to England to study divinity. They were obliged to return home, because not a copy of the Bible was to be found at Oxford. Before that century closed, Wycliffe had translated the Bible into English. In 1401 a statute was enacted making the possession of a copy of it punishable with death. Until the year 1534 England was as truly a Roman Catholic country as Italy is today. Tyndale's New Testament appeared in England in 1526. Ten years later, Tyndale was burned at the stake. Royal and priestly power were, enlisted in checking the circulation and reading of the Scripture. Part of the law of 1543 was that 'no

artificers, apprentices journeymen, servingmen of the degrees of yeomen, husbandmen or laborers, were to read the Bible or New Testament to themselves, or any other, privately or openly, on pain of imprisonment.' The short reign of Edward VI (six years) was favorable to the circulation and reading of the Bible. It was succeeded, in 1553, by the persecuting reign of Bloody Mary. To read the Word of God was then a crime. To all the years up to the time of Elizabeth apply the words of Lutterworth: 'O Christ, the law is hidden in the sepulcher: when wilt Thou send Thy angel to remove the stone and show Thy truth unto Thy flock?'"

Having rescued God's Word from the chains of the Papist, shall we now surrender it to be hawked at, picked at, and torn by the talons of that modern harpy, Higher Criticism?

The last reflection that I wish to offer upon the subject is this: That those who have any religion, or those who profess any, should join in this kind of a movement: Let us go back to God's Word. Oh, let us leave the piles of threshed straw and go to the wheat garner. Each grain has life in it. Wrap it in a mummy, put it in a pyramid, shut out the rain and the light from it for a thousand years, and then exhume the mummy and plant the wheat and it grows! There is life in the wheat. And the Word of God is living and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, a discerner of the thoughts and interests of the heart. It is better than all the light of nature, for while the heavens may "declare the glory of God and the firmament show His handiwork," yet it is the law of the Lord that is perfect, that "makes wise the simple and that converts the soul." There is the incorruptible seed that liveth forever.

Oh, let us go back to God's Word as the basis of belief, as the standard of creeds, as the regulator of life, as the measure of conduct, as the one supreme and infallible test by which all that man is and feels and thinks and does, shall be tried at the last great day.

I say, let us go back to this Word, because you can preach nothing else that will have any tendency to make dead men living men; that will make the enemies of God into friends of God. Therefore, when one who loved it, one who esteemed it as more than his necessary food, one who regarded it as the man of his counsel and the lamp to his feet, felt the chills of old age coming on him, and that paralysis of tongue which takes eloquence away from those once the most gifted; when he saw looming up before him the termination of his earthly career, he turned to the young man unto whom the same word was committed for transmission and thus charged:

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. That the man of

God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (~~STUB~~² Timothy 3:16-17).

“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom; preach the Word; be instant in season, and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (~~STUB~~² Timothy 4:14).

Now, as I want to see a revival of the Word of God, I may be pardoned for this statement, easily verified by every thoughtful student of the religious annals of the world, and I defy any man who ever looked into one page of history to dispute the accuracy of the statement that from the day that God made man down to the present time there has never been a religious awakening among the people, there has never been a genuine revival of religion, that has not been preceded by and superinduced by a revival of the Word of God, a turning away from human views and speculations, a going back to the simple, “Thus saith the Lord.”

I know it was so in the time of that Israelitish king when the Word of God was discovered where it had been hidden. It was so in the time of Ezra. It was so in the great Protestant Reformation. The Bible had been chained by the priests to the altar; but when the Word of God was given to the people without note or comment, the bare grain, when the translator came and in the tongue in which the people were born gave them that Word that is brighter than every heavenly light put together, then there came a revival of religion; then there was individual Christianity, personal Christianity; then men were converted; and it must be so now.

I hope that we will turn aside from the fondest dreams in which we ever indulged and from the most cherished speculations that ever beguiled our fancy, and from the loftiest flight of imagination, and from every subtlety of metaphysics, and from every accursed delusion of, falsely so called, science, and come to God’s Word, sow that as wheat that has life in it, use that as the fire and the hammer. Smite with God’s Word, and hard hearts will break; fountains of living water will flow from the granite bosom. Kindle that fire! Heat up that furnace! Smelt the ore! Melt the soul!

10. THE MEASURE OF RESPONSIBILITY

TEXT: If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. - ⁴⁸⁵²John 15:22

I want to state with all possible simplicity and clearness two or three fundamental principles that, as principles, I think will be recognized by all just minds without any regard to different opinions on the subject of religion.

The first principle is the law of responsibility — that a man is justly responsible for the right use of whatever light may be given to him; that with the giving of the light there comes an obligation to walk in the light; and that when he fails rightly to use whatever light is given, he is a transgressor of the law of opportunity. I shall quote two or three passages of Scripture to get that law clearly before you. First from the Letter to the Romans, the second chapter:

“There is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law. . . For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another; in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to My gospel.”

Here is a fundamental principle laid down — that a man who has only what is called the law of nature will be judged by the law of nature in the day of Jesus Christ; that if he has never had an opportunity to hear of a Bible, a written revelation of God, if he has never had an opportunity to hear the gospel preached, then he will be judged at the last great day according to the light given to him, and his conscience in that judgment will bear witness to the justice of its decision. His conscience will either accuse him or else it will excuse him. That is the principle. Now, in connection with that, I read a passage from the eleventh chapter of the Gospel of Matthew:

“Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto

heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.”

Here we see it expressly stated by the Son of God Himself that the people of Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida, the towns on the coast of the Sea of Galilee, who sat in darkness, saw the great light, and that by the coming of that light there was an increase of responsibility; that there came an obligation to walk in the light, for it shone in their town, in their homes, and around their hearthstones; and it is positively affirmed that at the day of judgment the punishment inflicted upon them for rejecting the greater light will be more severe punishment than was inflicted upon Tyre and Sidon and Sodom and Gomorrah. And the reason is expressly assigned that it was because of greater light. I read a third passage upon this point—from the third chapter of John, the nineteenth verse:

“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

Now, while I could cite a great many more Scriptures, the three I have read sufficiently establish the first principle set forth, that is, the law of human responsibility; that our punishment will be measured by the degree of light against which we sin. And I think that all just minds, without any regard to religion (I mean, judging as men judge) will accord with this principle.

So, then, we pass on to the next principle, which is this: One does himself what is done in his name by an accredited agent. Let me repeat that very carefully, and please give undistracted attention to these fundamental points, which underlie everything I am going to say on this subject. One does himself what is done in his name by an accredited agent. And of course it follows that when you reject an accredited agent who comes in the name of his principal, you reject the principal himself.

Now, on that principle I want to read two or three Scriptures; the first is from the tenth chapter of Matthew, the fortieth verse, and reads: “He that receiveth you receiveth Me.” The basis of that Scripture was this: “I send you apostles, and you preachers. I send you out to represent Me. I give you credentials. I accredit you for a certain purpose. I send you, not to tell what you think, but to speak the message that I put in your mouth. This you are to do in My name. And now, when you go out in My name, representing me, whoever receives you receives Me.”

I now quote from the tenth chapter of the Gospel according to Luke: “He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me. You see how this passage, which was spoken when He sent out the Seventy, exactly accords in principle with the words He spoke when He sent out the Twelve; and that if an accredited agent goes out to deliver a message, that the words of that message are not the agent’s words. If you hear them, you do not hear them as his. If you reject them, you do not reject them as his. If you despise them, you despise them not as his words, but as the words of him that sent him.

I quote a third Scripture on it, from the thirteenth chapter of John, twentieth verse:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth Me; and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me.”

In other words, the character of the messenger does not enter into the account. He may be a great man or a very humble man. He may be a man of fine caliber, or he may be a man of very few excellencies. He may have a high social position (some of them do) or he may have no social position. The thing is this: Not how high is this messenger, how rich is he, how good is he, how pleasant-spoken is he, but what is the message that he brings? If he brings the signet ring of the Master, that accredits what he says. If he delivers a message from his God, the responsibility as to hearing it fairly, as to attending to it promptly, as to accepting it, depends not upon the messenger but upon the message itself.

Now, I shall read one other passage on that. In the First Letter to the Thessalonians, fourth chapter, eighth verse, the Apostle Paul says: “He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God.” I want to impress upon your minds today this solemn thought, that in rejecting a true message from any properly accredited messenger of God, you despise not the man, but God that sends him. I shall quote substantially two other passages. In the sixteenth chapter of Exodus, the eighth verse, Moses said to the people: “You have murmured against me, but your murmuring is not against me; it is against God,” i.e., “I did not bring you here myself. I never selected this path through the wilderness. Every step I take is by divine direction. I did not come to you in my name, and I did not come to you claiming to be any better than yourselves. I came to you and told you that I had a message from God for you, and when you asked for my credentials, I authenticated the message by signs and by wonders until you were all satisfied. You did not ask any more proof at all that I came from God. Now, when you murmur at me about the situation you are in, you are really not murmuring at ‘me; you are murmuring against God.”

The other passage is in the eighth chapter of the First Book of Samuel, the seventh verse. The people came to the prophet Samuel to upbraid him and abuse him because he would not allow them to have a king like other men. Samuel was very much hurt at it and brought his complaint to God, and the Lord said, "Samuel, they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me. When they have turned against you and upbraided you and murmured against you as they did, that simply meant this: 'We are not satisfied with God as king. We want a king like other nations.'" I think that the Scriptures that have been presented upon that point establish it, so that it is not only true that the law of responsibility is according to the light we have, but that one does himself what he does by an accredited agent, and that to reject the agent is to reject the principal.

Now we come to the third principle. According to our text the rejection of Jesus Christ makes a new sin whose heinousness is measured by the light that comes with Christ and the evidence that accredits Christ. I shall read the text to show that the principle is right in it: "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin, but now that I have come and spoken unto them, there is no cloak for their sin." The text does not mean that these people had never committed any transgressions. The text does not mean that lying, stealing, and murder are not sins. But the text means that with the coming of Christ (this new Light "that lighted every man that cometh into the world") there had come a new responsibility, there came a new obligation, and that whoever had opportunity to walk in this light and walked not in the light, incurred a sin that would not have been possible if the light had never come. That is the thought of it. And this sin one commits is measured by the degree of the light and the character of the evidence that accredits Christ as being worthy of being heard attentively and received heartily.

Now, I want to quote two or three passages of Scripture on that point and then I am through with the Scriptural argument. I quote from the third chapter of John, the eighteenth verse: "He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already," (now mark the reason) "because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Here is a declaration of the divine law that condemnation comes upon every man who has the gospel offered to him and who does not believe when it is presented to him. The reason is not that you are by nature a child of wrath; not that you have been guilty of infractions of the Ten Commandments; but here is the sin that is pressed home upon you, and upon which comes either justification or condemnation — that Christ has come and you have rejected Him. And the condemnation is that you did reject Him in the light of the evidence that accredited Him.

Let us quote another Scripture on that. Turn to the fifteenth chapter of John, right in connection with the text: "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father." The point of it is this: "I came among them and claimed to be sent from God, and they naturally demanded my credentials. In order to authenticate My message I did among them works no other man has done, and in the light of these wonders and signs, which were sufficient in number and in character and in publicity to accredit anyone as coming from, God, when they rejected the works they rejected Him by whose power the works were done in order that it might be known that I came among them from God."

Let me illustrate that a little. I can understand exactly the attitude of Pharaoh's mind, when an entirely unknown man, a stranger, came into his presence and said to him: "The Lord God of heaven sends me to tell you to let three millions of your slaves go three days into the wilderness that they may worship God." This, you must admit, was rather a bold demand. Pharaoh said: "Who is the Lord and how may I know that He sent you? You come before me with such 'an enormous demand as that; I ask for your credentials.'" And it was a very just demand. Moses said: "I will give them. You worship the river Nile. I will turn its waters into blood. You have gods unto whom you go to ask protection from frogs and lice and flies and locusts, and even while you are calling upon your gods for protection, I will send upon you frogs find lice and hail and murrain, and demonstrate that the God in whose name I come is Lord of the gods that you worship. And then I will draw a visible line of distinction and I will put you and your people in the night and I will put my people in the light, and I will let that solid wall of daylight and that solid wall of darkness, with no twilight between, demonstrate that I come from God. And I will, in the name of my God, upon your rejection of this evidence, in the very hour that I designate, breathe the cold breath of death in the nostrils of the firstborn of every home in this land." And these were his credentials.

So Jesus said, "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin to reject Me. If I had come among them and said to them, 'I am the Son of God; I am the Lord of glory manifested in the flesh,' and stood empty-handed before them, and brought no signet ring from heaven, and no credentials to authenticate My message, there would have been no sin in rejecting Me, not an atom, because men who really love God might have said, 'I do not know whether you are from God or not. I am willing to hear God, and on proper evidence that your message is from Him I will hear the message. But first authenticate it.'" Now, He said that after it was authenticated, it was a sin to reject Him.

For instance, when Nicodemus came to Him by night and said, “Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God.” Why? “Because no man can do the miracles that Thou doest except God be with him.” That is how he found it out. Now, if Nicodemus admitted that the miracles did authenticate His message and accredited Him as God’s messenger, then Nicodemus sinned not to accept the message as from God. That is the point of it.

Let us take another Scripture. In the sixteenth chapter of John we have this: “It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; ... and when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, because they believe not on Me. Now, here is an advance in the credentials. There were men who rejected the testimony of the miracles. There were men who rejected the whole matter. When Jesus died, and before He died, He said,

“I will rise again and I will ascend into heaven; and on the fiftieth day after my death there shall occur such a demonstration that I have reached the Father and have been welcomed by Him that it will make it a sin for any man in the world to reject My message after that accrediting comes.”

What was it? The outpouring of the Spirit of God. On the Day of Pentecost that took place. There was a manifestation of the divine power of God in the outpouring of that Spirit, so that not Jesus, but timid followers of Jesus, stood up before that audience, stood up working miracles in every word they spoke; stood up evidencing a power within them that could not rest on mere man, and it was of just such a nature as compelled public attention. That Spirit touched up souls that had slept under the thunders of Sinai; that Spirit brought light into eyes that had not seen in the glare of prophecy; that Spirit melted hearts that had been hard as granite under all the light of the past; and there was a demonstration accrediting the Lord Jesus Christ as from God, as the true Lord of glory.

Now, let us have another Scripture. In the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, I want to show you that that is the precise point that these preachers made. When they gathered together to know what this mighty demonstration meant, Peter said,

“Ye men of Judea, hear these words. Do give your attention to them. Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you [accredited among you] by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, and through Him hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. Therefore let all the house of Israel

know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, both Lord and Christ.”

Take the same preacher again on a subsequent occasion, where the Jews had them before their judicial tribunal on trial for preaching. “Did we not straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? And behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with this doctrine and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” Then Peter and the other apostle answered and said, “We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a prince and a Savior for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we [mark the increase in the power] are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him. When they heard that they were cut to the heart and took counsel to slay them.”

We started out with the proof of miracles; we advanced then to the demonstration of the Holy Ghost; have now come to the witness of men whose testimony is added to the testimony of the Spirit and of the miracles. And it says that under this increased light they, being cut to the heart, knowing that this witness was true, knowing that they could not dispute the fact, yet sought to slay the messenger. Under the special head that I am discussing now, the argument would be to prove this: That by the presentation of Jesus Christ through His ministers, and by the rejection of Him when so presented, a new sin was created, that sin measured by the degree of the light, measured in its heinousness by the character of the proof that accredited Him. That is the proposition.

Take another Scripture. In the seventh chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we have a new preacher. This time it is Stephen. Now, here is what he says to these men that are rejecting Him:

“Ye stiff necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it. When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.”

Mark you that this Scripture reaches back behind the miracles and brings in the prophecies that went before the miracles, and says, “Here is other light. Here are your own Scriptures, written hundreds and some of them thousands of years ago, and they spoke of a just One who should come.” And he recalled them from the

past, from their graves. “Come up, Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Malachi, Hosea, Micah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah. Come up, ye ancient prophets of God, and let all your foreshadowings of the Lord Jesus Christ be as one witness, and let prophecy join hands with miracles; and miracles join hands with the Holy Ghost; and the Holy Ghost join hands with the living, experimental witnesses of the truth and of the doctrine, and thereby accredit Jesus Christ.”

Let me read another Scripture - the Letter to the Hebrews, the first chapter first two verses, and second chapter, first two verses: “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the Word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”

Here now is still new evidence that goes back of the prophets; it goes back to creation’s rosy dawn, when the angels of God shouted together for joy; when the new world blushed and blossomed and fructified under the smiles of God - that earth which came out of chaos; that earth which stretched under its arching heavens. That earth, as a constituent part of the universe, comes from creation’s day to say: “That One of whom the prophets spoke; that One who did the miracles; that One who sent the Holy Ghost; that One who filled the hearts of earthly witnesses with experimental proof; that One created us far back yonder in the beginning.” The Creator comes upon the scene as well as the Preserver.

Notice the next chapter: “Therefore,” [Ah, me! What a power in that therefore!] “therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip, for if the word spoken by angels was steadfast and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him?”

Now, here I plant myself on that “therefore” - on the weight of the proof which has been cited, and I say that you measure the sin of rejecting Jesus Christ by the degree of the light and by the number and character of the proofs that authenticate Him. If He had not come you would not have had this sin. If He had not done works that none other man did, you would not have had the sin of turning against such testimony.

And as I have gone back to creation, when God said, "Let there be light," as the very highest altitudes of heaven have been stripped of proof to demonstrate the proposition, come, now, and let us go down beneath the earth; let us go down into the realms of blackness so dark that they have never been lighted by the ray of any star of hope. Let us go down to the pit, and from the unfathomable depths of the abyss, call up the demons in chains of darkness and put them on the stand.

O devil's damned, can you accredit the Son of God? And we hear their voices: "We know Thee, who Thou art, Thou Holy One of God. We know Thee." Oh, evidence of hell; evidence of fire; evidence of anguish; evidence of racking pain; evidence of gnashing of teeth; evidence of wailing; evidence of unspeakable and unutterable woe!

I call a witness from the dead. Perhaps you would not admit a devil into your courts. I will ask a man who stood by Him as one of His chosen, who saw Him work miracles; who knew His character; who sold Him for thirty pieces of silver. Come up, Judas, thou traitor, and tell men whether Jesus Christ is an innocent or a guilty man. And he comes, shaking his money, and he shakes it because it burns his hand. It is so hot he cannot hold it; and he throws it down, and he says, "I have betrayed the innocent blood. The innocent blood I have betrayed, and it damns me with that conviction from the depths of hell."

I appeal to the doctrine itself. Men, men! Is anything wrong in the doctrine of Jesus? Does it not commend itself to your consciences? Does it command the tyrant to crush the poor? Does it crown the hypocrite with laurels? God help you to answer honestly! Or does it, without respect of persons, high or low, put every soul before God upon the same universally accepted principles of righteousness? Oh, the doctrine of Jesus is a witness in itself!

"If I had not come and spoken unto them they would not have had sin, but now that I have come, *they* have no cloak for their sin." No cloak! I know that here men manufacture an exceedingly flimsy kind of goods, as light as gossamer, and almost as transparent as glass, but still it is a wrapping of some kind. So flimsy that you can put a straw through it, but still you can call it a covering. This manufacturing of excuses, when all with one consent begin to make excuses! "Why didn't you do this?" "Well, I had this excuse." I say that it is the doctrine of that text that a man who will not hear Jesus; who will not accept Jesus; who will not follow Jesus; who will not acknowledge Jesus as Lord Christ, shall have no cloak for his sins, none in the wide world.

I tell you, you will be as naked as Adam in the garden of Eden when you stand before the judgment bar of God, without even a fig leaf to hide the nakedness of your shame. No cloak, no cloak! Your mouth will be dumb. Your sentence will

perish unspoken upon your lying lips and your soul will shiver and shrink and cower under the blazing eye of the Eternal Majesty of heaven; and because you have no cloak, you will appeal to the mountains to bury you under their ponderous bulk in order that something may hide you from the eye of God. No cloak, no cloak, and you know it! You cannot say that you had no time. You cannot say you had no warning. Listen! God now commandeth! Is not that warning enough? He commandeth. Listen! “Come everyone that thirsteth. All ye ends of the earth, come unto Me. Come unto Me, ye that are heavy laden.”

There is invitation by the side of command; then entreaty follows invitation; then prayer follows entreaty. Oh, where is your cloak if you go down to hell for rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ?

I would like, for myself, and I take for granted the same is desirable with others, to get a subject out of the mist; to narrow the ground; to ascertain where the capital point is; to be able to see the very hinge on which the door turns; to get at the very essence and cream of a thing; and then once and forever decide, and have done forever with wavering and halting between two opinions.

Oh, what a miserable comment on us it is that a man will go in this world of light twenty-five years and never decide the question - twenty-five years in an attitude of indecision; twenty-five years asleep on the bed of irresolution and inaction. It has been said that every subject calls for promptness of choice, sharpness of decision and of action, according to the magnitude of the interests that are involved. And now, in the language of God’s ancient prophet: “How long halt ye between two opinions?” If Jesus is Lord, follow Him, and if He is not, just have done with it and reject Him. Get out of the twilight. Go into daylight or go into night. Don’t stand astride of a line without being able to determine whether your right foot shall join your left, or your left foot join your right. Don’t hang on a fence, looking this way and that way and spend a lifetime saying, “Now, which side of the fence shall I take?” Don’t stand a lifetime at the forks of the road, like an uninformed child, wringing your hands, saying, “Lord God, I don’t know whether to take the right hand or the left hand.”

If the subject is susceptible of decision, decide it. If it is a decision worth making, make it speedily. If the interests involved are of magnitude enough to call for action, let there be such clean-cut and decisive action as will settle the matter forever.

My very soul shudders when I look out into the faces of men and women who absolutely trifle and idle away every precious hour in indecision. Creation speaks to you today. From the past prophets rise up and point to the Son of God. Blindness is touched and opens its hitherto sightless eyes to look into your face and convey the

knowledge that God is among men. Death, in its corruption and stench, comes again to the flush of health and lays aside its grave clothes and steps out and says, “Jesus, Thou art the Son of God.” And right here, in this very house, your neighbor, who but a few days ago, without God and without hope in the world, stood up before you and said, ““God being my judge, I am myself, from my own experience, witness of the truth and power of the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

What more do you want? What would you have? I submit that if you stand uncloaked before the burning eyes of the Judge, that if from this sermon today you go down to hell, it is because you hate Jesus; because you hate the light; because you hate heaven; because you prefer hell; because you would rather be in hell than in glory.

11. THE GOODNESS AND MERCY OF GOD

I shall not make the slightest effort to make this a sermon. It will be more in the direction of a Bible reading than a sermon, my object being to place the weapons of warfare, of Christian warfare, of evangelism, in the hands of the congregation, so that there shall not be one preacher, but hundreds of preachers.

You will remember that previously I explained how the providence of God broke up a great meeting of tremendous power and joy, and for the special purpose that those who had been converted in that meeting should go to their homes and speak the word of life to their neighbors, and how in a remarkably short time the fire that seemed to have been scattered by the persecution of Saul of Tarsus had simply been scattered as to its separate firebrands over an immense section of the earth's surface, and each brand, as it fell in one particular territory, became a fire, and how in a very short time the Word of God was preached throughout the whole world in that way.

There was not a traveled road in the world but witnessed something similar to that which occurred to Philip and the eunuch. And in every clime, on the shores of all the great seas, on the borders of the great rivers, and on the islands everywhere, there were men going and coming, speaking of what they had experienced, and telling what they knew of everlasting life. Instead of being one meeting, it made a thousand meetings.

Now, when you go out to work for Christ, remember, first, what I told you this morning, to go out imbued with power from on high; to go out with the Word of God as the only offensive weapon, but to go out panoplied, putting on the armor of God, as explained to you this morning. Now, as you go, either with a vest pocket Testament or a portable Bible, you want to be able, without having to refer to a preacher, to show the person some things yourself.

And indeed there are reasons why you can do this more effectually than any preacher. In the first place, a great many people do not go to church. When they go, they are in the habit of regarding what the preacher says as pertaining to his office, as perfunctory, and it does not make the impression on their minds as does a friend when he sits down and says, "Now here, I am just like you are. I am a man of business as you are. You and I know each other. I am no preacher, but I have something I did not have. I want to tell you about it, and suppose you and I sit down here and let's read some passages of Scripture. If you wish me to, I shall mark some passages of Scripture for you. If you haven't a Bible, I shall make you a present of one, if you will accept it. I shall mark these passages for you, and when you go

home, I want you to sit down and in a quiet corner carefully read these Scriptures. Will you do it?" That is bound to make an impression upon a man.

Now, suppose every member of this church, with such a marked Testament or Bible, understanding it sufficiently himself to be able to re-mark another book, and after earnestly praying God's blessing upon what he said or did, should take hold of such people as he feels that he can approach and make it a personal matter we would have a great revival and would not have to wait twenty years for it.

Now, with this view of the subject, note the first Scripture to which I wish to call your attention. My method is this: When I get a group of Scriptures on one subject, on a blank leaf of the Bible I write the first Scripture and state what is the subject. Then I turn to that Scripture and by the side of it I mark the next one. And then when I get to the next one, I mark by the side of that the third one. Why, I remember once I had a Bible where I could just take a start on one subject with just one sentence on the fly leaf and find from that one referring me to another, four hundred eighteen passages of Scripture on all the important questions likely to come up.

Now, first of all, you will have to disabuse the mind of the one whom you wish to lead to Christ, of his misconceptions with reference to the character of God. God is not as he thinks He is. God has revealed Himself, and that revelation you have, and it will always do good to sit down by him and make him see what are God's characteristics as God reveals them.

The first Scripture, then, is the thirty-fourth chapter of Exodus, the sixth and seventh verses:

“And the Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.”

Nowhere in the Bible can you find such a comprehensive picture of the character of God as is contained in those two verses. That great revolutionary preacher that I mentioned in a sermon, who said that God must have had some great end in view in the preservation of the life of Washington before Fort Duquesne, preached a series of sermons upon these two verses, and very remarkable sermons they were indeed. Now, you want to get before the mind the character of God as merciful, as longsuffering, as gracious, as forgiving iniquity.

And yet God will by no means free the guilty, but will visit, according to the power of the natural law, so far as this world is concerned, the iniquities of the fathers upon the children and the children's children, and who will also visit the good actions of the father upon the children add the children's children. The law works both ways. And it is one of the most important laws to which the human mind can be directed — the law of heredity, the law of a man's influence on those who come after him, and which you could not shun if you should try. The things that you do now are going to touch your children's children, either for good or evil, and there is no way of avoiding it.

Following out the same line of thought, the next Scripture I ask you to mark is the one hundred third Psalm, from the eighth to the fourteenth verses:

“The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide; neither will He keep His anger forever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust.”

I read that passage of Scripture once at a funeral. It was the pious wife of an infidel who had died. He never went to church, but he heard me read that passage, and, as he stated, for weeks and weeks every word of it was ringing in his ears - an exhibition of the character of God that he had not conceived of - and it touched him more than any religious service of his life.

Now turn to the New Testament (~~608~~2 Peter 3:9, 15). I want to bring out that thought of God's mercy: “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward,” that is, when He says He is going to punish iniquity, and some men say He is very slack about it, He lets them run a long time. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to usward.

Now, you sit down by a man and get that thought in his mind:

“Here you have been sitting ten, twenty, thirty, forty years, and some of your sins have been awful. You have sinned against heaven with a high hand and an outstretched arm until at last you have been filled with impurity. Because the sentence against an evil deed was not speedily executed, you have fully set your heart to do evil. Now, I want to tell you why God did not strike you

down. He loved you. He didn't want to send you to hell. He wanted to save you. He wanted you to come to Him. And His longsuffering is to be construed in that direction. And it shows how much you misunderstood it—His goodness, His grace, and His mercy.”

Now, I do hope that when you go out to evangelize you will not misrepresent the character of God, the God of love and tenderness and mercy. It does not make any difference how old a sinner is, just so he is not in hell. Just so he is alive. You go. You have the commission. The authority is on you to go and say to him: “Gray-headed as you are, few as your days are that remain, near to judgment and hell as you are, God loves you. God has borne with you and the construction that is to be put upon His longsuffering is that He wants you to repent.”

Now, let me read you another Scripture on that. ~~ROM~~ Romans 2:4:

“Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?”

What did His goodness mean? What did He mean by not letting you die when you were sick that time? What did He mean by allowing you to recover when your life was suspended by a brittle thread and it just seemed to be an even thing as to whether you were dead or alive? Why did He let you get well? Didn't you know, if you don't know now, that it was God's goodness in order to lead you to repentance?

Now, in this direction I shall ask you to mark only two other Scriptures - ~~JBK~~ John 3:16:

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Why is it that we get such a conception in our minds about God - that He is distant, that He is a tyrant, that He is unapproachable; that we should look upon Him as a thief looks on a sheriff? “God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son” to die for that world. Don't forget that. You ask him to sit down and look at that. “You study about that. Surely that thought has never gotten into your heart.”

Then, the last Scripture, Luke, the fifteenth chapter. I am not going to quote. I am merely going to call your attention to what it is about. It commences this way: “Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him.” And He spoke the parables about leaving the ninety and nine and going after the lost sheep, and searching for the lost piece of money, and the old father's welcome of the prodigal

son. Now, that is the most life-like representation of God that there is in the Bible. Why? Jesus was sent into the world to reveal the Father. Jesus is the express image of the Father. He came and laid bare the heart of God to the world, to show God's state of mind toward the world. And there it is.

I dare any man living who has not sinned the unpardonable sin to sit down and read that fifteenth chapter of Luke, and particularly where you get to that picture of that wayward and sinful son, without any excuse in the world for his sins, yet coming home in rags, coming home, knowing that he has no right there, and yet that father looking for him and running out to meet him, putting his arms around his neck and kissing him and bringing out the robe and putting the ring upon his finger, and the feasting, because the dead is alive and the lost is found. Oh, what a picture of God's heart is that fifteenth chapter of Luke!

Another point. When you go out to lead men to God, you go out with these two passages of Scripture as embodying everything in the way of an entrance to God: ~~2000~~ John 10:9 and 14:6. I shall quote them: "I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me."

Now you have got to keep the eye of the sinner upon that. You don't try to go in any other way. Here, this is the door - Jesus. This is the way - Jesus. This is the truth - Jesus. This is the life - Jesus. Keep his eye on that all the time; never let it waver. Don't let him look to the Virgin Mary. Don't let him look to the church. Don't let him look to baptism. Don't let him look to communion. Don't let him look to angels. Keep his eye upon the door, the way, and the truth, and the life. Oh, never let him see anything else!

Now I want to give you just a few passages in speaking of Jesus and the door. If ever you say in your heart that He is just a man, you had just as well quit. Nobody will listen to you. Indeed, what you say would not be worthy of being listened to. Prominent before his eyes, enshrined in his heart must be this supreme thought, "The divinity of Jesus Christ." God alone can say it.

Now, I shall just give a few easy passages that you can use as well as anybody else, and here they are. They are very short. ~~2006~~ Isaiah 9:6: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Nobody has ever questioned the application of that Scripture to the Messiah, and that is the Scripture that is applied to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, take this next Scripture before we leave the prophets - Daniel, seventh chapter, thirteenth and fourteenth verses: "I saw in the night visions, and behold one like unto the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him; His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." This is a prophetic picture of Christ's ascension after His resurrection.

Now, let us come to the New Testament a moment, in the twenty-sixth chapter of Matthew, sixty-third verse. When you use that, always use the parallel passage in Mark. You can look it up. The reference will tell you. I used that Scripture in a meeting. A lawyer present said he had never heard it before in his life. And after the sermon was over, he came up and asked as a special request that I mark that Scripture. He said, "Of all the things I have yet heard from the Bible, that impresses my mind the most as to the divinity of Jesus Christ." It did not so impress my mind, but it did his.

The high priest had assembled the Sanhedrin, which was the highest court of the Jews, having jurisdiction not only of ecclesiastical matters but of all civil and criminal matters. It was the Supreme Court, and before that court certain offenses had to be tried, for instance, the offense of blasphemy. Jesus was tried before that court under the charge of blasphemy, in that He assumed to be God. And according to the jurisprudence of that people, when one was a Jew, he might, if he consented, be put on the witness stand, with a fair notification, however, that his testimony, if it led in that direction could inculpate himself. The high priest put Jesus Christ on the witness stand before that court; put Him under the most solemn oath that *any* one could be put under: "I adjure thee, by the living God, tell me, art thou the Messiah?" Thus sworn, with uplifted hand, Jesus said, "I am; and hereafter you shall see me ascend up to the right hand of the throne of God." The effect of that is based upon the character of Jesus Christ as a truthful man; the purity of His life, and the veracity of His life, and the soundness of His intellect; so that He had every qualification of a truthful witness.

Now, the next Scripture. In the twenty-eighth chapter of Matthew and eighteenth verse, He claimed universal authority: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Listen! How soberly He said it! Listen! To what a practical end He said it! He was to send them out as I am asking you to go out, to evangelize, to lead people to Christ, and He' predicated the "go" upon the statement that all power in heaven and in earth is His; all authority. And you need not go out if that is not true.

Now John, the first chapter. I shall not specify a verse. Just that first chapter of John. But here is the thought of it: In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God, and by Him were all things made that are made, and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. That announces the preexistence of Jesus Christ in the beginning, that a child was to be born, but that that child was to be the everlasting Father, who in that birth was taking upon Himself human nature for the purpose of salvation.

In the eighth chapter of John and the fifty-eighth verse, He used this language. The Jews had asked Him this question: "Art thou greater than our father Abraham? Why, you are not yet fifty years old; and you greater than Abraham?" Now listen to His reply: "Before Abraham was, I am," using the Jehovah-name of the Old Testament, the "I Am." You remember when God sent Moses to Pharaoh, he said "I Am hath sent me unto thee." That is the self-existent Being, the One whose existence is underived, being contained in Himself.

Notice again in the seventeenth chapter of John and fourth verse. He is going to pray now. He knows He is about to die. Now listen to His prayer: "Father, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." These are His statements. I ask you to notice how He said them. He said them on oath. He said them in prayer. He said them in controversy, in every conceivable way; and He said them when He was sending men out to preach His gospel to every nation upon the face of the earth. Standing there with the majesty and dignity of God, He said, "You go out in My name. All authority is Mine. And you tell them to repent and believe and he saved."

Philippians, second chapter and from the fifth to the eleventh verses:

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father."

It does not make an atom of difference how that remarkable fact is to be disproved, and there has been diversity of interpretation of it, but you cannot interpret it in any

way that does not clearly establish the preexistence and the divinity and the universal sovereignty of Jesus Christ.

The next Scripture is the first chapter of Colossians, sixteenth and seventeenth verses, where it is distinctly stated that Jesus in His preexistent state created the world:

“For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thronings, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.”

When you read the first chapter of Genesis which says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” you are to read it, “In the beginning God, the Son, created the heaven and the earth.” Jesus was the Creator, the One who thousands of years afterward became a babe in Bethlehem of Judea. Now, the other Scripture I shall not quote, I shall ask you to mark it - all of the first chapter of the Letter to the Hebrews. I could give you a great many more, but those are enough on that point.

Now, I am coming to a matter a little more practical, that relates to the character of God and the divinity of Jesus Christ. Remember that I told you you should keep the eyes of the man on a certain Door, and no other door; on a certain Way and no other way; on a certain Truth and no other truth; on a certain Life and no other life. And that Door, Way, and Truth, and Life is Jesus Christ. Now, when you get his eyes there, though he is asleep like I described to you; though dead in trespasses and in sins; though he cannot hear; though he cannot see; though he cannot spiritually discern; though that heart of his he hard as granite, you are to put motion into him.

What must you tell him to do? You are to put motion into him by your direction. Well, now you say, “What good will that do?” Go and ask the prophet. When God pointed to the dry bones of the valley and said, “Can these bones live?” he answered: “Lord, thou knowest.” You go and stand right over them and tell them to live, and when you tell them to live, you invoke the Spirit to come and breathe into them that they may live. Just like Jesus said to the man whose hand was paralyzed: “Stretch out your hand; don’t say you can’t do it; do it.”

You have made a grand point when you are dealing with unconverted people if you never allow them to lie down upon this thought: “I must do.” That is what they must do. They must! They must! They are lost if they don’t move. And after you get them to take a step that is not broader than the ninetieth part of a hair, you have won the

main question. If their hearts are hard as granite, you have won over half the battle when you have put within their hearts the purpose to stir themselves.

I am going to give you the Scriptures on it; and it is dead men and dry bones and carnal people and people who have not an atom of power within themselves. I shall commence with Amos, the fifth chapter, fourth and eighth verses: "For thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel, Seek ye Me, and ye shall live." "Seek Him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with the night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: the Lord is His name." "Seek Him." Well, you say, "That is too much like a Methodist, a seeker." I don't care whom it is like; it is the Bible. The man who is saved must be a seeker, and unless he becomes a seeker, he is lost world without end.

Another point: Never let him loose. If you allow him any margin beyond the margin that this Scripture gives, you have lost your hold. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, that is, he has not a thousand years to do the seeking in. Get that thought in his heart like an unquenchable coal of fire - that his seeking must be urgent; that it must be immediate; that there will be a time when the seeking will do no good; that he must seek the Lord while He may be found and call upon Him while He is near.

I want to bring that thought out a little more. The thirty-second Psalm and sixth verse. Mark that: "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found." There is a time when Jesus may be found. There is a time when He is not to be found, and the godly man must never forget when he prays.

I want to develop the thought. In the New Testament, Matthew, fifth chapter, twenty-fifth verse:

"Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art still in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, until thou hast paid the uttermost farthing."

Now, here you have a man, a sinner. He has an adversary, and God is his adversary in the matter of that sin, and it is your business to bring about an agreement between that man and God. And you are to impress upon his mind that this agreement should be speedily effected; that it should be quickly done; that at any time on earth He pleases, God can cast him into the prison of death and reserve him unto the judgment

of the great day and then cast him into the eternity of hell, and that he can never come out. You must make that fight all the way along.

Hurriedly, let us look further, to the sixth chapter of Matthew, thirty-third verse: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” Now, he is seeking money, lands, houses, clothes, worldly honors. He says, “After a while I will talk to you.” You just stand right there: “No, No, No! You must first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness and then all these things shall be added to you afterwards. Here, this is the first; this is the most important; this is the most urgent. First seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness.”

You will see the emphasis that all the Scriptures put upon the “seek.” The thirteenth chapter of Luke, twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth verses: “Strive to enter in at the straight gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” “When once the master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and He shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are.” And you point to an open door; Jesus is the Door, and you say, “Enter! Enter!” and he says, “After a while.” “Enter it and enter it now.” “Well, at a more convenient season.” “Agonize to enter,” for I tell you there is a time going to come when that door will be shut, and after God shuts it, your soul will be as certainly lost as was the life of the antediluvian when God shut the door of the ark forever.

~~4034~~ John 7:34 compared with the eighth chapter, twenty-fourth verse: “Ye shall seek Me, and shall not find Me, and shall die in your sins: and where I am, thither ye cannot come.” Now, when you try to lead a soul to Christ and you try to put the seeking into his heart, it must be this kind of seeking, for there is a seeking that is unavailing; there is a praying that is unavailing. ~~4035~~ 2 Corinthians 6:2: “For He saith, I have heard thee *in* a time accepted, and *in* the day of salvation have I succored thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

~~4036~~ Hebrews 3:7-13:

“Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart: and they have not known My ways. So I swear in My wrath, They shall not enter into My rest. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

Jeremiah 29:13:

“And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart.”

Hebrews 2:1:

“Therefore we ought to give more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.”

These Scriptures point to the danger in delay. Now Romans 2:4:

“Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?”

These last Scriptures are all upon this point, that there is danger in delay. How can you escape if you neglect them? There is danger in neglecting. All bear upon seeking, and all bear upon this solitary idea that in some way by the help of the Spirit of God you get the impression upon the mind of the person to whom you are talking that he must move or he is lost, and that immediate action is what is called for.

The Bible reading is over. I have never done anything more gladly or with more pleasure than I do this. My heart is glad that even for one more time I have pointed ungodly people to a present Savior. I am glad that the character of God as outlined in His Book, is a character of love and goodness and infinite compassion and longsuffering, a character who has foreborne years and years with the most impenitent and the most ungodly with a view to their salvation.

Oh, I thank God that I can look from that character to the Authority, “All authority in heaven and on earth,” and know that by that Authority I am commissioned to stand and knock at every heart and say, “Here, I have a message to deliver. I have a message for you right now. Wake up and hear it. Come out and hear it. It is a message of life, of death. Will you hear it?”

There is not a sinner who needs to go on unsaved. There is not a soul who is lost who needs to be lost. Oh, if I could get that thought to you, a present Savior, now, right now, before anything else! Now! Taking precedence of everything. First! Now! Look and live! O, dry bones, live! By the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the name of the Omniscient Spirit, I command you to come out of the darkness into the light. Throw off the shackles and chains of Satan. Come to freedom and salvation!

12. THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

TEXT: All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. -

 2 Timothy 3:16-17

When it says “all Scripture,” there is a reference back to the preceding verse: “From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures.” And nothing on earth is more clearly understood than that the Holy Scriptures that boy studied from the time he could learn at all, was that Book, or twenty-two books, called now the Old Testament. Every Jewish child in the land had access in some way to that volume.

There are twenty-two divisions of the entire Old Testament. I mean to say that the Jews thus divided it for convenience to themselves in its use, and they made just as many divisions as there were letters in the Hebrew alphabet, as you will find by reading the one hundred nineteenth Psalm, where that Psalm is divided into twenty-two parts, each part for convenience being named so as to correspond to a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. And so the Jewish division of the Old Testament into twenty-two parts, as set forth by Josephus, includes the thirty-nine books as we now have them.

Anybody who will give five minutes' attention to it can receive a perfect demonstration of the historical correctness of the fact that our thirty-nine books of the Old Testament correspond to the twenty-two Jewish books. For instance, they put all the twelve Minor Prophets into one book, and they counted First and Second Kings one book. Their twenty-two and our thirty-nine correspond in text, and that volume of twenty-two books was translated into the Greek language and the translation completed at least one hundred and fifty years before Christ came into the world. That translation is the Septuagint.

Now that Book, subdivided into twenty-two books, was, by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and by His apostles and by uninspired Jewish rabbis, called in a body the Holy Scriptures. It is the declaration of this text that every one of these sacred writings is - now here, just one word - God-inspired, i.e., in the Greek it is just one word. Every one of these books is God-inspired, and it means God-inspired in every part of every one of them. And it means much more that it is inspired in its words than it means inspired in the thoughts of the men who wrote it. Often the thought in the mind of the man who wrote it was not the right thought, but the words he wrote were from God, and it is verbal inspiration.

Take the case of one of the prophets included in that list of twenty-two books. When the revelation came to him, he was not expecting it at all. It was as much a surprise to him as it was to anybody else in the world. Take another case - the man who was inspired didn't in any sense understand what he said and what he wrote. His thoughts did not enter into it at all. Very many of the ancient prophets recorded under divine direction and proclaimed under divine authority things that were as mysterious to them as they were to anybody else in the world. So, to make it an inspiration at all, it is absolutely essential that the words should have been inspired. Not only is this true, but in the case of some of them they were not themselves conscious that they were under inspiration at all at the time, as when Caiaphas made a prophecy concerning Christ, so that the thought of the human writer had nothing to do with the inspiration.

This inspiration may be mentioned under three parts: First, its revelation; second, its record; and third, the authentication of the record. God may reveal His will to a man; or He may reveal to that man some event that will happen in the future and so far it is known only to that man. The record is made up either by that man or by somebody else, and it makes no difference whatever who does the recording. It makes no difference whatever whether the one who recorded it had himself any inspiration at all, if you can get inspired authentication of the accuracy of the record afterward.

The whole question of the Old Testament practically comes before us upon a simple question of authentication. Is it authenticated to us? And does this authentication declare that it is God's revealed will, and that the record is accurate, as God had it recorded? Do the proofs that authenticate it to us cover the question? With the rest of it we need have nothing to do. Indeed, it is wholly unnecessary for the average man to consider it. Therefore, we take the Book itself. We find the Book in use at that time. We find that it was completed many years before Christ. We find that every little Hebrew boy in the land had access in some way to a copy of that Book. And it makes no difference who wrote any particular part of this Book.

As a whole, is it by a proper authority authenticated as the Word of God, as the standard, the supreme and infallible standard, of human conduct? If one is disposed to study the subject twenty-five minutes, he can see that the entire authority of Jesus Christ is pledged to the fidelity and accuracy and sufficiency of that Book (I am so far discussing the Old Testament), and to reject any part of the Old Testament is to reject the authentication of the Son of God. As for myself, it is a small matter with me to go back and pick up any part of it in detail and verify any particular part of it. "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures." and I take it that every one of these holy writings is God-inspired - every one of them.

Now, with reference to the New Testament, our Savior declares that He is the Word of God to men; that He comes to make known the way of life, and again His Word, so far as we are concerned, depends upon its authentication. Is it authenticated? He rested the authenticity of all of it on one single fact, on one single sign. He put the standing or falling of both the Old Testament and the New Testament upon one solitary issue - His own resurrection from the dead; that there should no sign be given but the sign of the prophet Jonah; that as Jonah was three days and nights in the body of the great fish, so the Son of Man should be three days and three nights in the earth; and that if Christ be not risen, our faith is vain and we are yet in our sins. But if Christ be risen, and if He has ascended into heaven, and is at the right hand of the majesty of God, and from that standpoint of absolute and universal sovereignty and power, if He has given a proof that authenticates the Book, that covers the question of the whole of it without going into any of the details of it.

Every one of the objections to Biblical inspiration rests on sinking sand, whether presented from the standpoint of science, or translation, or variations in texts, or certain expressions used in the Book itself that would seem to imply that its human authors were not at all times inspired. But I am not on that subject now. Just now I stand on the authentication of the entire Book; that it is sacred writing; that it comes to us accredited in such a way that we are criminal if we do not receive it in its entirety.

Now, I want to make the application. There were men, and there are some millions of them living now, who have practically set aside that Book as authority and substituted in the place of it mere traditions and reference to it. I could cite here for one-half hour declarations of distinguished Jews, some of them when dying, telling those about them not to look to the law, but to look to the Talmud, to look to the comment on the law, to look to the tradition as better than the law. Then there are two hundred million professing Christians in the world today who are averse to putting the Book itself in the hands of the people. And I could cite you authentic and official so-called infallible declarations from different popes, to the effect that the Bible societies, when they put the Word of God in circulation among the peoples of Italy and Spain and France, were committing a great sin, and that the people must look to the traditions and interpretations of the church and not to the Book itself.

I now come to press home upon your hearts one or two thoughts. First, there is a God. Then, touching His character, a good God would reveal to His immortal creatures a standard of right and wrong. He would not leave them to grope in darkness. There is bound to be, wherever there is moral accountability, a standard that measures right and wrong and that standard must be, if it comes from God, an infallible standard. You cannot conceive of right and wrong without a law that makes

one thing right and another thing wrong. You cannot even think of a good God - the thought is inconceivable - who would leave His moral and accountable creatures without a standard of human conduct.

Now, here is the historical fact that I want to impress upon you. Where men have turned aside from this Bible standard, they have been utterly at sea as to what is the standard. There has been no agreement among them. There have been just as many standards as individuals. It is a people without a king, each man following the bent of his own inclination.

Take the case of our text. Here was a little boy with that Book before him - that authenticated Book. His mother loved him, his grandmother loved him, and they believed that it could make him wise unto salvation by faith in the Redeemer it discloses. And they taught this boy this Book as the Word of God. He grew up in the knowledge of it, and when he got to be a man, he went out into the world and he found people who said, "Look here, and look there. I would not go by that Book. You take this. Here is something better than that." Paul said to him: "You remember that from a child you studied this Book. You remember from whom it came. You remember why it came. Turn away from these men who would call your attention to any other standard."

I know of one man who said to souls under conviction of sin. "Here, leave that; that is old. Come to modern Spiritualism. Let us turn away from the love and oracles of God and look to the spirits to tell us what is right." A man, intelligent upon other subjects, said, "When I die, that is the last of me. I go out like a candle, and I do not live again." And he is living as if this life were all, as if after death there was no judgment. He has turned away his heart from the supreme standard of right and wrong - the Word of God.

Why do men turn away? This Book tells us. They become lovers of self. They become lovers of money. They become haters of God. They become implacable to men. They become lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. Their deeds being evil, they hated the light of the Bible that shone on those deeds and called them sin, and they turned away from the Book, from the standard of right and wrong.

Now, look at the declaration in that text. Because that Book is God-inspired, every bit of it is profitable. There is not a word in it that is not profitable. For what? For instruction. You want to know your relations to God and to your fellowmen in this world and in the world to come.

A steady and unwavering light shines from that Book on the human heart and on the human life, that will give every man instruction as to what he should do, that will

show him what is right and what is wrong, and here is the proof of it - that within himself a witness rises up and affirms it. His conscience speaks in attestation of the truth of God's Word, turns away from the lies that have been whispered into his ear as a substitute for that Book.

It is profitable for conviction. You have seen illustrations of that during this meeting. Men have been going along through this city attending to their business or pleasure perfectly unconcerned, absolutely thoughtless with regard to the trend of their driftings and of their tendencies and of their moral bearings, and they hear the Word of God preached, and all at once they become thoughtful: "Where am I? Where am I?" And that Book becomes a discerner of the thoughts and intents of their hearts; that Word becomes sharper than a two-edged sword; that Word unjoints their bones and cuts into their marrow and penetrates to the very secrets of their souls, and they are convicted. And they say, "We are sinners." They show that they are convicted. They tremble under its revelations and by their actions they testify that those revelations are from God.

It is profitable for rectification. "How shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word." That Word is a straight-edge, laid by the side of his crooked conduct to show that it is out of plumb, out of line. That Word, laid parallel with his life, reveals the moral discrepancies in his conduct and shows him what will conform his life to truth and to righteousness.

That Word is profitable in training, in discipline. Here are feet new to the path of righteousness. They have not walked in it much. They are not strong in God and in the power of His might. Their spiritual limbs are not yet sturdy, and their muscles supple and pliant with power. They do not yet know how to endure, and that Word takes them and trains them until they become spiritual athletes in the sight of God.

But the main point and the last point that I want to bring in on it is this: If you close that Book; if you tear out its pages; if you shut out its light, in all the whole universe of God there is not revealed a way by which a sinner can be saved, not one in the world. To me that is a stupendous fact.

Since being a sinner myself, since my friends are sinners, since my neighbors are sinners, and all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, it is to me of supreme consideration, where shall there be found a God-inspired and God-authenticated method of saving a sinner? Outside of that Book there is none, and there is not a man living, who has intelligently studied the subject, who will say so. In all the literature of this world, sacred or profane, civilized or barbaric, coming from white men, or brown or black men, take away the Bible, and there is not in all the

literature of this world even a glow-worm light on the subject of how a sinner can be saved, not a bit of it.

Take away that Book and there is not even a glow-worm light on the condition of the dead - on their eternal destiny. After a profound investigation of the subject, I do not hesitate to say that everything in the two or three thousand books that are published upon the subject of Spiritualism as a revelation is no more than the clatter of apes in a coconut tree on this point.

How shall a sinner be saved? How shall a man whose conscience condemns him and who feels that he is under the condemnation of God be justified before God? You go to that Book or none. And what does it say? What are its directions? I want to come to that in a few words. I want, to put before you the way of life, and I shall take a single case - the case of the publican. Here was a man perfectly conscious that he was a sinner. He knew it. There were some things that he didn't know, but upon that question he didn't have the least shadow of a doubt. The question that came to this sinner's heart was: "How can I be justified before God?" There was a way appointed, and he came to the Temple, and that Temple spoke of a propitiation, of a sacrifice, of the slain, of blood shed on account of the penalty for sins, and he came there and he beat upon his heart and he said, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." Or, to put his language into English, "God, be propitious to me through a sacrifice. God, let Thy mercy reach me through an atonement made by another." That is a fair rendering of the Greek expression that he used, "God be merciful to me"; be propitious to me through a sacrifice. And Jesus said that man went down that very day justified. He went down acquitted. He went down absolved from his sin, freed from its penalty, a man against whom the law had no charge at all.

Today there rush into my mind the memories of men whose faces I have seen when they first began to be interested, the first steps that they took, the eagerness with which they pressed forward, finally the depths of conviction that came upon them when they felt they were lost; and then that sweet and happy transition from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God. And they are today witnesses of the truth and power of this Book of God as revealing a way of life and of salvation.

I have seen the wife, the jewels of tears in her eyes, steal over softly and sit down by her husband and look up appealingly into his sin-scarred face, as if she would say, "Thou art dearer to me than life, and thou art lost. Oh, come to the fountain of cleansing." And I have seen him start, take her hand, and come up and fall down before God, and say, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" And I have seen the light of heaven shine in his eyes when the glorious redemption came to him and he stood

up before all men present and said, "God Almighty, for Christ's sake, has forgiven my sins."

I have seen fair maidens, against the propriety of whose conduct from a worldly standpoint nothing could be said, and who, in worldly parlance, would be called innocent, and who were not guilty according to the world's standards of right and wrong, but whose hearts, in the sight of God, were alienated from Him, who did not love Him, who loved pleasure more than they loved God; who did not worship Him; who, if they worshiped Him at all, worshiped Him only in an empty form and denied the power, the vital and eternal and spiritual power, of religion. And I have seen them, under sharp conviction of sin, seek for mercy and find peace in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have seen Christians who, with this perfect standard of life and conduct as their guide, had deflected from it; went away from it into irregularities; went into dissipation; departed from the true and the living God, and lived by day and by night contrary to His expressed precepts. And I have seen this Word, under the power of the Spirit who inspired it, reconvict them and bring them with tears to confess their sins and to forsake their sins, and to turn back to the fountain of truth and righteousness, to light, and peace, and holiness.

What more do you want? What kind of a standard do you ask? By what standard of right and wrong will you regulate your life? By what forecast of the future will you outline your own destiny? Unto what oracle will you go to receive the truth concerning the realms that lie in the outskirts of darkness beyond the grave? What will they tell you? What have they to offer you? O Book of God - God-inspired Book - precious volume! All thy words are power, those infallible oracles, those living oracles of God to men! It makes my soul shudder within me when I hear any man speak slightly of God's revealed will.

There are some here today upon whose hearts and consciences I want to impress repentance or impending doom. I have always, throughout my life, even in the days of my dark rebellion against God, had an admiration for men of decision, for men who were not reeds shaken by the wind; for men of action; for men who would not be influenced in vital concerns by that most trifling of all shifting clouds, the influence of other people; but upon personal conviction, when the individual soul is confronted with a question of right or wrong, under responsibility to God, and under the 'light of His eye, and under the determination to be the arbiter, the sole person who should settle the question that pertained to self, would take the step, and take it regardless of time and circumstances and people.

I would always rather preach to people in the daytime than at night. I would rather preach to them when there is the least suspicion of undue influence operating upon their minds; when you can look right into their eyes and they can look right into yours; and when the question presented is one whose important bearings they can recognize, and in the light of God's bright day stand up and say, "Here I am. I take my stand. I follow that Book. You show me in that Book what I am to do and I will do it. I am no child. I am no straw, taken up by the west wind and carried east, and by the east wind and carried west. But with full purpose of heart, and because it is right in the sight of God and eternity, I say I want to be saved. I want to be reconciled to God. I know I am a sinner. I don't need any argument on that point, but how shall I get right? How shall I realize in my own lost soul that God loves me and that my soul is precious in His sight?"

Well, I shall tell you the way. It is to come directly to the Lord Jesus Christ. Come to Him face to face. I do not pretend to put Him before you here in the flesh, but I do say to you today that He is here in the Spirit, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and that He is sensibly here, and that His power is here, and that if you will come to Him as your mind sees Him, as your soul recognizes Him, and say, "Lord Jesus Christ, I am here according to thy Word, a lost sinner. I come on Your invitation. I come on Your promise that if I would come You would not cast me out; I come right to You, and I say, 'Help, help, Lord, for I perish.'" He will save your soul this day.

O sinner, sinner, if you would know the things that make for you great peace; if you will, today, make one earnest, straightforward, honest effort to come to the Son of God for light, I pledge you my honor you will find it. Will you come? Sinner, turn; why will you die? Separate yourselves from the throng that shuts you in. MOVE! The law of motion is the law of life. Stir up your minds. Stagnation is death. Rouse your energies and exert your powers to overcome the *inertia* of long rest in sin. Break away from restraints. Throw off the stupor of irresolution. Convert inaction into movement. It is thy salvation; seek it. It is thy promise; claim it. It is thy door of escape; knock, knock, now; knock loudly and escape for thy life. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

13. THE FAITH OF NOAH

TEXT: By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. - ~~3110~~ Hebrews 11:7

There are two parts to this sermon: The part that relates to Noah as a person and the part that relates to those who were condemned by Noah. Let us look first at the case of Noah and see if we cannot, in the light of faith exemplified, make an application to ourselves.

God made known to this man that the wickedness of the world was so great, their persistent rejection of the remedies by which it could be made better so incorrigible, and their state so continually waxing worse and worse, it was better that the world should pass away. So he said, "I will destroy it. I will bring a flood upon it; and every one in whose nostrils is the breath of life shall die and we will make a new start for a new world."

That is about what He said to Noah. But He said, "I make known to you, because you have loved Me and trusted Me, a way by which you can escape. It will cost you something. It will cost you some money. It will cost you a good deal of time; it will cost you a good deal of labor. But I will make known to you a way by which, in the general destruction that comes upon the world, you can save your own family. And that is to prepare a vessel under the directions I give you. Don't you vary from my plan an atom. I am the architect. I will furnish the draft of this vessel. I will tell you exactly how long to make it, and how wide and how high, and into how many compartments. I will tell you the material you are to use. But I want you to get the work done within a certain time. At the expiration of that time the flood will come, and before it comes, whether you see any sign of it all or not, upon my naked statement, upon the plain and unvarnished word of God, before a cloud gathers or a throb of thunder is felt, I want you to enter that vessel, trust Me, and be quiet. And you need not be alarmed at anything you hear outside. And no matter how long you stay in there, you trust Me. I will take care of you. It may seem to you, indeed, a long time before I command the door to be opened to let you out. But you stay where I tell you to stay and at the proper time I will anchor your vessel and open the door and bid you come out upon a new world, rising out of the flood after the subsidence of the water."

Now, here are two things. First, God's warning to this man. God gave him warning of things that were not in sight at all. It was the bare announcement of God that a certain thing would be. Then God set forth the strongest kind of a plan by which he might prepare for the issue that was coming. Noah's mind had to exercise faith and fear. And I do not mean selfish fear. Noah believed the statement that God had made, and Noah felt that that judgment was coming, and moved by the fear of it, that kind of an apprehension that a prudent man has when he sees an evil arising and guards against it, he obeyed, making that kind of preparation which any father will rightly make, and make it correspond to the magnitude of the danger he sees coming, which is imminent, which is coming to him, to his wife, to his children.

He is a strange kind of a father if he is not moved with some sense of apprehension of an evil so plainly mapped out before his eyes. In the old days, if a Texas father and his family were in camp in a valley and good evidence came to that father that the Indians were on a raid, a trustworthy scout brought him definite information, moved with fear, thinking not so much of himself as of his wife and children, he would make the kind of preparation that would, in his judgment, be sufficient for the protection of his wife and children. How much more when God said to this man, "I outline across the future an impending evil; it is no fancy sketch; it is as God says it; it is coming; it is near at hand; if you have any faith in the veracity of God, prepare to meet it."

I shall not go into the details of Noah's preparation, but I will say that he went on steadily with it, whatever it cost him; that he went on with it, no matter how foolish his actions appeared to an outside world. I haven't a doubt that many a man whom he hired to help in building that vessel mockingly said, "We will take the old fool's money. He can do what he pleases. He pays us for this work, but if ever there was a madman upon this earth, this is one."

Noah could not construct such a vessel by himself. He could not construct it even with the help of his three sons. He would have to employ other men to aid him, and it required a great length of time, and it was a very costly structure. And while it was going up, he preached; he preached of a judgment to come; he preached of a flood that would rise from beneath and that would fall from above, and whose waters would meet and commingle and submerge the highest and the strongest resting place of man.

And when the time came, the supreme test of his faith was made, for God said, "Go in; enter the ark."

"Lord, can I not wait until the clouds begin to gather?"

“Go in. I want to shut the door after you. I want to shut you in. I want to shut danger out. You go in right now.”

“Well, won’t you give me some sign, some moaning of the wind, some black line on the horizon, to indicate that the storm is approaching?”

“No, not a sign. You have the naked, unvarnished word of God that the time has come to enter the ark. Go thou, and all thy house, and enter in now and let Me shut this door, and shut it quickly.” Moved by fear he entered in, as believing in God, he had made the preparation. And thereby he and all his were saved from that physical death, that temporal death.

Now, with reference to the people, it is said that by thus believing God, and by thus preparing for the judgment which God foretold, that he condemned the people who did not believe; that his faith stood over against their unbelief. It demonstrated that as he had light enough, so had they.

Perhaps you say they didn’t have it. He preached to them. God made known to them as He had made known to Noah that the judgment of the flood was coming. They heard it. But you say he had spiritual light. I say they had spiritual light. “By which Spirit Christ went and preached to the spirits that are now in prison, in the days when the long-suffering of God waited in-the days of Noah.”

It was on that dreadful occasion that the record was written: “My Spirit shall not always strive with men.” It was concerning that day and its history that Nehemiah said, “He sent His good Spirit to instruct them.” “The gospel,” said Peter in the next chapter, “was preached unto them who are dead.”

It is a very wide misconception that God suffered these people to pass into the jaws of death without enlightening them, without admonishing them, without spiritual light. While they had not the light that you have, they had the prophets of as far-reaching ken as any of a later day.

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, foresaw and foretold the second coming of the Son of Man and coupled it with the very fact of that flood, that as these men, by ungodly manners and ungodly speeches and ungodly actions, were casting their rebellion and their unbelief in the face of the Almighty, so the judgment of God would come upon them. It was only fifteen or sixteen hundred years from the days of Adam to the flood, and Methusaleh, who died the very year that the flood came, had lived to talk two hundred years with Adam, and they had the whole history of the world before them. They knew of the law in the Garden. They knew of the expulsion from it. They knew of the way of life by the blood offering, and they turned away from it. There

were sons of God then in the children of Seth who believed in Jesus Christ as you believe in Him now.

But how did wickedness become so universal? It is stated that godly men, converted men, fell in love with unconverted women, and married these women, and that having married godless women, the mothers controlled the education of the children, and the children grew up like the mothers, and when the living men that were believers died, who were there to take their places? They had married godless wives, women of the world, and these women cared not a jot for religion.

Their hearts were as hard as the nether millstone, and they did not want their children to be brought up under pious influences. They said to their husbands, "If you want to go off and worship your God, go on. I will take the children with me." And when will they not follow the mother? Through this method the corruption became universal.

The Enochs were translated; the Seths died; the living men who had stood up for God and had believed in Him passed away, and there were no children coming on to take their places - none. They were following their un-Christian mothers down to death and hell. It would fill the world with ruin now if the same course were adopted. Such system provides no generation to follow this generation. It makes no provision for successors to the living. "The sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair," and formed alliances with them, intermarried with them, and the children of these mothers looked at the giants that were in the mother's family.

There were giants in those days, not giants such as you would commend, but there were great men, heroes in the popular estimation. And so the children looked at the mother's mighty relatives. Just look what a prize-fighter there is in the family! There were John L. Sullivans in those days. That is about what it means. There were wrestling men, slugging men, mighty men, physical giants, great, brawny animals. And the little boys would look at them and say, "Look at him; there he goes; there is John L. Sullivan! There is Jim Corbett!" They would run from any talk of Jehovah to look at him, and turn away from the admiration of the father to see him, to look at the giant; to see how he could knock a man down! Of course, such boys were not converted; they grew up children of the devil. When the fathers died, the generation of pious men was gone, and God said, "The whole earth is corrupt and filled with violence."

Now, mark the last step in the divine proceedings. Always before a dreadful judgment comes, there is apt to be a remarkable multiplication of the means of escape. There is an extraordinary outpouring of the Divine Spirit. Just before Jerusalem perished, just before the days of the Jews ceased and the days of the Gentiles came in, oh, what mighty power of God was displayed in Judea! How the

lights kindled and shone! How the Spirit manifested His power! What remarkable cases of conversion! What a glorious outpouring of love and mercy!

But there was another thing: That as mercy was magnified at that awful juncture, in making the last fight, in the prelude that led to the coming annihilation, so the spirits of evil mustered their forces. Hell saw the issue, as Heaven saw it. As good angels hovered around, so demons came and crawled in their slime. The reserve powers of the pit were called out to the last spirit. "Empty yourself, hell. Call up the last battalions! Here is a battle for the souls of men, before Jerusalem is destroyed."

And so it was in the days of the flood. God's Spirit mightily manifested Himself. And I give it to you as the opinion of some, based upon one or two passages of Scripture; I am not sure enough about it myself to announce it as a doctrine, but I give it to you as a current opinion, that in the time that Noah preached in that one hundred and twenty years, there were some remarkable conversions to God. I base it upon one statement that follows the passage that I read, where it is said that the gospel was preached to the dead, to the people who are now dead, and though they perished in the body, their spirits should be made alive unto God.

It is true that when the flood came there were but eight that passed over into the new world when the waters subsided, but this opinion holds that in the last outpouring of the Spirit of God many souls were converted, as souls were converted in Jerusalem and Judea just before the dreadful destruction of the city under Titus after the Lord Jesus Christ had ascended into heaven.

Now, I want to make the application. There is always a profound signification when the Spirit of God is in any community; when there is any special display of the divine love and power. When God manifests Himself not as ordinarily but as extraordinarily; when you feel that the reserve forces of hell and heaven have met together, it means that the intelligences that are higher than ours see that a crisis is at hand - an awful crisis. I tremble when I think about it.

O my God, what is the issue that has called for such displays of Thy divine power? What is coming? What danger is imminent? It means something. Hell's forces would not be concentrated for nothing. Heaven's mighty power would not be displayed here for nothing. O Spirit of God, what doom is impending over souls that such divine and such diabolical power should be displayed in the wrestling for these spirits? I do not know what it is, but I do feel that from any great revival-meeting there are going to be broad roads down to death and hell as well as stairways to heaven.

It is an awful thing for any man to trifle with God's Spirit. "My Spirit shall not always strive with men." Oh, for faith in God! Be moved with fear. Prepare, prepare and let God tell you what preparation is necessary. Don't dictate to Him, but come you, and come your wives, and come your children into the ark of God. Enter while you may, lest He should shut the door and say to your soul, "Too late! Too late!"

Lord God Almighty, on this battlefield, where souls are born to God and die into hell, O God, send the power of the Spirit to bring souls to life! I stagger under the awful thoughts that come into my mind. I believe God's Word. I believe that there are men and women who will be lost forever if they say, "No, no, no," to God's Spirit. O men, if God touches your heart today; if the Spirit moves you today, come, come at once; do not delay a moment, but be saved now and forever.

I feel like praying. I want to offer a prayer for any man, any woman, any child, who wishes to make preparation for eternal life. God help Him to come. There are angels hovering around you. It is awful. God Almighty is in touch with souls. Oh, come, come, and be saved!

Answer me a question; not an impertinent one, but a very tender one. Hear it now: Is the spiritual condition of your home such that it makes it probable that your family is going to be a godly family? Do you ever pray about it? Is it a place where the sensual, carnal appetites are gratified? Is it a place where thought is habitually fixed on things that are sinful and temporal and not on the things that are not sinful and eternal? Is it probable, from the present condition of your home, that in the world to come those who grow up around you will stand upon the right hand or upon the left hand in the great day? And does there not devolve upon you today, O thou head of a house, an awful responsibility that the things which make for righteousness should be in your life, should be in your conversation, should be in your house; that the right example should be before your children?

Oh, is there a godless mother hearing this, whose children are following her, imbibing her spirit, the spirit of the world, the spirit that is against God? Is it possible that there is a father who, by all the power of parental influence, is dragging his children down to death? Come thou, come thou, and all thy house. Oh, may the Spirit of God move upon you in behalf of them who look to you; of them who depend upon you; of them who count you the greatest in the world; of them who are apt to be more influenced by what you say and do than by all the world beside. The Lord God will help you today to ally yourself with what is right.

Now, I know it seems an unusual thing to get up in a crowded church and come up and say, "I am a sinner. I confess it before God; I confess it before men. I wish my

sins were blotted out.” But there is no harm in it in the world, none whatever. There is a vast deal of manliness in it when you look at it right.

If you are wrong, why try to cover it? Why wrap yourself in a mantle of pride and say, “It is not becoming to me, to my position in society, to admit in the presence of my fellowmen that I am a sinner.” Why, they know you are a sinner. You would not tell them anything new. They know it. God knows it. The devil knows it. Everybody knows you are a sinner. You cannot hide that fact.

You may think it is covered up, but the other fact, that your spirit makes acknowledgment of it, and that with a true honesty you come into the presence of God and say, “Lord God, I am a sinner; be merciful to me, a sinner” - there is something in that which appeals to every feeling in the human heart. There never was anybody but a lost devil who did not respect a man who came, a woman who came and confessed wrong-doing and sought forgiveness of God.

Anyhow, I am going to invite you to say, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” What does any human judgment amount to? Whoever craves that for the breath of his nostrils will die of spiritual starvation. Neither human approval nor human condemnation, neither the one nor the other, is worth a moment’s consideration in such a crisis.

Let God and God alone determine what shall be human conduct. His promises glitter above you like stars. His invitations beckon you like shining angels. His Spirit moves you. His people welcome you. His Word assures you: “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” Come, therefore, and be saved today and forever.

14. THE WAGES OF SIN

TEXT: For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. - ~~4163~~ Romans 6:23

Many times in my long pastorate have I preached from this text, and never twice the same sermon. Not that the later sermon ever contradicts and refutes the earlier, but that each time additional truth is presented or the truth before stated is presented from a different standpoint and in a new light.

In this sense the sermon today will be new. Heretofore the sermon has been preached upon the isolated, independent proposition: "The wages of sin is death," etc., as if that were a solitary sentence uttered as a revelation of a truth complete in itself. But today let us include in the text its introductory word, "*For* the wages of sin is death," etc. This forces a consideration of the context and through the conjunction looks back to antecedent propositions out of which our text arises and in harmony with which it must be expounded. The sentence immediately preceding, containing the matter opened and illustrated by our text, and which identifies and defines the term "eternal life" is this: "But now being made free from sin, and become servants of God, ye have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end eternal life."

The address is to Christians. The exhortation is to practical holiness, whose end is eternal life. The third, fourth, and fifth chapters are devoted to justification. They tell us how sinners become reconciled to God, how they are freed from sin. But the sixth, seventh, and eighth chapters treat mainly of sanctification. While proceeding with this discussion of an exhortation to holiness, predicated upon the justification previously set forth, we reach our text thus: "Being now made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

What eternal life? That eternal life which is the consummation of holiness, that eternal life which, commencing in justification, found its fruit in holiness and found its end in eternal life. You see then from the context clearly that whatever may be the import of this text, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." that it illustrates an exhortation to Christians.

From the premise that they are now freed from sin through reconciliation, justification, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is denied that they should, after justification, sin the more that grace may abound, or that they should now yield their

members unto righteousness, but that they should now use their members unto righteousness, since the fruit of justification is sanctification and of sanctification is eternal life.

Our lesson, therefore, derived from this text, not usually brought out in preaching, is that no man, however earnest his protestations of belief in Christ; no man, however affecting the emotions through which he passed when he made his profession of religion; no man, however prominent in the church, can expect upon any reasonable basis to attain to the eternal life discussed in this text except through the fruit of holiness.

In other words, that if there be no holiness, there is no regeneration. If there be no practical conformity to Jesus Christ in life, then it is either an act of hypocrisy or of self-deception or of deception by others, when the profession of faith is made in the Lord Jesus Christ. Evidently the eternal life of the text, which is the gift of God, is the eternal life of the preceding verse, which comes indeed through justification but also through sanctification, through which comes the end - eternal life.

What terms, therefore, are here calling for definition? Sin, wages, death, free gift, eternal life. What is sin? Have you ever reached a final and satisfactory answer to this question? You may be sure from Genesis that it did not come from God originally; nor is He its author, for James says, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God *cannot* be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man: but each man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

How, then, did it start? Revelation tells us that it commenced with the angel of light, who fell, self-tempted, and through his solicitation reached the human race. We are expressly told that it came into this world by one man. And as in his loins, as the progenitor, were all his descendents, its penalty followed, not only upon him but upon every descendent to the end of the world, and all for that one offense.

What, then, is sin as discussed in this letter of which our text is a part? Sin is that act of disobedience on the part of the first man, the father of the whole human race, by which he lost the image of God and by which he became corrupt in his own nature and which he transmitted to his posterity. That is sin.

Very clearly is all this set forth in the preceding chapter. Through one man sin entered into the world. Through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners. By the trespass of the one the many died. Through one trespass the

judgment came unto all men to condemnation. By the trespass of the one, death reigns through the one. The judgment came of one trespass unto condemnation.

There was law before the promulgation of the Ten Commandments on Sinai by Moses, for death reigned from Adam to Moses. And this primal law bound the posterity and the ancestors, for death reigned from Adam to Moses even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression.

Mark the one man and the one trespass and the death upon all of his posterity for the one offense, and be astounded at the exceeding sinfulness of sin! One transaction, just one, committed six thousand years ago: one offense, one alienation of heart from God, one disobedience, and as a consequence there hangs a funeral pall over the whole world.

It reigns in, its penalty from Adam to Moses until now, and from now until the second coming of Christ. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death," and death is destroyed at the second coming of Christ. "As in Adam all died, so in Jesus Christ shall all be made alive." Because of that one offense by that one man, death reigns until that time, and it is true of the other Adam of which the first is a figure, that it is through the second Adam, and a gift through Him, that the graves are unsealed at the second coming of Christ.

I say that sixth chapter in its discussion of sin makes prominent, makes cardinal and primal, not many offenses, but the one offense committed in the beginning, and whose penalty yet reigns upon the whole human race. What is sin? Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the prophets, the martyrs, all the dead who have gone down into the narrow prison house of the grave, every one of them passed under the dominion of death because of that one offense.

What more is sin than the original trespass? This much more as a consequence - a corrupt nature - a depravity whose workings are sin. If the Scriptures teach anything in the world, they teach that sin after it was first committed in one act became a state. What is sin? Lack of harmony with God, whether in act or state.

Whatever misses the mark, whatever falls short; not merely what is directly hostile, but whatever does not come up to the measure of full harmony with God, who made us, is sin; and if a baby in a cradle, in his moral nature not yet developed, is out of harmony with God, there is sin in that cradle, as a state, and wherever there is sin, death will come. And so death reigned from Adam to Moses, "Even over those that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression."

What is death? Death is a penalty. It is so presented in the Bible always, and never a misfortune. Let an appeal be made to the record. When God made man and put him in the Garden of Eden and gave Him His law, He announced its penalty: "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Who said it? God. In what sense did He say it? He announced it as a penalty upon transgression. Death cannot be anything else than a penalty. It is the penalty of the violated law.

But in what does death consist? Unquestionably it primarily means dissolution of soul and body, what is commonly understood by death, physical death. How does this appear? In what God said to Adam in explaining the execution of the penalty upon him, "Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return." Provision had been made in Paradise that man's body never should die; that it should attain unto immortality; but when this sin was committed here is an announcement that a part of the man shall be dissolved, that it shall return to dust, and this announcement is made as an explanation of the penalty itself.

But a higher proof that physical death is a part of the penalty denounced is the fact that escape from that physical death is a part of redemption. If physical death be no part of the penalty the resurrection from the dead through Jesus Christ is no part of the redemption. But it is expressly stated that as in Adam all sin down into the grave, so in Jesus Christ shall all be raised up out of the grave. As the grave was digged by Adam, as his sin peopled the cemeteries, so the righteousness of Jesus Christ shall awaken the sleepers and empty the graveyards.

Again it is expressly said that because the children were partakers of flesh and blood He likewise took part of the same, that through His own death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

I maintain, therefore, that a part of the idea involved in death is the dissolution of the soul and the body, and that redemption will never be complete, the work of the Second Adam will never be consummated, until the body that was shipwrecked by sin will be redeemed from the power of the grave. And it is then, said Paul, and it is not until then, that it can be said, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" When mortality puts on immortality and corruption puts on incorruption, when all that sleep in the graves shall be awakened at the sound of the trumpet of the archangel, then the work of redemption will be completed.

In the second place, death is not only physical, as it affects the dissolution of the soul and body, but it is spiritual. I mean to say that the soul dies. I do not mean to say that the soul is dissolved. The body is complex. The soul is simple. It cannot be dissolved. As far as existence is concerned it is immortal, but when we say that a

soul dies we do not mean annihilation. We do not mean either suscitation of existence or suscitation of conscious existence, but we do mean a separation from God, who breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life and he became a living soul. As physical death means the separation of the soul and the body, spiritual death means the separation of the soul and God. That soul then is dead which is alienated from God in its affections, in its purposes, in its desires. It is dead.

Now let me give you some Scriptures bearing upon that. Paul said, referring to certain women of his time, "She that giveth herself to pleasure is dead while she liveth." He did not mean that her body is dead. He meant that any soul is dead that loves pleasure more than it loves God. Again: "You hath He made alive who were dead in trespasses and sins."

You are dead, not in your bodies as yet, but dead in trespasses and in sin. How hath He made alive? Not made your bodies alive, for that does not take place until the resurrection. But you Christians were made alive by the regenerating power of God. Regeneration shows that death had passed upon the soul and that spiritual death is alienation of the soul from God.

But the meaning of death is not exhausted. It is not exhausted from the fact that our text here demands something more than all yet stated. There is a contrast here between life and death, and when you describe the length of the life you describe the length of the death. But the eternal life of our text, the eternal life that comes from the fruit of holiness, holiness whose end is eternal life - that is at the resurrection, when the body will be raised and glorified and the spirit sanctified. That is the eternal life of this text. But that is on the other side of the judgment. That is on the other side of the second coming of Christ. The eternal life of our text is that life which is completed not only in the soul but in the body; not only completed in itself but in its surroundings and in the unchangeableness of its surroundings and of its condition. That is the eternal life of the text.

Now, death is the darkness that stands contrasted with that supernal light. Death is the black night that stands over against that brilliant, eternal day. And what is that death? It is called in the Scriptures the "second death." The first death brought about a dissolution of soul and body and the separation of the spirit from God. The second death is after the resurrection of the body, the body being made immortal and the soul being restored to it. The second death follows from the final decision of the Judge when He says, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." "And the beast and the false prophet and the dragon were cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death, and every one whose name was not found written in the Book of Life, was cast into the lake of fire which is the

second death.” Death, then, means, in its first manifestation, alienation of the soul from God; then the dissolution of the soul and body, and, finally, the eternal banishment from God after the resurrection and the judgment.

Now, with that definition of death, let us glance for a moment at some of the fallacious ideas that have been propagated by quasi-infidelity. Some men say that death is not a penalty - that it is merely the reaction from the violation of a natural law. For instance, that conformity to a natural law genders health and life; non-conformity, disease and death. So argues the philosopher. A theologian follows him, quoting the Scripture from the fifth chapter of Proverbs: “His own iniquities shall take the wicked man and he shall beholden with the cords of his sin.”

They say that here is all the penalty of sin. If a boy sits up late at night and drinks champagne and becomes intoxicated, the penalty comes next morning in a headache, which is but the reaction of a violated law. And this, they say, is all there in the Bible.

It is true that such a reaction takes place in both physical and moral laws. It is true that this reaction will detect the sinner. It is true that one’s own sin will find him out and publish him. It is true that sooner or later in smoke and flame and slime, sin will manifest itself to the sight of all men, unto God and unto angels and unto devils. But you must not in this exhaust the idea of penalty.

Others regard penalty as only preventive, and yet others that whatever penalty is inflicted is designed for reformation. An English judge said when he condemned a prisoner for stealing sheep, “I do not condemn you because you stole sheep, but to keep other people from stealing sheep.” Here he advanced the idea that the object of penalty was to be deterrent, preventive; that it was done in the interest of society. That is as false as the idea that its object is reformatory or remedial.

Now, I want to answer very briefly both of these thoughts. I want to show you in a few words why death or penalty of any kind, in its primary object, neither looks to the reformation of the culprit nor to society’s benefit. The first reason is that penalty of any kind proceeds not from love to the culprit, nor from love to the community, but from justice. Penalty is the voice of justice, not of mercy, nor of love. And we cannot too carefully shun the thought that it is only a reactionary consequence resulting from violation of law.

There is in death and all penalty a personal element, and that personal element is God. I mean to say that we widely miss the mark when we limit this matter to mere law and its consequence, a mere principle and its violation. I say that there is a personal element, which means that there is a Lawgiver, whose wrath is excited by sin. Hence we have such Scriptures, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the

living God,” and “Fear not him that can kill the body but cannot kill the soul but fear Him that, after He has killed the body, has power to destroy both soul and body in hell.” So when a man sins it is insufficient to arraign him before a mere principle of nature which has been violated. Summon him rather before a judgment bar, on whose throne a Person sits. That person is God, into whose hands it is a fearful thing to fall.

In the next place, penalty not only proceeds from justice but upon no other principle than the intrinsic deserts of the offense. Neither man nor God, under the teaching of revelation, can claim the right to punish me to benefit society nor to punish me to reform me. If there be no offense committed, if there be no violation of law, punishment or penalty cannot come; and if it comes, it must be upon the ground of its deserts. Here our text speaks: “The wages of sin is death.” It must come as wages, something due, something deserved, something earned, or, to put it in other language, the sinner must be worthy of death.

Paul, in this very letter, after reciting the fact that the Gentiles once knew God but did not desire to retain that knowledge, actually refusing that knowledge, and showing the consequent reprobation of their mind, bearing fruit in all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; with all the details of murder, theft, envy, backbiting, insolence, and treachery, thus concludes: “Who knowing the ordinance of God, that they which practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also consort with them that practice them.” He then distinctly declares that in the day of wrath, to them “that are factious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, God will render wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish.”

There is no hint of any ground of punishment other than the demerit of sin. “Worthy of death.” There is no intimation of good to society or of the remedial design of punishment. There is no semblance of a shadow even of such talk, such scientific twaddle as “mere consequences of natural law.” It is the wrath and indignation of a Person, the holy and righteous God. “Worthy of death!” Not worthy of reformation - worthy of death.

I stand upon this position as the capital idea in penalty, as the idea which is being banished from the world by a sickly sentimentality, a gush of humanitarianism, falsely so-called, which would rob law of a law-giver, and rob the world of God, and make the universe simple matter under the control of what is called “natural law.”

Again, from the theory that the penalty is intended to reform the culprit, it follows that if I kill a man, and immediately after killing him am just as sorry for it as it is possible for a man to be, and as determined in my own mind never to commit that offense

again as it is possible for a determination to be reached, then I am already reformed and hence beyond the reach of penalty.

It again follows that the law must consult the state of my mind before pronouncing the penalty, and if I am half-way sorry it must grade the penalty. What a change in procedure would this necessitate in earthly courts! Investigation must be transferred from the proof of guilt to the proof of reformation.

But happily the penalty never stops to consider what you think about the offense after it is committed nor of the resolution you have formed as to its repetition or avoidance, but, "Did you commit the offense?" "Do you deserve the penalty?" "Has law been violated?"

Look at this theory fairly. Do you not see that two classes at least would be forever exempt from penalty altogether? First, the one in whom the reformation took place speedily after he committed the offense. If the object of penalty is to reform him, it is already accomplished and he ought not to be punished. And, secondly, the irreformable man - and that is the worst part of it - if the object of penalty is to reform and the transgressor prove incorrigible, he is free, and therefore the greatest criminals can have no punishment.

For instance, the devil is irreformable. Nobody supposes that he will ever be different from what he is, that he will ever cease to hate God, that he will ever cease to sin. He is fixed, incorrigible, malignant in his opposition to God, and no one hopes to see him different. Therefore, if the object of penalty be to reform and there be no chance to reform the devil, there should be no punishment of the devil. To what an absurdity does this theory bring us! It exempts all criminals from penalty, since there can be but two classes, the corrigible and the incorrigible.

Moreover, all capital punishment should be abolished. If the object is to reform a man, then, of course, capital punishment must be abolished, for you cannot reform a man after you kill him, either by hanging or beheading or shooting. So this theory violates that primal law, that "whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," and thereby takes away from human legislation the great principle enunciated by the Almighty and which constitutes the basis of human legislation down to the present time.

There are offenses which merit death. Behold the second death - a lake of fire - and answer the question: "Is hell intended as a reformatory? Is hell for the benefit of society? From its penal fires comes back a response which cannot be gainsaid, "There is no reformation in hell." There are no means provided. There is no gospel preached. There is no altar of prayer. There is no offer of compromise. It would be a

strange thin- if in the eternal fires of hell a man should hear God say, "I have not put you in hell because you deserve it, but I have put you in hell for the good of society."

The term "wages" employed here is used twice elsewhere by Paul. To the Corinthians he said, "I robbed other churches, taking wages of them to do you a service." Again he asked: "Who goeth to war at his own charge?" (that is, at his own cost). Who furnishes his own rations and his own pay when he goes to war? Showing that if he goes to war for a government, it is under obligation to him to feed him and pay him, and that if Paul engages to do a certain missionary service and receives his compensation therefor from these mission-loving churches, he does it under the terms of an express or implied contract, and that the money which goes to him is not a gift, but wages. As our Savior expressed it, "The laborer is worthy of his hire." There is no charity in it; he earned it.

And so "the wages of sin is death." What rations does sin offer? What pay does sin offer? Death. If as of a master you enquire of sin, "I, O Sin, am thy bondservant; I have taken a contract under thee. Now, for my service what do I earn? What is my pay? What are my rations?" Death! death physical; death spiritual; the second death the eternal banishment from God. "The wages of sin is death." So not to reform the culprit, not to prevent others from sinning, but as something earned, justly and fairly earned, comes this penalty.

I was very much impressed by an editorial in *The Standard* written some weeks ago with reference to human discrimination in sin, the penalty that society visits on one class and withholds for precisely the same offense from another class. But notwithstanding this time-serving and partial discrimination here and in time, let it be known a man that commits an offense of that character, to him the wages of sin is death as well as to the woman. A writer, long passed away, whose heart was touched by this question, wrote the following lines:

*Three men went out one summer night,
No care had they, or aim,
And dined and drank, "Ere we go home,
We'll have," they said, "a game."*

*Three girls began that summer night
A life of endless shame,
And went through drink, disease, and death,
As swift as rising flame.*

*Friendless and homeless, foul, they died.
Rich, loved and praised, the men.
But when they all shall meet with God
And Justice speaks-what then?*

“The wages of sin is death” to the man who commits an offense just as much as it is to a woman, and it was by the disobedience of one man, and not of one woman, that death came into this world. Sin came and death through sin. It was the man who was not deceived, the man whose eyes were open in the transgression, the man who knew he was violating the command of God’s holy law. What a shifting of the scenes there will be when death culminates, when the second death comes.

Sinner, sinner, what is heard now? “Come unto me.” “Come,” says the Savior; “come,” says the Spirit; “come,” says the church. “Whosoever will, let him come.” But in the hour of the second death what will it be? “Depart,” will say the Savior. “Depart,” will say the Spirit. “Depart,” will say the church. “Go away into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

And you will have earned it. It will not come upon you as a misfortune. It will not be a mere expedient for the benefit of other people that you will be in hell. You will not be there with a view to your restoration to the divine favor or in the hope of any mitigation of that penalty. It is Justice that speaks: “Thou hast earned death. Thou didst sin, and the wages of sin is death.”

In stupendous contrast with wages is God’s free gift. The gift of God, not wages, is eternal life. You did not earn justification. It does not come to you because you fairly won it. It did not arise from any predisposition to good upon your part. It is not a reward bestowed upon you for your amiability of character, or as a result of a fixedness of purpose to do right, or because of any good deeds wrought by you in almsgiving toward suffering humanity. You do not earn it. No, no. You do not earn it. It is grace, all grace. It comes through Jesus Christ. That eternal life, from its incipency to its consummation, from its foundation stone in the death of the Redeemer to its turret in glory, is all of grace. “A sinner saved by grace.” “While we were yet enemies Christ died for us.” While our discussion is concerning penalty, yet may we close with this thought: That whatever may have been the consequences as to physical death or the corruption of your nature through the one offense committed by Adam, yet God has intervened with a scheme of redemption in your behalf, which invites you merely to take, to receive, to accept, to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior. It is more than an invitation. It is a law. It is not a matter that you can dispose of at your own option with impunity. You have not, irrespective of the

penalty of evil choice, the election of saying, "I will take Jesus Christ, or not take Him," for "He that believeth not shall be condemned."

Where there is no sin, there can be no death. By the penalty I prove the sin, and the wages of that sin is death. It is death to the man of science covered with the medals of honor conferred upon him by the European universities. It is death to the amiable woman who obtains a high reputation in society on account of those graces which adorn the social life.

The wages of the rejection of Jesus Christ to the girl, to the boy, to the man of science, to the banker, is death, eternal death. And you cannot escape from it. And you cannot earn the life that you need and would have. You cannot put up money enough to buy one single ray of light that shines on the pathway of the redeemed, or to obtain possession of one impulse of purpose thereto. None of it is for sale.

If you take it, you must receive it just as the Negro takes it, just as the pauper takes it. As the publican took it, so, O Pharisee, must you take it. It is the gift of God in contradistinction to the wages which sin pays. But never forget that you have not received it unless there be fruit unto holiness.

If to the world it is said, "And even now is the axe laid unto the root of the tree; every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire," let the church also hear: "Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly cleanse His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the garner, but the chaff He will l: urn up with the unquenchable fire."

15. THE ONE THING NEEDFUL

TEXT: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her. - ~~100~~ Luke 10:42

Perhaps no part of the Bible has attracted more quiet, pleasing attention than the part that tells of the relation of Jesus Christ to this Bethany family, consisting of two sisters and a brother. We have three special accounts of it. This is the first one, where Jesus made the acquaintance of the family, and Martha, who seemed to have been the head of the house, the elder sister, invited Him to be her guest. The second account is when they sent Him a message that their brother was sick, and His coming after the brother died, and raising him to life again. The third account is still later, where in this very village a certain man, once a leper, gave Him a feast and invited to meet Him His friends and His disciples. In this case, as in the first, Martha characteristically served the outer man while Mary ministered to the spiritual nature of Jesus.

The first question that called for solution in my own mind, as I began to study this lesson, was this: What object had Christ in view in entering into this or any other house while He was here upon the earth? What was His object? If you can once understand His purpose, the great reason prompting Him to come, you can understand then what reception of Him would be most consistent with that purpose and hence would best please Him. He Himself tells His purpose. He says, "I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

He did not come into the world to be made much of as a guest, to receive a stranger's hospitality. He came to save the world, to minister to them. That purpose never left His mind. Now, it follows that when He accepted this invitation, He would approve as the better reception of Him that which best accorded with His object in going there.

The two sisters seem to have formed separate ideas of the kind of reception to tender Jesus. One of them, as we infer from what is said of her every time she is mentioned in the Bible, was a very careful housekeeper, with much pride in her housekeeping, and who, when she received a guest, thought that the best thing she could do would be to prepare a very sumptuous meal for him, and so she put herself to a vast amount of trouble in the preparation of this meal. She counted it a big thing, something well worthy of thought and anxiety and preparation. And so highly did she emphasize this part of hospitality that it drove everything else out of her mind. Her thought ran this way: "Now, the way I am to receive this Guest who comes to my

house this day is to spread before Him such a table as He has not seen in a long time.” This involved a great deal of work.

The other sister had this idea of hospitality: That to receive a guest properly implies that you give him your company; that it does not suffice to feed him, for he can provide food elsewhere, but if he comes to that house he comes to enjoy the companionship of those who are there. So while the one concluded to give Him a dinner, the other, decided to give Him her company, to entertain Him personally. This view of it would strike any thoughtful mind at once as being the best attention a thoughtful hostess could possibly pay to the guest - to show by her presence, by the delicate manner in which she listened to what he said - as the best way to receive him, far higher in the scale of hospitality than to busy herself so much about less important matters and allow no opportunity of personal conversation or communion with him. On this point, then, all good judges of hospitality will say that Mary’s method was the better method.

But I want to pass to something very much higher than this. As was stated, our Lord came to minister to other people. He came to do them good. He was the Great Teacher of the way of life. He came to open up to them a plan of reconciliation to God. He came to save the souls of the people with whom He came in contact. Mary seemed to understand that: “Now, as that is His mission, as His heart is on that, as He is thinking more of saving my soul than of eating a fine dinner in this house, I will receive Him, not to my table, but in my heart. Come and reign in my soul forever, Lord Jesus.” And I submit that the reception of Jesus into the soul, to give Him a welcome in the heart, is far higher than simply to give Him a welcome at your table.

A great many people have kind thoughts about the Son of God and His kingdom, who are ready enough at all times to minister, with some degree of thoughtfulness, what are called the external wants of the kingdom of God, and yet these people are very slow to welcome that kingdom into their own souls, very reluctant to say, “I will not only give a portion of my time, of my money, and of my best skill to attend to the external parts of the Christian religion, but independent of all this, and infinitely higher than all of this, I will give myself, and let the Lord Jesus Christ be the King of my soul.”

It is important next to observe that when He came to that house these two ways were optional. Martha chose the other. I am not discussing that high and mysterious and great doctrine of God’s election, God’s choosing us from before the foundation of the world, but I am speaking of the choice that we make. Here was a necessity of choice put upon these two women. Jesus is coming to the house today. He will be a

guest under this roof, and to both was an opportunity of election, as to the better method of receiving Him. Martha chose the one way and Mary chose the other way.

Let us see, then, what this choice was. It is said that “Mary sat at His feet.” What does it mean? Does it mean that He occupied a high chair and that she took a stool or a low chair, and literally and actually sat at His feet? There is not the slightest reference to that. Painters indeed catch that thought and so represent it in the great masterpieces given to the world on canvas. But the expression, “sitting at the feet,” is what is called a Hebrew idiom. Paul refers to it. He says he sat at the feet of Gamaliel. What does it mean there? It means that Gamaliel was the teacher and Paul was the pupil. To sit at one’s feet, then, in all the sense meant here, is to put oneself under the instruction of another, to become a pupil, to be taught.

Behold, then, the scene! The Great Teacher has come to this house. His object is to teach and to teach the greatest thing. He comes to teach as no other can teach. Now, if the Teacher is coming, which is the better? Which would you choose? That you would be no more than an ordinary cook to furnish Him a dinner, or that you would receive instruction from Him, that you would put your life under His direction? Note this point: To submit oneself to the tuition of Jesus, to become the disciple of Jesus, is to recognize that Jesus is the Master, the Teacher. Mary became the disciple, or pupil.

Approach that thought through a lower form. Suppose such a man as Socrates, the great teacher of philosophy, has come to the market-place in Athens and two services are there offered to him: First, a friendly huckster in the market-place arranges for him a sumptuous repast, which is confessedly a very thoughtful, pleasant kindness; second, an Alcibiades comes with lordly intellect and princely form and mighty influence, to say, “O Socrates, teach me; impart to me thy wisdom. Let me receive thy familiar instruction.” Which service, think ye, would please the philosopher most?

And when you consider that our Lord’s teaching was infinitely higher than the teaching of any earthly philosopher, that it involved a gathering back of all the clouds of darkness that hide the other world from human sight, that it revealed to the clear eye of faith the great hereafter, eternity and judgment and salvation and glory, and that this is the first time that this Teacher came to that house, why did it not occur to the other: “The supreme thing that I can do this day is to place myself at Jesus’ feet. O Lord, instruct me”?

The question recurs, which would He like best? Fortunately we have some examples from the Bible that show us which He liked best. You remember on one occasion, when traveling through Samaria. He stopped at Jacob’s well, near Sychar. They

were tired and hungry; Jesus was very weary; they had walked a long way, and the minds of the disciples were very much concerned about dinner and what they should eat. For this they left Him. But there came a woman to this well, and instantly Jesus forgot about the hunger of His body and began the joyous work of leading a soul to salvation and making that soul the instrument of leading many others to salvation. And when the disciples returned with their basket of dinner, He waved it aside and said, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." "You ask Me which I prefer, which I would esteem as the greater joy - for you to bring Me food to minister to temporal and physical hunger or for God, My Father, to open up a way for Me to show a lost soul how to find salvation."

No wonder that His worldly minded brothers thought He was crazy on this very point, for we are told that on one occasion, when word was brought to them that He was so much absorbed in teaching, in reaching out the hand to lead souls to eternal life, that He would not so much as eat, they said, "He is out of His mind." They wanted to get out a writ of lunacy against Him, and apprehend Him, to lay violent hands upon the One who was so crazy as to prefer teaching the plan of salvation and the way of eternal life to the satisfaction of temporal hunger.

These two cases will show you how much more the Son of God appreciates the reception that Mary gave Him than the reception that Martha gave Him. She sat at His feet and heard His words. He said, "Mary hath chosen that good part. Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about a great many things. There is only one thing in this world that is needful to be anxious about, just one, and that is the obtaining of that part which can never be taken away."

It is a waste of human energy; it is a degradation of human dignity; it is a reflection upon the majesty of the image of God in which a human being is made, that we should have distracting cares and anxieties about infinitesimally small things, the millions of them, when if they were all put together they would not weigh even as a particle of fine dust in the balance of God's judgment, and that, too, when the great question of eternal life is not solved.

Look at the Sermon on the Mount. See how He addresses Himself to this question. He says, "Be not anxious about what ye shall eat nor what ye shall drink, nor what ye shall put on. The life is more than the raiment, than the food of the body, but seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and afterward all these things shall be added to you."

There was the wisdom of Mary; she chose the chief thing first. She made the great thing paramount. And there was the folly of Martha, that she disturbed her mind and fretted and fumed and took cares and burdens on her soul when that supreme

question with her had not been settled. Here is a comparison between many things and one thing: "Martha, Martha, thou art disturbed about many things, but only one thing is worth anxiety, only one in this world that you need to be deeply concerned about, and when that thing is settled everything is settled, and when that is unsettled, all things are unsettled." It is only another instance of our Lord's manner of impressing upon His audience, whether that audience were a great crowd or a single individual, that we should first settle our relation with God; that we should fix our thoughts on the great need of the soul, and never allow anything else to be accounted as worthy of consideration until that supreme question was thoroughly and effectually settled. He gives as a reason for this that the good part that Mary chose could not be taken away from her.

This is the doctrinal point, and I shall discuss it briefly. Our Savior here certainly teaches that if you choose God and eternal life that it can never be taken away from you. I know there are some who teach that you may have that good part today and you may lose it tomorrow. That puts it on an equality with the dinner that Martha made, with the perishable things, sweet to the taste and gladsome to the sight, here now, and gone tomorrow, and the same hunger crying out to be appeased as if you had never stood at that feast.

Over against the perishable, in sublime contrast, Christ puts the imperishable. Over against the things that slip through our fingers even while we grasp them, and the robes that fade even as we wear them, He puts the crown of eternal life and predicates the wisdom of choice upon the fact that no change of season, no vicissitudes of life, no emergency that can arise under the sun, can ever jeopardize what you have gained when your soul once gets that good part.

The Psalmist refers to this in that precious division of the Book of Psalms that has always been a favorite with me, the Seventy-third Psalm. After stating that God would guide him on earth with His counsel and afterward receive him into glory, he bursts into this rapture: "Though my heart fail, though my flesh fail, O God, Thou art my portion forever." "Mary hath chosen that good portion which shall not be taken away from her." And in talking with His disciples about it He says, "I give unto them eternal life [mark the nature of it, eternal], and they shall never perish." "None shall pluck them out of My hand." "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The value, then, of this good part consists in that when you once get it, it is yours forever. It is inalienable. There are no destroying forces of wind or wave, or fire or

persecution, that can eliminate one grain of substance from the solid enduring gift of God, but in its fullness and in its entirety it is yours forever and ever. “Mary hath chosen that good part which can never be taken away from her.”

I ask you to notice in the next place that when you make an election of the good thing first, that it shows that highest wisdom in this, that you secure the other things also. The Apostle Paul, referring to this, says, “All things are yours.” Is Peter a gifted apostle? If you are Christ’s, Peter is yours. Is Apollos, that brilliant rhetorician from Alexandria, who, being converted to God, turned all of the powers of his cultivated mind to the ministry of God — is he desirable? Then Apollos is yours, and life is yours, and death is yours, and heaven is yours. All things are yours if you get the main thing, which is God.

We are so constituted (God made us so) that we can never be satisfied if we do not get that lasting portion that never can be taken away from us. The prophet Isaiah compares what are ordinarily called the good things of this world to a cistern. The cistern, you know, is a vessel, and a broken cistern cannot hold any water. Not only is it limited in its capacity, while your cravings are unlimited on account of the eternity of your being, because you have a deathless soul, but even as a cistern it is cracked and lets the water out, whereas God, he says, is an unfailing fountain, a fountain that is not wasted by its outgushing fullness and its outflowing; a fountain that comes from such deep reservoirs and such great volume of accumulated waters that it commenced to sparkle and sing when the earth was created, and when the last day dawns on the world that fountain will still be flowing. He says, “My people have committed two evils. They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water, and have hewed out for themselves broken cisterns which can hold no water.”

Hear the words of a great and good man. Patrick Henry thus closed his last will and testament:

“I have now disposed of all my property to my family. There is one thing I wish I could give them, and that is the Christian life. If they had that, and I had not given them one shilling, they would be rich; and if they have not that, and I have given them all the world, they would be poor.”

Whoever has God and nothing else is rich indeed. Whoever has everything else and not God is poor indeed. Then we see why one is called the good part. We see how there is no necessity to have undue cares and anxieties about the little things. They were not worth it. The human soul ought not to vex itself over the non-attainable. Let them go if they do not come of themselves.

Now we can understand what our Savior meant when the disciples, the Seventy that were sent out, came back rejoicing. About what? "What are you so glad about?" "Lord, the devils are subject unto us." But He said, "There is only one thing in which the soul should rejoice; rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven. Rejoice that the good portion is yours; rejoice that the great question of salvation to you has been settled and settled forever and never can become unsettled."

And that is why also those preachers who go out among the people, whose minds are so possessed with the value of a soul, who can enter into the depths of that question of Jesus, "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 when it is once lost?" - why the preachers who go out with that great ruling thought in their hearts and address themselves to saving men, become such grand preachers.

It is a nice thing to get up in the pulpit, and sometimes, if you do not take too much time for it, a profitable thing, to tell how many miles it is from Dan to Beersheba and what is the grade of the fall of the river Jordan, and how much lower the Dead Sea is than the Mediterranean. These are good points, but if a man's mind is fixed on them, if he stops to look at landscapes if his fancy is carried away with the height and blueness of mountains, if he stops to gaze at the trees and the flowers as he goes and forgets that souls are perishing that preacher's ministry is barren and the world could well do without him.

And now I make the application to the church. If the good part to be selected is the settlement of one's own salvation, and if the settlement of that question disposes of everything in this world that is worth anxiety, the one thing about which it is needful to be concerned, then it seems to me that the great mission of the church of Jesus Christ is to try to lead souls to the settlement of the question, and every song and sermon and prayer and service and every thought in connection with the service should be directed to that end. The building itself, its style, the amount of money to be put into it, everything in connection with it, should be adjusted and shaped to the accomplishment of the one great, supreme business of a church of Jesus Christ - the salvation of the souls of men.

Oh, if God gives a member of this church, as His servant here on earth, admittance into one family, (it may be that there are no more than three in the family, as there was in this family in Bethany), when he has gained admittance into that house, how shall he enjoy that glorious privilege? To what end shall he address himself? If we shall find an opening into that home through the coming of a child into the Sunday school, a house where heretofore we have had no welcome, if a child comes to the Sunday school and the door of that house is now opened to the members of the

church, O brethren, should it not be the one great care of our souls, when we think of that family, to give them that good part? Let us call their attention to the supreme thing, the settlement of their relation to God, and get it once settled forever.

Allow me to illustrate. We obtain admission into a house and we make our going there a matter of pleasure and of profit to that family, and through our going has been introduced into that family a book as a gift, a book of travels, and the boy receives it and reads it. He says, "I am very much obliged for what has followed from this acquaintance. Here is a marvelous opening to my mind in this book of travels. It tells me about many strange countries." And there is a feeling of gratitude in his heart commensurate with the gift but there will come a time when seeing will not satisfy that boy; even if stimulated by that book he will himself become a traveler and look upon these lands, these strange foreign countries, notice of which he first saw in The pages of that book; there will come a time when no scene in any of these foreign countries can satisfy his eye. Then he says, "Oh that I might see another land, where night never falls, into which sickness never comes, where sin and death and sorrow never reign! Oh, that I had a book that told me of a sun-bright land, luminous with the presence of God and glorious in its eternity of joy! My soul longs for another and a better world. Where is it?"

Now, what if that visit had led that boy to the Son of God who gives title to that mansion in the skies? There comes to him a time when the old earth having answered the purposes of God in its creation, and dried up until it has become so inflammable that a spark of ignition shall set it on fire - a time when earth and sky pass away, ages and cycles of ages roll along through eternity, when the boy would say. "I remember when some member of the church of Jesus Christ came to my home, came there with an opportunity to minister unto me, came there to lead me to some part, good or bad, and that servant led me to the good part; the ten thousand years have sped away, and its life is as bright as when it first dispelled the gloom of my sorrow, and its joys are as unfathomable and as shoreless as when my suffering soul, grief-stricken and sin-stricken, first bathed in its gracious and pleasant water."

Just think of this and then you can understand how salvation came to the Bethany house that night; how the two things were offered and one took the good part and held and then enjoyed it and held it when sickness came and death took away her brother, and held it when the Master was going to His own crucifixion, and came with loving heart and hand and broke the alabaster box of her gratitude, and poured out on Him the fullness of the fragrance which symbolized her love until the aroma of it filled that chamber .and that village and that country and the whole world, for wheresoever in the world the gospel shall be preached, it shall be told of her what

she had done. Oh, that was the good part! Reading Homer, Alexander became heroic. Learning of Jesus. Mary became filled with divine love.

Alexander's fame filled a part of the world and an age that is dead, and only a few monuments remain to attest his valor. Her love filled the world and will fill it, and will echo in all of its secret chambers throughout this narration of her amazing devotion to her Lord. Well, it was the good part that had that effect, that so moulded a life, and so dowered a heart, that so crowned a soul, that so equipped an image of God as to exalt into such conformity with the divine nature.

And as divinity touches even a piece of charcoal in the deep pits of the earth, where former fires have burned, and transforms it into a diamond that shall sparkle in the diadem of a king, so this good part received in the earth shall make our apprehensions like an angel, shall gird us with knowledge swift as intuition, and shall make us love the whole world. That was a good part. If I had to select a portion for my child, my little girl, would I not like to select one that will never take the joy from her eye, that will never mar her beauty, not of form but of soul, one that will give her a queen's dower, one that will lift her above the heroines of all the secular and profane antiquity, one that will make her queen indeed because she shall be an inhabitant of heaven and an intimate friend of the King of kings and the Lord of lords? It is a good part.

If there is a soul undowered, a soul fretful and peevish, a soul distracted by the infinitesimal things that, if solved or not solved, amount to nothing, O soul, exchange all that care for anxiety about one supreme question, "Am I lost or saved? Is my name written in the Lamb's Book of Life? Am I a child of God?"

O Lord God, impress upon such a heart the necessity of choosing now, choosing with a conclusive decision, choosing with a decision that lays hold and will not relax at all upon that good part which shall never, no never forever, be taken away!

16. GOD SETS HIS SEAL ON THE CHRISTIAN'S HEART

TEXT: Set me as a seal upon thine heart. - ²⁰⁰⁶Song of Solomon 8:6

I wish to read three introductory passages of Scripture. The first is from the first chapter of the Letter to the Ephesians: "In whom having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise."

The next Scripture, fourth chapter of the same Letter: "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye were sealed unto the day of redemption."

The last Scripture is from the Second Letter to Timothy and second chapter (verses 18 and 19):

"Who concerning the truth have erred, . . . and overthrew the faith of some. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

The text is an expression in the eighth chapter of the Song of Solomon, ninth verse: "Set me as a seal upon thine heart."

Those of you who have ever witnessed the attachment of a seal to any document or instrument know that it means a definite, particular thing and entirely different from anything else connected with that document. It is not the dictating of the document nor the writing of it, nor the attachment of the signature to it, but it is something that comes after all of that.

The seal is stamped upon the instrument - one definite act - clearly distinguished from anything else. You know that it is not a continuous nor a repeated action. When the seal is *affixed* once, that serves for all time to come. The object of it in such a case is to attest or authenticate or validate the instrument.

Another use of the seal is to secure that which is sealed - make it safe, so far as the power of the one whose seal is attached can make it safe. You remember that when the tomb of Jesus was closed up by rolling at the mouth of it a great stone, a seal was put upon it. That seal could not be broken except in defiance of the authority which placed it there, and though it may have been a thin slip of paper, it represented all the power of the authority affixing it. When the word is used in the sense "to make secure," it always means to make secure to a definite time, and in that case it was to make secure that sepulcher until after the three days were passed.

The sanctity and power of every seal depends entirely upon the power of the one who attaches the seal. If it is the seal of a man who represents nothing and has nothing, the seal is of no more account than the man himself, but if it is the seal of an omniscient and omnipotent and omnipresent God, it is just as powerful in holding safe what is sealed as the omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence of God can make it.

The expression, "Him hath the Father sealed." whatever that sealing meant, refers to a past transaction. The tense shows that - "whom God hath sealed," not "whom He will seal." And as that statement was made very early in His ministry, it shows that the sealing of the Son of God was already performed. So you must go back of that date to find out what the sealing was. Whatever it was, it had already occurred. Whatever it was, we know by whom it was done. The text declares that the sealing was done by the Father.

The thing to be determined is, what was the sealing. Think a moment - what is the object of a seal? It is something that is done to authenticate; then it is some one thing done at one time which serves for all times; it is not a continuous act, a repeated action, but it is a definite and a determinate thing, done once for all. The passages which I read to you later on in the New Testament, all state that so far as a Christian is concerned, he is sealed in every instance, in or with the Holy Ghost. That is the seal every time in his case. All of the Scriptures that refer to it state that.

Then, doesn't that suggest to us what was the sealing of Jesus Christ? John the Baptist was commissioned of God to baptize and was assured by the Almighty that in the administration of that rite, the Messiah should be designated and accredited in some unmistakable way-that while he was baptizing, God Himself would seal the One who was the Messiah. So then when we look for this seal, we watch the baptism of John. When Jesus came to John to be baptized, John did not recognize Him as the Messiah. The sealing had not come then. If it had come, He would have already been accredited, but John said, "I knew Him not." The sealing had not yet occurred. John baptized Him and that was not the seal. He went up out of the water praying and to Him the heavens were opened, and down from the heavens came a visible seal in the form of a dove, and rested on the head of Jesus. There is the seal - the Holy Spirit - the giving of the Holy Spirit. John said, "and I knew Him not; but that He should be made manifest unto Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record saying, I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and abode upon Him. And I knew Him not; but He that sent me to baptize in water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth in the Holy Ghost. And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God."

Now, as further proof that this was the sealing of Jesus Christ, we notice that He Himself used it in that sense, when He went into the synagogue in Nazareth and read the passage from Isaiah, where it said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor, to give sight to the blind, to give deliverance to the captives."

Here was something now that accredited Him as a preacher of the gospel to the poor; here was something that constituted His credentials to deliver captives; here was something that once over was never repeated, but remained with Him, and wherever He went, accredited Him as the true Messiah - the Spirit resting on Him. That Spirit came down at His baptism. Jesus claimed that that was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, and it was a fulfillment of other prophecies I could cite. It is a mistake to say that the voice from heaven which said, "This is my beloved Son," was the seal. Nobody heard that voice except Jesus Himself and John, so far as the evidence goes, and that voice did not abide with Him. That voice was not heard at Nazareth when He preached there, but the Spirit remained with Him always constituting His power and constituting His authority and that seal was never repeated. But the voice may well represent the inscription on the seal, and the two voices - this one at His baptism and the one that came at His transfiguration - may represent the double inscription on the seal. Imagine on one side of the seal this inscription: "This is My beloved Son"; now, on the other side of the seal, this inscription: "Hear ye Him." That is what would be written on the seal, but the seal itself is the eternal Spirit given unto Him.

Now, notice the peculiarity of the sealing of Jesus Christ, that which distinguishes His sealing from the sealing of an ordinary Christian. John brings out that distinction. He says that "to Jesus, the Spirit was given without measure." There was no limit, but to the Christian the Spirit is given with a limit, with measure. Jesus had on Him the whole power of the Spirit without any limitation whatever. God in the gift of the Spirit to Him, bestowed all the authority of Deity, with plenary power to teach the things to be believed, as He says in another place: "All authority in heaven and on earth is given unto Me."

Now, let's look in the next place to the sealing of the Christian. By whom is a Christian sealed? We may make a mistake by a misuse of the word "by," as is sometimes done. Evidently the sealer of the Christian is Jesus Himself, but He seals him instrumentally with the Holy Spirit. He seals him in the Spirit. That is the Christian seal. There is a definite time always when the sealing takes place, and it never takes place but once. The Apostle Paul says, "And after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." Not "by the Holy Spirit of promise," but "with" it.

The true sealer is Jesus Himself, but with the Spirit; that is, by conferring upon this Christian the Spirit, he is sealed.

This does not refer to conviction nor conversion. There the Holy Spirit is a direct agent. That is the work of making a Christian. Peter says, "This gift is unto you and unto your children," i.e., "The gift of the Holy Ghost." Paul says, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" When you believed did you receive it? Now, the gift of the Holy Spirit to a Christian after he believes - that is the sealing.

Let us next notice the object of sealing a Christian. It is to make him safe. There is put upon him a seal which stamps him, marks him as God's property, and holds him as God's property against any other claims, and which holds him unto the time specified; for, when a seal is attached, it is to a definite time and to a definite end. If I addressed a communication to a man in Washington the seal holds it secure until it reaches its destination. The one addressed may break it; it has accomplished its end when it gets to him.

Now, when a man is converted, when he believes, God seals him to a certain time. After that time has expired, he does not need a seal to keep him safe; but, what is that time? It is expressly set forth in one of the Scriptures I quoted as "the day of redemption." That does not mean the day in which Christ died for the redemption of the world, but it is explained in the Letter to the Romans, to wit: "The redemption of our bodies." The day of redemption to which the Christian is "sealed" is the resurrection day, and the seal which God places upon him holds good until that time. It keeps, him safe from every evil, and unless you can find a force stronger than Omnipotence and wiser than Omniscience and which can be nearer to you and stay longer with you than Omnipresence, there is no danger about that seal.

"Sealed unto the day of redemption" - now notice that this seal on the Christian has an inscription, a double one, and both are declared in Paul's Letter to Timothy. Suppose you take a coin of the United States - I happen to have one. On one side is this inscription, "In God we trust," and on the other side is the inscription, "E Pluribus Unum." Now, Paul says that on the Christian seal there is a double inscription representing the divine side and representing the human side. The divine side says, "The Lord knoweth them that are His." On the other side it says, "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."

Notice the difference between God's knowledge and our knowledge. The foundation stands sure with the Lord all the time; why? Because He knows them that are His; but how is it with us? We don't know. I mean that there is, as Dr. Dagg, the great theologian, said, only one infallible proof that you are a Christian, and that is perseverance in holiness. On the obverse side of that seal: "Let him that nameth the

name of the Lord depart from iniquity.” I maintain today that the doctrine of that inscription is that in a state of departure from God, no man with a conscience feels safe. The comforting assurance that he is a child of God is taken away from him. I do not say that the salvation is taken from him. I am very far from affirming that; but the comforting assurance of it is taken from him. Some people seem to think that the certainty of salvation depends upon their knowing God; whereas, the inscription on this seal says that “the foundation stands firm, because the Lord knows them that are His.” The foundation stands firm, not because you know Him, but because He knows you.

Now, I want to apply my text by an illustration. My text says, “Set me a seal upon thine heart.” If you turn to the book of Exodus you find that God required Moses to make stones - beautiful stones - and on these stones to inscribe the names of the twelve tribes, and these stones were fastened to the breast-plate of Aaron, so that whenever he went to appear before God, he carried on his heart the names of the twelve tribes.

It is to that declaration of the Pentateuch that our text refers, when it says, “Set me as a seal upon thine heart.” Aaron put these several jewels inscribed with the name of the people who were God’s upon his heart and carried them into the Holy of Holies.

In another place you have the expression: “I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands.” Upon His hands - and every time He lifted them up the pleading hands of intercession, there were the names, and so the text: “Set me as a seal upon thine heart,” means, “Let my name be on the breastplate of the great High Priest,” and it means, “Let my name be graven upon His hands,” when He spreads them in intercession, so that every time He opens these hands and holds them up to plead, my name will be there, and on His heart my name.

Now, let us see the correspondence of this - if there be a correspondence in it. You take a man who is not a Christian and whose heart is hard. You hold a seal against that man, and it will make no impression, no more than if the seal were pressed upon hard clay. Before the heart will take the impress of the seal, it must be by the power of the Holy Ghost changed, softened, melted-but when it is under the influence of the Spirit of God, then the seal is put on it.

Now, what is that seal? I have said that Jesus does the sealing, and that it is done “with the Holy Spirit,” but we have not yet determined the precise thing - the sealing. What is it? Paul twice tells what it is. He says that it is “Christ formed in us the hope of glory”; the light of God shining into our hearts and revealing the face of Jesus Christ. The seal then is an image of Jesus Himself.

That could not be impressed upon a hard heart. Such a heart would not take the impression. But if the Holy Spirit melts it and makes it tender, in that man's soul is formed an image of Jesus Christ, and when the image of Christ is formed on the man's heart, the man's name is set as a seal on the heart of Jesus and there is thus a double seal. O God, impress on me Thine image, and then "set me as a seal upon Thy heart!"

That is the correspondence of the thought. That is why no man uninfluenced by the Spirit of Jesus Christ can appreciate anything you say to him about Christ and the gospel and heaven and hell. But when the Spirit of God fills a community with His presence and power, let conviction work; let the trembling seize the sinner; let the warmth and comfort of the Spirit melt that man's heart, and directly, if the man were able to look into his heart, he would see what Paul describes as the image of Jesus Christ.

There is the seal, and it is done in us with the Holy Spirit. It is done by Jesus Christ. It is done when a man believes on Jesus Christ. It is done once, and never repeated. It holds good until the resurrection day. It carries him safe through life, safe through death, and safe through all the changes that come to his material body after death, and puts him at God's right hand, when every enemy is dead and destroyed. The seal goes beyond the life of his last enemy. It holds good until the last one that would seek to detach him from God has passed away.

Now, there is another use of the word in the third chapter of John, and in the thirty-third verse: "He that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true." That means that when God sealed Jesus Christ by conferring upon Him without any measure the Holy Spirit to accredit Him as the Messiah, and He tells me to believe in that Messiah, if I do believe in Him, then by my action I have set my seal to the declaration that God's Word is true. I have ratified it by my actions.

We have thus looked at all the most important passages of Scripture which touch this question of sealing, and there is only one other thing that I have to say. The whole question turns on what God knows about the case, and God knows whether the image of Jesus Christ is in your heart or not, because if it is, you may be sure that on the breast-plate of the High Priest your name is there and it is His knowledge that determines.

You remember that sad case mentioned in the Bible where a number of people - formal Christians - externally so by profession - knocked at the door and said, "Lord, open to us; we know You; You taught in our streets," but from that closed door comes the awful voice, "I never knew you; I never knew you." "The foundation

of God standeth sure, having this seal—the Lord knoweth them that are His.” It is God’s unerring, infallible knowledge that tests the case.

You may get at the spiritual thought of this sealing by a saying of John Knox. He was so deeply moved with concern for the spiritual condition of Scotland, seeing the papacy unrestrained, seeing the people ground to powder, and longing for their redemption, and praying for their redemption, he said, “God, give me Scotland, or I die!” “I think if I were to die and my breast were opened, you would find ‘Scotland’ engraved upon my heart.”

Now, that leads us to understand something of the form of Christ in us, and the fixing in us of the image of Jesus. And I do believe that from the day that God converted my soul to the present time, that if I had died, while not on the material heart, yet on my spirit, would have been found the name of Jesus formed in me as the hope of glory, as the seal that is to carry me to the day of redemption; formed when I was melted by the Holy Ghost; when my soul yielded to God, and I trusted in Jesus, and He became to me the chief of ten thousand and the One altogether lovely.

Are you sealed? Is the seal of God upon you? You say that you believe. Have you received the Spirit since you believed? Have you in you the mind that was in the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you love what He loves? Do you seek to bring about what He desires? Do you see the excellency of things as He represents them? Are your hopes fixed on the home where He is, and when you are off alone, when your most natural expression comes to you and there is no longer any necessity of wearing a mask — or the hypocrite will wear a mask in a crowd — does your heart turn heavenward? Does it pray, “Come, Lord Jesus”? Does it long for that home with the saints? If it does, then those are strong assurances that the Spirit of God is with you—that you are sealed.

Then, when temptation comes to you, is there something that shows the hatefulness of that sin, or if you have under its sudden power succumbed to it, is there something that rises up and condemns you for it and makes it abhorrent to you, and causes you, because of what is inside of you, to feel a desire to be delivered from that bondage? That is an indication of that seal. It shows that there is something in you, then, even when you do wrong which makes the presence of that wrong incompatible with the Guest who inhabits you. The two are not consonant; they are not congenial, and your greater love is for the spiritual resident. Shame covers you when you think that while such a Guest was abiding in your soul, you turned aside to entertain such a tramp of hell as a sin that had beguiled you.

Therefore the inscription, “Let every man that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.” If a man says, “I just know I am a Christian; I know it,” and I see that

not the accidental, not an occasional act of his life is away from God, but that he is habitually in the course of his life going away from God - not departing from iniquity, but departing from God - why, he certainly discredits his statements that God is his, or that he is God's.

The true child of God wars against passion, wars against appetite. He may trip and fall now and then, but he rises again, and falls heavenward as he falls, and, like Bunyan's pilgrim, though he gets into the Slough of Despond, he climbs out of it on the side towards heaven, not to go back to the City of Destruction, but on the other side. That man has the mark and the seal on him. Are you sealed?

Day before yesterday I had one of these sudden, strange thoughts that surprise me very much. I had occasion to go out to the cemetery, and there is an immense city out there - silent people awaiting the resurrection, and many are the inscriptions of men written on the tombstones, and as I gazed on the mounds of earth, I could not shield my heart from the question - how many of these are sealed unto the day of redemption? God's seal? And if I could have known it and stood by one who had that seal, I could have said with perfect truth: "Asleep in Jesus, blessed sleep; sleep till death dies; sleep till the last enemy shall be destroyed: the seal of God is on you; the resurrection is coming, and your body will be delivered from corruption and mortality to incorruption and immortality, and to be reinhabited by the spirit which occupied it, and then enjoy God and heaven ever afterward." "Whom God the Father hath sealed."

Without any measure the Spirit was given to Jesus, and that is the argument for His acceptance. That is the sign. Who claims now to be Christ? I call for the credentials. I call for the seal which authenticates it. Is the Spirit of God resting on him? Is the Spirit of God resting on him without measure? Does it rest on him through every form of want and sickness and storm and death and hell? Does the Spirit rest on him? Has he been sealed of God as the Messiah? If not, of course he can stand aside. He is an impostor. He is not worth a hearing unless he can show that God the Father hath sealed him with the gift of the Spirit without measure.

That He must have to be the Savior of the world, and to my mind there is no stronger argument than this as to the Messiahship of Jesus Christ, that even to this day the demonstrations multiply that the Spirit was on Him; He still pours out the Spirit - still dispenses the Spirit. It is Jesus, accredited of God the Father by the seal that was put upon Him, who touches men's hearts today; who leavens the evil civilization of the day and purifies it; who builds almshouses and orphanages, and Christian colleges, and permeates society with the spirit of truth and purity, and protests against evil in every form.

It is Christ in the world, speaking through His credentials, the Holy Spirit, given to Him without measure. "Him hath God the Father sealed," and the seal is legible and visible to this day, and it accredits now just as it accredited then, and there is no other thing that does accredit. When He rose from the dead, He was quickened by the power of the Spirit that had been conferred upon Him; when He wrought the miracles, He wrought them by the finger of God and by the Spirit that was conferred upon Him, and they were the manifestations of that seal that was set upon Him.

Oh! There are some upon whom that seal is not and never will be placed. God forbid that any here should be of that number. I plead with you tonight; I plead with you for your own soul's sake; I plead with you by this conscious fact, that if your heart is hard it cannot take the impress of Jesus Christ. It cannot take it any more than hard clay can take the impress of a seal. Oh, seek the Spirit with whom you are to be sealed to the day of redemption. The preparation He gives; the conviction is His; the repentance and faith are His work. After the faith, then the sealing. The image of Jesus is that seal. No time can dim it. No enemy can efface it. It is formed inside of you, the light of the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ, formed in you the hope of glory.

I do wish the people would pray more for the Spirit. We want the Spirit in this city, to convict the hearts of the people we love, that are dear to us, whom we could not, without unspeakable bitterness, see going away as Jesus saw Jerusalem going away. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" Loving them so, we ought to pray for the Spirit to touch the hearts of our boys, of our girls, and all our friends, and do, oh, do think of this!

I would not dismiss you without saying that when the Spirit comes, then you need not argue any more. You need not talk about youth and old age. The Spirit of God can convert a man a hundred years old. The Spirit of God can even convert a rich man; the Spirit of God can convert a child. There are no things too hard for God. All things are possible for Him, and you may with perfect confidence ask Him to save the vilest sinner on the face of the earth. Oh, for the power of that Spirit!