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**SOUL HELP**

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# SOUL HELP

**BY**

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# CHAPTER 1

## THE SOUL

AMONG the mysteries there is none profounder than the human soul. Everything about it savors of the unknown. The inexplorable and unexplainable meet us at every turn in spite of much that is known, and that is being discovered.

Every night hundreds if not thousands of telescopes are pointed at distant stars and planets in the endeavor to understand better the nature, and to discover new secrets about these faraway rambles in space. Some things have been learned about them, but much remains to be found out. The vastness of their distance from us is the explanation of our ignorance concerning them.

In like manner the gaze of innumerable eyes and the energies of countless minds are directed in investigation of the human soul. Hour after hour, and minute after minute, the telescopes of thought and study are turned upon it, and while much has been discovered, much remains to be revealed concerning the invisible stranger, that, unlike the stars, is in a few inches or feet of us, and yet in many respects is as profoundly unknown.

Mystery after mystery rolls up before us in the questions, What is spirit, and how can it act independently of matter? And when does the soul begin its existence; and is it generated or created? Does it exist seminally, or is it a direct creation of God in the womb?

Then, where is its location in the body? That it is there we do not doubt, but in what part of the body? Does it fill the physical frame, or is it in the perineal gland, as Wesley thought, or in the brain, or nearer the heart, or where?

Then other puzzling thoughts arise as to the nature of the soul's existence when separated from the body, and whether it has powers which correspond to speech, sight, hearing and other faculties, as well as

members of the body. And has it a shape? And does it possess color? etc., etc.

But everywhere we are confronted with closed doors, which are not only shut, but locked, and refuse to open to our knock and call. An unsolvable mystery is near us yes, in us; and there is no more answer to us from that viewless inhabitant about some things we want to know, than if it was a dweller upon Jupiter or Saturn.

And yet we know something about this invisible tenant of the body. We have sailed along part of the coast lines, explored a few of the bays, and stood upon some of the capes and hilltops. We have made a little chart concerning what has been discovered, with a wavering line showing what we know, and great white spaces marked “unknown,” “unexplored,” etc., declaring what we do not know. We mention a few things that we know:

**First**, It is distinct from the body.

We discover that it has longings and desires that are not physical, but spiritual. In the midst of a life of bodily gratification, it is itself perfectly miserable. The bodies lies down satisfied, while this nature starts up unsatisfied, full of unrest, and plaintive inward cries. This is the soul, which has a hunger as keen as that of the body, which thirsts and wants rest like the physical being, and failing to obtain will surely lead the man to despair and deeds of desperation.

**Second**, It is a thinking something.

We have a thought nature in us. It commenced running away back yonder at its beginning, and is destined to run forever. We are told that when reason is dethroned and one tramps the cell of a lunatic, yet thought goes on; wild, disordered, disconnected, it is true, but not the less is it thought. The mental machine works on faithfully.

As far as the soul has been traced and followed from the body, it is found to be thinking. It thinks in death, and, according to Christ, thinks after death. The rich man’s agony in hell sprang partly from the fact that he remembered his brethren on earth, and the effect of his life upon them.

We can conceive of no greater torture than to be compelled to endure the slow, deliberate, steady, faithful grindings of the mind machine, which

reproduces all the scenes and events of a sorrowful, sinful, misspent life, and keeps this up forever.

**Third**, It is a beautiful something.

As we have said, we neither know its shape or color. The general opinion is that it is white. A confirmation of this thought is that whenever the soul is aroused, there is a flash of light in the face.

But of one thing we feel assured, and that is, that every human spirit is beautiful. Doubtless in this respect the king has no advantage over the beggar, the civilized man over the heathen, nor one race above another. Made in God's image, they are all compelled to be lovely.

As we view the human family, after an external fashion, we see great differences produced in face and form by clothing, old age, disease, poverty and suffering. And so consciously and unconsciously a very great variety of treatment is rendered to people. But the eye of God pierces these externals of accident and misfortune, and sees within every human form a beautiful soul. And those who are filled with God's Spirit have a measure of the same discernment and recognize the loveliness and preciousness of this hidden something within, called a spirit. As Angelo saw an angel in a stone, so they see a beautiful possibility beneath a hard and unattractive exterior. They know that an invaluable gem is in these crumbling walls of clay.

The soul is lovely. Its Maker, and the likeness in which it was fashioned, proves that. But also, its swift and vanishing appearance in the face puts the matter beyond question. Who has not seen it tremble on the lip, laugh in the eye, and at times stretch out its arms to you?

When the soul is allowed to have continued rulership over the animal life all have observed the cultured, attractive look that appears stamped on the countenance. Then there are moments when under the mighty influence of truth perceived or received, some great deed of moral heroism, some sacrifice to man or God, some great influx of the divine life and glory, the soul appears fairly looking at you out of the face, which is in itself transfigured by its glorious presence. It is noticeable that even the homely become attractive, and the naturally beautiful sweep beyond that into an angelic appearance, when the soul, aroused by the Holy Ghost, stands

gazing out into the world through the face, as one stands and looks out from a window.

**Fourth,** It is a lonely something.

It came into the world alone; it leaves the world alone, and is made to stand alone before the Judgment Seat of Christ. It is fenced off from all other beings in a body which encases it, and looks out of its clay prison upon the world, as a man on an island gazes upon the ocean washing around him.

This fact, in addition to others, produces the indescribably solitary feeling which every soul has felt with bitterest pangs, and at times came near sinking under.

**Fifth,** It is a friendless something.

We do not mean that a soul does not love, and is not loved. We do not say there are no such things as attachments and warm, true friendships. Such a statement would be absurd and false. And yet we reiterate the fact of the profound friendlessness of the human spirit.

When we recall that a deep religious experience is to place one at once into a place where opposition comes alike from friend and foe; when we remember that our own loved ones, with a mistaken affection, try to bring us into amusements, employments and places which are simply ruin and death to the spiritual life, some idea of the soul's friendlessness begins to dawn on the reader.

**Sixth,** It is a restless something.

No argument is needed here. A glance within, and the study of human life without, confirm the statement. This invisible spirit wants rest, and is after it. Its actions prove it.

The trails in the forest lead down to springs and brooks. The physical thirst drives animal life to the seeking, finding and frequent return to streams of water. In like manner the soul, impelled, not to say driven, by its own yearnings, is seen going in every direction for satisfaction. It leaves its trail everywhere. Its track is found by the side of every earthly pool and cistern of pleasure. The pity is that it makes such amazing blunders in

searching after spiritual rest and gratification. The marvel is that an animal is truer in its instincts than a spirit in its reasonings and judgments.

The only perfect rest for the soul is to be found in God. It was made for Him, is restless without him, and will be wretched as well as undone forever if it does not find Him. It seems to require years for the soul to discover that the eye and ear are never satisfied with seeing and hearing, that the spirit may be infatuated for a brief while, but never inwardly contented and filled by an earthly object. When the discovery takes place, then the life of the misanthrope, and recluse or the suicide is often the result. Tell the disappointed, soured, embittered man that the cause of his unhappiness, heart emptiness, and life failure is that he has missed God, and likely as not he will laugh the informer to scorn.

Astronomy tells of numerous small bodies flying through space and circling about the sun. They originally came from that great shining orb, and their only hope of rest is to fall back into the place from whence they came.

The parable is plain. We came from God. He saw to it in our creation that enough of His nature was implanted in us to make us restless and unhappy until we returned to Him, fell in his embrace, and found that blessed repose and perfect heart-contentedness only to be realized in God Himself, through Jesus Christ, His Son.

[Transcriber Note: Either the printer or author mistakenly placed two “Sixth” points in the original text. The second of those two “Sixth” points follows this inserted comment.]

**Sixth**, It is a dreadfully imperiled something.

There is no danger in the universe, frightful as it may seem, that can be compared for a moment to the peril which threatens the soul. The ruin and destruction of a soul demands, as some one has said, that the heavens are veiled, and the stars hung with crepe.

Let the reader think for a moment of what a world we are living in. It is a vision of the weak flying from the strong, every form of life trying to escape some kind of danger and death. The insect is avoiding the bird, the dove is flying from the hawk, the fish is rushing from the angler, the



smaller animals running from the larger, the larger from the hunter, and destruction and death is on every breeze. The trap, dead fall, baited hook, net, spear, sword, musket and cannon are seen everywhere, and blood is trickling in every field and wood, and life is being gasped out everywhere.

Dreadful as is the spectacle, yet the heart-chilling thought at once comes up, that none of these dangers and deaths can be likened to the peril and ruin that threaten the soul. A doom and destruction is on the track, and in full pursuit of the human spirit, which transcends in horror all the others beyond words to describe.

A world of devils are unified to accomplish this destruction. Sin in every conceivable form is at work to get control of and damn the spirit made in God's image. Temptation is lurking on every side to spring upon and drag it down. Traps, pitfalls, baited hooks, painted decoys, every imaginable device of hell, is set to deceive, bewilder, overcome and undo forever the soul made in the image of God. The wonder is how any one can escape, And none would be saved but for the grace of God.

**Seventh,** It is a boundless something.

We mean that the invisible Spirit within seems to be endowed with inexhaustible capacities. As long as we observe its life it is learning. Its possibilities seem to have no end. In a strange sense it has bottomless depths and topless heights.

Men but faintly realize the value of the soul. If they did, better care would be taken of it. Christ knows its worth, and declares that a man could be the eternal loser, if he exchanged it for the whole world. According to the Bible, the soul is more precious than the entire earth, with its continents and seas, its forests and harvests, its gold and silver mines, and stores of precious gems.

The way that the soul can receive knowledge of all kinds; the systematizing and classifying; the ticketing, labeling and putting away in mental drawers for future use; the constant addition of facts with no sense of plethora, but ardent desires for more and boundless room for more, constitutes one of the amazing things about the human spirit.

It is evident that the soul from its very nature can make the choice of having a bottomless abyss experience within, and an eternally sinking in itself; or it can have the topless height, and be forever rising in all that is pure, true, holy and divine.

If a life of sin is chosen, the man will find, sooner or later, that he has a soundless pit within him; and the steady fall from day to day, the constant sinking from mean, meaner to meanest, from vile, viler to vilest, with yawning depths far beneath the present evil doing, and to which he feels he is going — all this will serve in a measure to show the boundless capacities of the soul.

We have a river in the South, whose broad powerful current slices off hundreds and thousands of acres of land, sometimes whole plantations at a time, sucks them up in its swirl, and sweeps them far off into the distant ocean. Then we have a stream in the mountains which suddenly disappears and carries with it whatever is floating on its bosom, never to be seen any more. Besides, we have read of a hole in a large natural cavern that seems to be bottomless: you may drop a stone and listen for the fall, but you will listen in vain. Again, we all know that if a rock could be cast from the earth, and laws of gravitation suspended, that rock would fall forever. Into the deep, black, empty, infinite space which underlies the universe, it would enter, and sink, sink, sink, forever and forever.

It requires all these figures and illustrations to show what is meant by a fallen and falling soul. We have all seen sin, like a Mississippi River, cutting away the spiritual acres of a man's life. Truth was washed away; honor, honesty and purity were swallowed up; reputation departed; and character disappeared.

We have also seen iniquity like a sinking hole in the spiritual life. Everything said to and done for the transgressor went immediately out of sight. Sermons, prayers, conversations, entreaties, warnings, rebukes, tears, all alike fell into the cavernous character, and were heard of no more. We were calling into and trying to fill up a bottomless pit. There seemed nothing within to catch and hold up a Gospel message or personal appeal.

Then we have seen the sinner falling like the stone descended through infinite space.

There is no doubt that when Christ spoke of hell being a bottomless pit, he was thinking not so much of locality as a spiritual state or condition. His mind was upon the everlasting sinking into darker moral depths of a lost soul.

This falling, while going on in life, is unquestionably retarded by the restraining grace of God, and by many extraneous things, like music, literature, public opinion and church influence. But the hour comes when the soul, leaving the body and entering eternity, will find itself stripped of all these things, and is left to follow its own bent, which is a perpetual inclination to sink. There is no doubt that when the spirit of a man has broken beyond the law of spiritual gravitation and commenced falling, it will continue to fall eternally. The centripetal power of God's grace has been cast off; the centrifugal force of self-will set on fire by sin alone operates, and means that the man gets farther from God every minute, hour, day, year, century, cycle and age, and through eternity itself. He is falling, falling, falling; lower and lower; deeper and deeper; sinking on himself; sinking in himself; and finding to his horror that he himself is a bottomless abyss.

On the other hand, if the soul chooses God and good, then we begin to see what is meant by topless heights in the spirit life.

All of us have marked the improvement, development and steady advancement of a soul after its conversion and sanctification. The progress in some instances was remarkable and in others wonderful. When filled with the Spirit we walk in the light steadily and faithfully with God, there is a constant growth and rise in the spiritual life all the while. People see it, and the soul feels it. It stands thrilled with the consciousness of its unfolding powers; while the months and years are accentuated and marked by the realization of greater wisdom, deeper love, increased gentleness and tenderness, with a commensurate firmness and power in the things of God.

A few years ago, at a college commencement, we saw a schoolgirl who had come to the place of learning from a back country neighborhood. Both face and manner showed the mental and social lack. Grace, knowledge and instruction had separate works to do in her behalf. About that time her soul was converted and sanctified, and then followed the training of mind and heart and enrichment of both. Some months ago we met the same girl,

but had to be introduced to her. The crude schoolgirl had disappeared, and in her place stood an elegant young woman with refined manners, cultured mind, deeply spiritual face, and noble Christian life. And yet this marvelous change is but the beginning. Eternity lies before this young maiden, with its everlasting progress and development, and as one of the daughters of the King, she will actually add grace to His palace, and with an increasing glory and honor forever.

In one of our largest cities a burglar, who was imprisoned for theft, was converted to God in a cell while reading one of Moody's sermons in a newspaper. After his release, he was sanctified and joined the M. E. Church, South. His life became irreproachable, and his face familiar at a number of holiness camp-meetings. He had been such a bold criminal, and such a terror to the police, that for months and even years after his change, the officers of the law kept watchful eyes upon him. But all at last marked the change in his life, and above all the wonderful transformation in his face. We have seen two photographs taken of him, one while he was in the depths of sin, and the other after he was sanctified and a devoted member of the church. The contrast was simply amazing, and constituted a powerful sermon in itself. The contrast was so dark, lowering, vicious, animal-like, and even devil-like, that it was hard to believe that the other photograph, showing a noble, open countenance, full of gracious light and love, could be the same man. And yet it was, and thousands who have seen the pictures and know the man as did the writer, can vouch for it.

And yet this improvement is but the beginning. Other heights of grace still tower above this redeemed man, and remain for all redeemed men. There are peaks of knowledge, dizzy elevations of glory, and mountain tops of grace and goodness and love and holiness, that shall be seen ascending one above another through the never-ending ages of eternity. And we are to ascend them forever. Topless heights in heaven over against bottomless depths in Hell. An eternal ascension of the soul in holiness and happiness above, as well as the everlasting sinking of the spirit in wickedness and wretchedness below.

It fairly dazes the mind to think what God's redeemed ones will be and look like in Heaven, a thousand or ten thousand or a million years from now. It does not yet appear what we shall be; we only are told we shall be

like Him. But what will He, the King of Glory, be like? So the mystery is not cleared up. The Glory has not yet been described.

A hint comes to us in Revelation, when John falls down to worship a transcendently glorious being, whom he sees and mistakes for a divine personage. The rebuking words to him were, "See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow-servant, one of thy brethren, the prophets."

May God help the reader to guard and preserve a soul which has such a wonderful appearance and is to enter upon such a glorious destiny above the stars.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE WAY OF SALVATION

ONE of the marvelous facts in the spiritual life is the possibility of communication with the invisible God. The eternal world can be heard from. A cable has been laid joining earth and heaven and its name is prayer. Upon this line flits the human cry, and back flashes the divine message perfectly understood by the one to whom it is sent.

Before such a fact, the telephone wire of hundreds of miles and the telegraph cable of a thousand leagues sink into nothing, for by this remarkable medium God and man are put in connection, and tidings flash from the invisible world, and eternity and time, in a sense, are linked together.

Of course the natural mind fails to believe and receive this great truth, and professes to be amused at the bare idea; but those who have heard and still hear from God in this manner have their confidence in no wise shaken by the unbelief of men, and continue to receive the blessed heart-thrilling messages from the skies.

The result of these answered prayers is deliverance from sin, transformation of character, usefulness and victory in life and heaven at last. This fact should cause men to study it carefully, and especially note certain points observed by a man who was signally successful in supplication. In other words, the kind of person who gets in touch with God and the invisible kingdom of glory.

Christ tells of a certain man, a Publican, who came upon the earth end of the heavenly cable and sent a message, and obtained a response that not only saved the individual himself, but filled the earth with his fame. Now as there are many who are skeptical about the possibility of such a divine interview, or whose souls have but barely entered upon the alphabet of heavenly communion and spiritual experiences, it is not only well and wise for them, but their duty to study this victor in prayer and see what things

are mentioned about him, and what practices he observed which may be lacking in themselves, the performance and fulfillment of which will bring the lacking knowledge and glory to their own souls.

One thing Christ said about the Publican was that “He went up into the temple.”

It is true that God is accessible everywhere, but some places are peculiarly favorable, for getting in touch with heaven. If there had been no need of the temple, tabernacle, synagogue and church, God would not have provided them, and that man is wise who places himself in the most favorable and helpful surroundings while he seeks salvation.

The very fact that the Publican went up to the temple showed a certain amount of faith in God to begin with, and in addition, that he recognized and bowed to the appointments and ordinances of heaven. The spirit of separatism from the church is certainly not taught here, while the individual who laughs and scoffs at the church gets a withering rebuke in this parable where the temple is seen to be a door of heaven to the seeking soul. The house of God has proved the same to millions of souls since that day.

A second thing said about the man is, that “He went up to pray.”

The Savior says that two men went up for that purpose, but one evidently forgot his original intention, and instead of supplicating, fell to praising himself. This individual was a Pharisee.

He is not the only person who seems to have misunderstood the character of the church, and has forgotten that Christ said that His Father’s house was one of prayer, and made it a social hall, a lounging place, a Chautauqua auditorium, a Sunday rendezvous ground for friends and acquaintances; in fact, anything but what it should be a gateway to the skies and a vestibule of glory.

It has ever been a lovely sight to the writer to see multitudes of people flocking to the churches, even though many went not with the best motives. It is a good place to go, and a right thing to do, and blessings innumerable and unspeakable have resulted from it to countless thousands who even attended with little or no expectation of being blessed.

If, however, like the Publican, one goes up with the avowed purpose of prayer, blessing is certain to come.

A third fact appearing about the spiritual victory was his humility.

This is made manifest in the man's standing afar off, and in the casting down of his head. Poor heartsick one, he little knew that he was in the very best position to hear from heaven. Doubtless he did not know that the Bible said, "God resisteth the proud," and "the proud he knoweth afar off." Perhaps he had not even noticed the defeat of the boasting Pharisee in the court above him. He did not stop to reason how disgusting and shocking is the swagger and strut of any man in the presence of God; nor consider that outside of grace, the human soul has every reason for abasement in the dust and none for self-exaltation.

All these things were true, but the Publican doubtless never thought of them, he only knew he was a soul-sick, miserable man wanting deliverance, but feeling perfectly unworthy of anything at the hands of God. Hence the pathetic attitude in the outer court of the temple.

We have marked scenes wonderfully like this one of Christ's own drawing, and have had the eyes to fill and the heart to melt at the sight. If the spectacle of a heartbroken man with head bowed on his breast in some remote shadowy corner of the church, should so move us, how very tenderly will God regard such a drooping, grieving figure.

A fourth feature of life shows the man not only thoroughly humble, but deeply convicted. The Bible says "he smote upon his breast."

This alone plainly declares an inward, mental state of unrest and suffering. The naturalness and eloquence of the act is such that it needs no enlarging upon. Conviction had seized upon him, and the man was miserable.

When men get really convicted they will soon find God. The burden is so great that they must obtain relief, and as none but a divine hand can give this, that hand must be found. People with any spiritual knowledge worth speaking of know this, and are sighing for the return of that mental and spiritual distress which fell upon men not only under the preaching of the apostles, but of the Wesleys and Whitefields, and still later under the preachers who swept this land one and two generations back.



It is a blessed sight to see men smite their breasts, and fall down and struggle in agony on the ground. This is much more impressive and awe-inspiring; than the sight of a congregation of perfectly composed looking people signing cards to the effect that under the circumstances and considering all things they would like to be Christians.

To see the genuinely convicted man today, one has to attend a full salvation meeting where men preach with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Some of us are very familiar with the sight of men and women rushing up the aisles, falling down at the altar, beating their breasts, and filling the air with cries which pierce every heart. And we also know that when people get this far they are exceedingly close to salvation.

A fifth feature in the case was the man's confession. He called himself a sinner.

It is to be remembered that the individual who went up to the temple with the Publican spent quite a while in complimenting himself. He was very thankful that he was not like other people, etc., etc. The record is that he went down as he came, empty, and doubtless much emptier and worse in heart.

The condition of hearing from heaven and having God speak to the soul is an honest admission or confession of what we are in the moral world. Herein is the explanation of many an unanswered prayer, and the greater, less, or utter failure of certain meetings held in churches and tents. The preachers and people tried to fool God. They presented the wrong ticket at the gate. They appeared at the door with non de plumes and aliases. They were not what they seemed. They tried to make God a partner to deceit and hypocrisy. They tried in this condition to press through a door over which hung such words and sentences as, "Nothing that maketh a lie can enter in," "They that do his commandments may enter in through the gates."

We all know that the worst of characters can be saved and all — and to come into the kingdom of grace. But the condition is that all sin must be left at the door. One may appear at the threshold as a liar, thief, fraud and hypocrite, but to cross it, all lying, theft, deception and dissimulation must be left on the earthward side of the door. Confession of sin and

separation from it is indispensable to entrance. Honesty with God is absolutely imperative.

To insist on admission into grace, the possession of the divine favor, and walking with God in the ostensible light of a character which we do not possess, is to make God smile on fraudulency and take liars and impostors as companions.

If we want the word “Son!” to ring over the heavenly cable to our delighted souls we must first send the cry along the wire — “Sinner!” If we want God to come down in power on the meeting, we must uncover hearts and lives and tell the Almighty what kind of a crowd is calling upon Him. He insists upon truth. He demands that we call ourselves, and the things we have done by their true names, and then He will come. He will not have fellowship with deceit of and kind. A falsehood is the same to Him, whether it is covered by a broadcloth coat, silk dress, jeans garment or the rags of a beggar. We must be true, we must uncover, we must confess.

A sixth fact in the Publican’s case was that he asked only for mercy. His brief, but heart thrilling cry was, “God be merciful.”

The man out of and away from God might as well learn the force of this truth. It is the only cry for a sinner to make. If men pleaded for justice the whole world would be damned. In all our wrongdoing we are without excuse. We have sinned in the face of knowledge, privilege, providence and grace. So the man who wants to hear from God in his pardon and adoption, or in his restoration to divine favor, must come with the single plea, “Be merciful.” This, of course, brings the victim on the cross into sight, for Calvary, dreadful as it is on the heavenward side, is mercy on the earthward side. Christ is the mercy of God to this world, and we can only come to God through Him.

A seventh feature of the case was the strictly personal nature of the prayer, “God be merciful to me.”

To draw the mind in from all others, to turn the attention from many disturbing and distressing things without, and fix it on the peril and present spiritual necessity of the soul is a victory in itself and means a speedy answer from heaven. We find many not only shut out from

pardon, but from the blessing of perfect love, because they allow the spiritual condition of friends and family to divert their gaze from their own need.

It is not selfish to say, God be merciful to me, God save me, God sanctify me. It is the quickest way to bless others, the nearest road to the salvation of the family.

The eighth feature in reward to the spiritual victory was that the man used his voice.

We have been a close student for quite a number of years of people who are seeking salvation, and find a most remarkable difference as to clear and immediate results between those who bow in gloomy silence at the altar, and those who cry aloud to God for mercy. Whether the calling intensifies the desires of the soul, strengthens faith, and builds a wall between the man and the old life, we do not stop to answer; we only know that such a method pursued by the seeker meets with an amazingly swift response from God, who has already stated in his Word, "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it," "Call upon me and I will deliver thee."

In looking back upon the Bible conditions necessary to obtain the heavenly answer, and the life interview between man and God, we see no mention of dress, position, accomplishment, learning, influence, culture, grace, dignity or any of the things so magnified by men. One needs not to be a gentleman by birth, a graduate of a college, or possess fine standing in church or state. But if any man will put himself in the way of truth and duty, will honor God's house and divinely instituted means of grace; if he will call on the Lord humbly, earnestly, continuously, with his eyes fixed on that unspeakable mercy of God, Jesus Christ, Heaven will catch the cry, the King will receive it, the skies will bend and smile, while the celestial cable will flash the message of pardon or purity back to earth, and another miracle of grace be beheld in our midst.

# CHAPTER 3

## CHRISTIAN SERVICE

THERE are many kinds of employment, or services on earth. There are numbers of them which, while perfectly proper, legitimate and honorable, will do nothing for the soul in the way of enlargement and improvement. Cotton picking, corn pulling and selling goods are all right in themselves, but there is nothing in them to develop the intellectual and spiritual nature. If nothing besides these as factors are introduced into the life, that life is compelled to be an arrested one. Hence all of us have seen the man of the desk or counter remain the same little, narrow, shut up and shut in individual; twenty and thirty years seeming to make and mark no change.

Different from all the employments of earth is the service of God. To enter upon it is to feel at once its ennobling, transforming and transfiguring influence and power; and as the years roll on, the moral elevation, the spiritual broadening, the heart cultivation and the whole uplifted life is not only a conscious fact to the Christian himself, but equally evident to the outside world.

Two sisters may be born and raised about the same hearthstone, and up to the age of nineteen possess similar advantages in the way of education and accomplishments. Now, let one of them be converted to God and be parted for a year. One goes into the world and becomes the refined, polished woman of society. She never says or does a single coarse or inelegant thing. And yet with all the social culture she possesses, in spite of all her pleasant speeches and affable manners, there is a painful sense of the artificial, a hollowness in the voice; a lack of sincerity, and absence of real heart and soul under the elegant bearing that makes one think of veneering on furniture, marble statues and moonbeams on an icy surface. On the other hand, the converted sister has been for twelve months in the service of God, and it has left its unmistakable mark in the life, in the gracious beautiful lines on her face, expression in the voice, light in the eyes, soul in all that is said and done, and God's transforming grace

evidently in complete possession of the woman. The difference between social and soul culture would be evident at a glance, and the remarkable superiority of the latter over the former unquestionable.

So great is the reflex benefit of the Christian service upon the soul that no man can afford not to enter upon it. It is to rob one's self of that spiritual development which can only come that way. In the study of the causes of this life transfiguration we find the following explanations:

The first reason is to be found in the constant spiritual contact with Jesus Christ.

A service which throws us with the Savior is bound to tell on the appearance, manner, conversation, spirit, profoundly affect our hearts and lives. It is not more sure with refined, cultivated people will change our manners for the better, than frequent touch with Christ will profoundly affect our hearts and lives. It is not more sure that when one passes through a garden filled with flowers that a perfume will be brought out on the garments, than if we come in daily contact with Jesus we will bear away with us some of the fragrance of His beautiful, perfect character and life.

It is said of the disciples that when arrested and stood before the Sanhedrin that "they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." The aroma of His life was in their lives, the gleam of His holy nature was reflected in their faces, the calmness of His spirit was felt in their presence, and the sublime fearlessness of the crucified rang out in their voices. In a word, it is impossible to be with Christ, to talk, to walk with and work for Him without its being recognized in face, voice and actions of the life.

In the South before the war we had two kinds of slaves the field hands and the house servants. The latter were selected from the former. They were brought up to what was called "The Big House," or the family mansion, and entered upon their domestic duties. In a few weeks the difference would be manifest to all between them and the class they left. They not only purposely patterned after the master and mistress in manners, speech and dress, but almost insensibly became more refined in many respects. It

was these same house servants that the hotels and steamboats wanted as cabin boys, chambermaids and waiters.

So we are brought from the field to the Big House. We talk and walk with God. The eye continually rests upon Jesus. We drink in His spirit, while we follow, obey and imitate Him. Who can wonder at the soul improvement and its ever-growing likeness to Jesus under such circumstances?

The second reason for spiritual development can be found in the contact by the worker with human souls.

That the soul is beautiful we doubt not. That it is not only a treasure but a treasure house we are equally certain. That it is the most wonderful of God's creations we feel assured from plain statements in the Bible and the study of its nature and never ending possibilities Christ speaking of it says that it would be better that a man lose the whole world than his soul. Its value far transcends the worth of this globe, though the earth may wave with harvests, be robed with gold and silver and sprinkled with rubies and diamonds.

Christian service brings us into the midst of souls to work for their salvation. It stands to reason that we could not labor with and for these marvelous creations of God withheld benefit. Corn, cotton and dry goods cannot communicate any good to us from their very nature, but immortal spirits made in God's image exert a very different influence. They teach us, while we try to instruct them, and we gather profitable and eternal lessons from the humblest among them. We discover that what we have regarded simply as a field of labor is also a school of Christ. We awaken to see that men help us while we help them, and that in a true, deep sense we are debtors to every man.

It is enough to thrill and renew the heart of every discouraged worker who is ready to give up, and craving to die, to think for a moment of the marvelous objects which claim his attention, energy and sacrifice. From the windows of moving trains that command a view of the landscape we see the farmers walking breast deep in barley, rye and wheat, and then suddenly remember with a swelling, rejoicing heart, that we toil for an everlasting harvest; for souls which God made, Christ died for, and that

will flourish on the uplands of heaven in fadeless beauty and glory forever. The very thought is sufficient to revive the spirit and make the jaded servant of God push with new hope and vigor onward through the years.

The third reason for the soul's development is to be found in the character of the service performed.

To help human spirits in the matter of salvation means a constant demand on the noblest powers which we possess. It means calls not only on our love, patience, gentleness, meekness and long suffering, but on every fruit of the Spirit in us. The faculties of the intellect, the rich sensibilities of the heart, and the regal force of the will, all are placed under tribute and called into play in the work of bringing men to Christ.

The more difficult the work, the harder and more obdurate the sinner, and the more unyielding the community, the greater the drain upon us, and the greater result therefore in good. Ingratitude, perversity, opposition, persecution, with many other forms of sin, are anything but attractive and agreeable to deal with. And yet this very state of things calls on us for greater measures of kindness, pity and forbearance, and so becomes a blessing to the soul.

As muscle is brought out by exercise, so faith is increased by use, and the character strengthened in all its virtues by the very discipline it receives and the demands made upon it.

The chiseling made upon us by the world's treatment is anything but pleasant, but something far lovelier than a marble statue is the inevitable result. The social and domestic sand-papery which we get, not once but repeatedly, awakens a protest on the part of nerves as well as spirit, but there comes a polish and shine from it, if the trials are borne, which is seen even in this world by every eye. The constant demand on strength and time, the monopolizing of the life itself, our inability to have our own way, to follow our peculiar preferences and to advance our own interest, all this looks like a wrong and suicidal course to many sensible people; but out of it all comes the most beautiful and Christlike of characters

The breaking up of a stony, neglected field is a spectacle not to be forgotten. The rocks are broken to pieces and cast out; the stumps and logs are burned up; the great sub-soiling plows rip up its bosom; the

harrow tears its breast; the hoes knock the clods to pieces; the hoofs of animals and feet of men walk over its surface in the process and progress of its improvement; the seed is sown and then there is the dragging of a heavy block up and down the rows of beds. This is followed by the cold and heat of changing seasons. There is also a time when the field seems left to itself; the laborers go away, and the farmer looks upon it from afar. But it is all right. The owner knows what he is about, and is filled with a sense of joy over the knowledge of labor well spent, and the assurance of a thirty, fifty and hundred fold yield in the crop which first heaves like a sea of green, then tosses later like a billowy yellow ocean, and still later covers the plain and hillsides in almost endless lines and rows of stacks and shocks of material plenty. But beautiful as is the scene, it cannot itself feel the glow and sweet rapture of the man or men who lean against the fence and, looking upon the outstretched harvest field, know that this is the work of their hands. The very toil put forth has made them not only healthier and stronger, but even happier.

God is at work on us and in us while we labor for others in the Christian life. No matter what may be the strain and drain; no matter how numerous the rocky hearts we encounter and the hard conditions which surround us; no matter how trying the plowing, planting, hoeing, weeding and waiting seasons may be; yet there is certain to come a double reward. First on the outside in the human harvest, and second in ourselves in what the labor itself did for us. We under the grace of God are made by the work. A delightful spiritual strength leaps in the veins, the face shines with moral health, the lips laugh from a sweet gladness within, while upon the retina of the eyes beaming upon you one can almost see the waving, abundant harvests of redeemed lives made by this faithful workman of God.



# CHAPTER 4

## CHRISTIAN PAY

THE fact of service suggests the thought of remuneration. A certain equivalent is given in the world for labor and called pay. When a man undertakes toil for another the understanding is that he is to be recompensed.

This universal observance is not dropped in the spiritual life, and is found working there with greater results and richer satisfaction than anywhere else. Christ is discovered to be the best of paymasters. He does not propose that a man should serve Him for nothing, and he who hangs back from the Christian life for fear of loss shows that he has not read the Bible nor studied the lives of God's people. Christ not only pays, but remunerates abundantly, and in many ways besides.

The pay day is not necessarily Monday, Wednesday, or Saturday; nor at the end or first of the month. One of the peculiar features connected with Heaven's way of rewarding is seen in its suddenness and unexpectedness. The soul may be weary and discouraged, when, in another instant, it is thrilled and delighted with a blessed enrichment from the skies, in heaven's best coin, which goes rolling, clinking and sparkling all over the tables of the heart.

Moreover, this pay of Christ does not consist of one kind of coin; for even the nations of the earth have gold, silver, copper and paper, but heaven has all this and more beside to make up the celestial currency. It is not, however, the financial part of the reward that we speak of in this chapter, although there is no question but that it pays to serve God in this world, even for material reasons. It is the more spiritual side of the question we would now dwell upon.

One pay is realized in sudden influences of peace and joy.

Not more certainly does a tide sweep into a partially emptied bay or harbor, nor a delightful breeze pour itself through the gates of the west

with reviving, exhilarating power into a sultry evening, than that divine influences are made to breathe upon and sweep over a fainting Christian soul.

The change seen upon the face of Nature is not more remarkable than the transformation in the man or woman. A sweet, new strength is in the heart, a new light seems falling on the earth, while a new willingness to endure burdens and perfect victory for the time being, over all thing, is in the soul.

Now it is we say, if in the regenerated experience, we will go in the strength of this meat forty days and nights; we will not worry any more about our troubles; and we fully intended to do as we said. But the manna melted by nine o'clock, the meat lasted but one day, the water gave out in the wilderness, and the old time murmurings were resumed. So we went on our way until we obtained the higher form of Christian remuneration an abiding joy in the soul.

A second kind of pay is the gracious renewing of the spiritual life.

A tide or mighty wind sweeping in is one thing, while the dew falling silently on the grass and a zephyr stealing from the skies is another. In like manner there are gentle manifestations of divine power. There are influences breathed upon us by the Holy Spirit, which for tenderness, quietness, and yet completeness of heart renewal would defy all description. David alludes to this when he says, "He restoreth my soul."

Sometimes we are exhausted by a day of toil or we may have talked too much; anyhow the soul has been hurt in some manner. A weak, dispirited feeling is upon us; the discouraging whisper is in the heart, "You have failed again!" Just then, while brooding upon the matter, we feel the divine touch, a gentle, reviving influence comes upon the soul, and lo! we are made whole again!

It might have been in the house of God; or in the closet of prayer; or with Bible in hand; or while sitting thoughtfully by one's self without any conscious act of worship or effort made to touch the Lord, when suddenly we were made whole. It was done so gently, graciously and satisfyingly that the eyes were filled with happy tears, and the soul lost in wonder, love and praise.

A third pay is a habitually restful heart.

The Christian who possesses the secret of full salvation well knows this peculiar reward of Christ. The world cannot give it. Money cannot purchase it. Success cannot guarantee it. These conditions of life may bring spasms of gladness, thrills of temporary pleasure, but Christ alone can give the restful soul.

It is certainly a marvelous blessing to wake up in the morning, not only without the old-time heavy load on the heart, but with a deep, sweet peace in the soul. In spite of every changing circumstance of life it is our privilege to awaken each morning with a song in the heart. This is the pay that Christ gives every one of His followers who have followed Him not only to the cross, but tarried in the upper room for the baptism with the Holy Ghost.

A fourth payment is felt in the consciousness of being a blessing to others.

It is a great thing to help in any way an immortal being made in the image of God. It must make a very soft death bed pillow to the philanthropist or to any benevolent man who has made life easier and sweeter to his fellow creatures by the gifts of his hands in material mercies.

And yet there is something beyond this in the character and duration of benefits. The soul is far greater than the body, and he who brings that soul to Christ, or if it be already saved, will do that for it which enlarges, ennobles, strengthens, and in different ways blesses it, that man is doing even more for his brother, a something that money and food cannot do, and that will endure as a work when suns have burned out and stars have dropped from their sockets.

It is impossible to be a true follower of Christ without being such a blessing to others. And, moreover, we are permitted to see a part of our labor; and this is in itself a wonderful pay. Who can look for a moment on a man pardoned and sanctified, comforted and blessed under one's own words and influence without the sweetest joy in the soul.

Sin pulls men down. The sinner is compelled to look at the ghastly spectacle of human beings dragged down in different ways by himself. This is some of the wages of the transgressors and a sad pay it is.

Christianity builds up and sets fallen men on their feet, and so a part of the Christian pay is to see a procession of happy faced men and women on their way to glory, whom, under God, he started for the better world through his devoted labors.

Dr. C.K. Marshall, one of the most gifted preachers in the South, was sitting in his garden one day with an unusually heavy heart. He found it impossible to shake off the gloom. Glancing at a church paper in his hand his eyes fell on the obituary column, and he began reading about the triumphant death of a Christian lady in Arkansas. The notice ended by saying, "This godly woman was saved under the ministry of Dr. A. K. Marshall." At once the tears gushed to the eyes of the preacher, and a delicious joy filled his soul. All sadness was gone in the thought that he had led a soul to God and heaven. In other words, Christ dropped some of His pay into the soul of His drooping servant, and, judging from the happy tears, swelling heart and beaming face, that pay was eminently satisfactory.

A fifth payment is the friendship and love of the people.

Some Christians are given to talking of their sacrifices for the gospel, what they left and what they gave up. If they would begin to count up what they have gained they would be amazed.

We have certainly added to our fathers and mothers; for while leaving one we have had given us scores in the Gospel, whose tenderness and affection we cannot doubt, and whose trembling hands have been laid on our heads in blessing as fervently as if our natural parents.

We have also gained in brothers and sisters; for in leaving four or five we now have them by the hundreds and thousands. Moreover, they prove their love, and some of them have been kinder, gentler, more affectionate, and even more liberal to us than our own flesh and blood.

We have gained in homes. We left one, perhaps none, and lo! hundreds of houses over the land stand with hospitable doors wide open for our coming. To be a true Christian is to have a knife, fork, something to eat, a bed, and above all a cordial welcome at many a lovely and excellent home. Sin cannot and does not pay this way, but Christ can. We have never in

our life heard of the doctor's room, or the lawyer's room, in any home in the land. But the "preacher's room" is a household word.

It began with a woman in Shunem, who as she observed the holy life of Elisha said to her husband, "Let us build a room for him, and put in it a bed, stool, table and candlestick." This is the first record of the prophet's chamber or preacher's room, but who can count them today? There are family circles that talk about the absent man of God. They write to him and send him word: "When are you coming? we all want to see you!" This is part of the pay of Christ.

A gentleman was going down the Ohio River to Cincinnati and southern parts beyond. He was a Christian, but a different and reserved one, and so held himself aloof from the other passengers. On arrival at Cincinnati he found that the boat would have to stay nearly two days before going on her journey down the river. Every passenger but himself was leaving the steamer. The prospect of the two days' lonely waiting was not enviable; so, with a sudden rush of courage, he leaned over the guards, and, speaking to the throng of passengers crowding the gangway in their departure, he cried, "I don't know one of you, but if any man out there loves the Lord Jesus he is my brother!" Instantly several gentlemen returned and shaking him by the hand cordially invited him to spend the two days with them instead of remaining at the hot, noisy wharf on the river side. He received three invitations in as many minutes to good Christian homes. The name of Jesus was the power which rolled the coin of a loving regard and welcome before him.

A sixth payment is the divine honor placed upon the follower of Christ.

We have all listened to lectures, addresses and discourses that were everything in an intellectual way. They received the admiration and applause of the audience, but it was evident that the favor of God was not upon the speaker.

On the other hand, we have listened to personal testimonies and sermons that fairly dripped with unction. Nothing brilliant or remarkable was said, but something undoubtedly was being done. The Lord was putting His hand upon His servant and setting His seal upon his every utterance. If this great honor could be purchased with money how quickly some would

offer the price. But it is a coin in itself, and is given in exchange for a certain commodity, and that commodity a completely surrendered human life.

A minister once said of another who thus stood before an audience, full of the holy strength, confidence and independence born of such a relation with heaven: "He speaks as if what he said was true, and could not be denied. He towers up there in the pulpit like a giant. He acts as independently as if he were a king."

Yes, all these things are characteristic of rich people, and a man with the blessed coin of heaven ringing in his soul, sparkling in his eyes, and rolling all over the table of his heart, might be excused if he feels rich, acts independently, thinks he is a giant, and looks like he is a king. Especially should this be so when his feelings and convictions are corroborated by the plain statement of the Bible which says that he is rich, that he is an heir of God, that he is equal to a thousand, and that he is a king here, and is to be a still greater one in the kingdom of glory.

This is part of Christ's pay. O, that the people of the world who have been defrauded by the devil, cheated by his broken banks, and fooled with his numerous counterfeits, would come to Christ and receive a reward which is not only perfectly satisfactory in this life, but is to be an hundred fold more in the world to come!

# CHAPTER 5

## THE USES OF TEMPTATION

ONE of the features of a probationary state is the fact of temptation. It may come directly from an evil spirit, or from a pleasing object. It maybe felt as a brooding horror upon the soul, or approach with a promised delight to the body. In its assault upon the citadel of a man's life, the Will, temptation travels upon various routes. Its form is seen moving upon the emotions of the heart, along the sensations of the body, and endeavoring to steal its way up the channels of all the senses, and every appetite known to the race. It has been a wonder to many why God should permit temptation to come to immortal creatures, who if they prove faithless and fall under the attack, make shipwreck of happiness and character, and finally if sin is continued in to the end, are ruined forever. The wonder grows when in full recognition of the momentous consequences of yielding to the evil suggestion and movement, the Bible says: "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." The Scripture does not say fall under, but "into." Just as it does not say, Blessed is the man who is tempted, but who "endureth temptation."

Moreover it is remarkable that the apostle was writing to Christians when he said these things. The verse reads, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into diverse temptations." Evidently there is a moral use of temptation to the Christian. It is this fact we call attention to; not to the necessity of temptation as a feature of moral probation on earth; but to the use of these strange and perilous influences upon the soul of the child of God.

God of course does not and can not tempt, but He allows us as His people to be tempted. Why does He permit it? What is the advantage and good which He expects to come out of it and which in many cases is undoubtedly derived?

One is the knowledge of self.

Very many Christians do not know themselves, and never would but for temptation. The Scripture says the children of Israel were led about in the wilderness for forty years, that they might know what was in their heart. In like manner through the probings, motions and assaults of temptation we are made to see the barely suspected evil, and the vulnerable place in our nature and character.

Peter never dreamed at first that he was capable of denying the Lord, but under circumstances of testing in which we find involved man fear, self-interest and self-protection, he went down. Saul, the king of Israel, had a new heart and started out humble enough, but temptations to pride and self-will soon came in sufficient number and force to show him he was not really as lowly as one would have supposed when he was found "hiding in the stuff." David, in spite of his beautiful psalms and leaping before the ark of God, had a weak place in his character and there was most likely to fall. In due time the circumstance came which revealed the vulnerable spot. He got to know himself under the sad power of temptation.

In war a battery is often placed upon a hill and the guns trained upon the surrounding woods. It is called "feeling for the enemy." This is what temptation does; it discovers for us the hidden foe of the heart.

In dental matters, when a man has an uneasy feeling in a tooth, the nerve of which he thought had been killed, he places himself under treatment. The dentist has a number of drills and very fine, sharp, needle-like instruments which he uses to discover the little particle of nerve matter which may have been left. When he finds it, the patient in the chair instantly knows it without being told.

So we may honestly think we are sound and all right in the spiritual life. It is the province of temptation under the overruling power of God to find and touch the remains of the carnal nature, and the weak places of the moral character. If the man is not thoroughly sound, by and by the drill and probe of the Tempter will reach him.

This does not mean necessarily a fall into sin. Far from it. Many are thus tempted, stand self-revealed in some unsuspected weakness and yet do



not fall into transgression. Nevertheless they get to know themselves, which is a great gain and triumph in itself.

We recall the grave look of older Christians when they have sometimes to listen to the swaggering, boastful talk of young Christians. These younger followers of the Lord have mistaken the cannon-shooting of the Fourth of July for the siege of Vicksburg. They have been in the battle of Lexington, but know nothing of the fearful trials of Valley Forge. So they talk and so the older Christians listen, grave, thoughtful and oftentimes silent altogether. The young fledgling has the floor or rather the barnyard, and is talking about the great upper air currents, when he has never been higher than the hen-house in which he was born. He speaks indignantly about certain things, and tells us what he would do under such and such circumstances, and what should be done to parties who had said and done certain things. Meanwhile older Christians listen silently and often pityingly. Not that they tolerate sin, or would do wrong or have done wrong; and they have been higher than the hen-house, and felt the blast and rush of spiritual wickedness in high places against them. They have been far away from the barnyard with its simple history and relationships, and met a bear in a cave, struggled with a lion in the woods, and had a battle with a giant in the mountains. They killed them all, but they know what the paw of a bear is, the strength of a lion's jaw, and the awful power of a giant. They have gone through experiences, and obtained self-illuminations, and drank cups, and borne burdens, which add ten years to one's life in a single day. In other words they have got to know themselves, and in this discovery of self are now better able to meet the onsets of the world, the flesh and the devil.

A second benefit is compassion for others.

Those are very tender and beautiful passages in the Word which speak of Christ having been tempted in every respect yet without sin, and of His being touched with a feeling for our infirmities, and having compassion on the ignorant and on them who are out of the way. He can feel for us, because He has been assaulted by the power of Hell, and knows our anguish in like conditions.

As we study men who have gone astray or lapsed in any way in the spiritual life, we notice that nothing touches them more deeply and is more

potent as a human instrumentality in lifting them up and bringing them back as genuine compassion.

Another fact that strikes me is that it is very hard to understand and feel for people in certain mental and moral conditions when we have never been there, or realized any temptation to be there.

If a person could be raised in a state of seclusion from the world and not brought in contact with any of its forms of sin and sorrow, such an individual would make a wretched comforter and adviser in this heartbroken world. So not to feel certain forces of evil to beat upon the heart for admittance, is to make certain classes of our fellow beings perfect mysteries to us. We would not know how to counsel, cheer or otherwise assist them.

A woman who never lost a child makes a poor comforter to the bereaved mother next door. It is the woman who has seen the life go out of first one and then another of her little ones, whose voice moves and very touch brings comfort and strength.

An unconverted preacher knows not what to say to the weeping penitent at the altar. So in the matter of temptation, ignorance of its changes, phases and forces would make one a failure as a sympathizer and helper of men in this world.

A number of times in life, the writer has felt in his breast a perfect surge of what he recognized to be Satanic influence, to do something desperate. He never dreamed for an instant of yielding, but the dark, awful pressure of those moments has been the means of creating a very tender, pitiful feeling in his soul for Christians who have been similarly assailed.

Again we recall a time in our early ministry when we were on our way to speak with an eminent preacher on the subject of a peculiar and distressing trial in the life, when we were distinctly and profoundly impressed by the Holy Spirit not to go to him, but to another person altogether. The last one, it is needless to say, understood the case and gave the help needed. The first one we see today would have frozen and discouraged the soul from lack of sympathy and appreciation of the case. A man not tempted in certain lines would stare with cold wonder at the confessions of a visitor who came to get instruction and direction about a matter of which he knew

nothing. But if he has been tempted himself, there would not only an understanding attention be given to the confession, but a most pitiful and compassionate attention. He himself has not sinned, but he can see why and how the other man did. He remembers the tug and pull at his own heart, an hour when he wrestled not with flesh and blood but with principals ties and powers in high places, and when Satan with a troop of dark spirits tried to beat down the door of the will and get possession of the life. Hence it is that he listens with patience and pity, and is able to give helpful counsel to those who have been bewildered, saddened and hurt by the devil.

A third benefit accruing from temptation is humility.

To go down under the Tempter brings condemnation, self-abasement and gloom. To be tempted without yielding brings to the mind and heart a much better state of things. Humility is a beautiful plant to flourish in the soul, and God is pleased to allow temptation to be one of the means for its development. The conviction after many and varied temptations is certain to be wrought in the mind, that but for the grace of God we would have been overwhelmed a thousand times. If this does not make the soul feel lowly, then what effect is produced?

The emotion of grateful, humble joy which swept through the heart of a preacher in England, when he saw a drunkard staggering before him, and said, "There goes John Newton," but for the grace of God, is the feeling of a man who has come successfully out of heavy temptations, under which many of his fellow creatures have fallen. He is glad but also humble, remembering who saved him, and how he was saved.

A fourth result of temptation is increased prayer and watchfulness.

A truly saved man learns to distrust himself. The strongest in the kingdom becomes more and more cautious, and realizes the need of supplicating as not all do, "Lead us not into temptation." How full of significance in its very position in the prayer is the next sentence, "But deliver us from evil." So truly is it the case with many that temptation ends in evil, and so properly self-distrustful becomes the very saintliest in the kingdom of Christ, that while recognizing the good which can and does come from temptation, yet the child of God very naturally and properly dreads each

new and powerful temptation, and thinks with thankful joy of the life and world where no such things exist forever.

Hence the discovered weakness of human nature, and the power of Satanic influence drives the Christian to renewed and redoubled watchfulness and prayer.

It is said that a man is no stronger than his weakest point. If this is so, then truly all of us have need to watch and pray. Not to do so is to invite the world and the devil to take possession of us.

A fifth result is increased ability to help others.

It is a blessed thing to be able to assist immortal beings as they struggle through a thousand difficulties, discouragements, and besetments along the path of duty to heaven and eternal life. Happy indeed is the man who can speak the word which will put hope again in the sickened heart, and strength in the faltering feet. There are such people, and we have invariably observed that they are individuals who have been tossed about in many a spiritual storm, and walked in furnaces of fiercest moral trial.

If the reader will turn to the biographies of the most devout men he will be struck with their description of sore temptations, and dreadful personal attacks of Satan upon their souls, which would have swept them from their feet, but for their steadfast looking to Christ and calling on God. Concerning the preeminent usefulness of these men, history leaves not a shadow of doubt. To such Christian characters we would rather go for help in time of great spiritual trial than to any other class of God's people.

When the writer felt the call to preach over twenty years ago, and with the call came all those bewilderments of mind, heart and conscience which Satan brings to confuse a man, he did a very foolish thing when he went for advice to a friend who was an unconverted man. How could a natural mind understand the things of God? The counsel he gave was of course absurd and could not be followed.

Equally great will be the failure to obtain information, comfort and strength in times of deep spiritual gloom from some converted people. They have not been where you have been. They have not prayed, suffered and achieved enough in the Christian life to bring the devils in great awful

rushes of darkness down upon them. The words Gethsemane, Gabbatha and Golgotha only refer to historic sites to them. So they do not know what you mean when you speak of soul travail and spirit desolation.

Some temptations told to one of these rocking-chair, or hothouse plant kind of Christians would fairly take the breath from him or her, and he would think you had never been regenerated.

Who of us have not heard the following expressions from the canton-flannel and catnip-tea kind of religious character, as he or she speaks to a faithful and successful worker in the gospel:

“What! You tempted!”

Just as well might one say to a captain or colonel who led the charge in a great battle:

“What! You shot at!”

Yes, of course he was shot at; and one hundred more guns were pointed at him than at any single soldier in the ranks; and the numerous bullets were fired because he was a captain or leader.

An illustration arises in my mind. It is another scene in a barnyard. A young bantam is sitting on top of a chicken coops giving a lecture to some old motherly hens about how to avoid contracting the disease called the “pip.” An old rooster with one eye gone is half dozing and half listening from under a neighboring hayrack. At times his head is turned thoughtfully to one side, and again his remaining eye scans the heavens for a hawk. He lost his eye in a fight with an owl one night; and most of his tail feathers in a struggle with a mink; besides he has run miles and miles in his life to save his carcass from the dinner pot. He has had many battles and victories in his line for years, and has a glorious right to crow, and does crow. But the bantam lecture seems to be too much for him this afternoon, and as he listens he appears to be too full for utterance. But my! how much more he knows about things in particular as well as in general than the little Bantam Theologue and Preacher on the coop. The “gaps” and “pip” do not been so dreadful to him who had two dogs, a mink and a darky all after him in one night. In a word, for perfect information about hawks, eagles, owls,

weasels and other enemies of the barnyard, it would be better to go to the old rooster than to the young bantam.

Ever since the writer has been a Christian he has felt that the battle-scarred veterans of the cross, the men and women who have had frequent and awful fights with Satan, were the best counselors, and so he always went to them, and invariably realized help and comfort. Many and varied temptations had prepared them to be helpers indeed.

There are some Christians of a bandbox and lavender style of piety, and they are preachers of a feminine make-up as to constitution, temperament and habits of life, and are perfectly powerless to assist certain classes of their fellowmen, because utterly unfamiliar with their peculiar trials and temptations.

As to soul edification and life deliverance give me the Christian to talk to who has fought the owls, hawks and weasels of hell and ran many a time to save his soul from the black dinner pots of the devil.

All this being so, we can see the deeper, fiercer and more varied the temptations are which come into one's life; and the man does not fall under them, but "endures" them, the more is he fitted to become a kind of human high priest among men. Like his Lord he is touched with pity for others, has compassion on the ignorant and on them who are out of the way, and finds himself a consoler of human sorrow, a helper of the weak and tempted, and a blessing of his race in many ways every day that he lives.

A sixth benefit from temptation is a constantly increased spiritual strength.

Of course we do not mean temptation that is yielded to, but endured, resisted and overcome.

With every triumph in this line comes not only a sweet and delicious inward joy, but a realization of growing power. In this manner we go from strength to strength in no way can we more quickly come into greater measures of spiritual vigor than by victory over temptation. It is the gymnasium where moral muscle is developed, or the campaign experience which makes the veteran.

We read that David first killed a bear, after that a lion, and later still a giant. So it is still; we begin with small victories, but we grow mightier with every triumph and finally get to slaying giants easily.

Under such a progressive life, the things which moved us a few months or years ago cannot do so now. Plains are traversed, rivers crossed and mountains climbed we once thought impassable and insurmountable. A wall is leaped over, a troop is run through or overcome, Satan's attempted bonds are snapped like thread, and the head fastened to the wall is jerked triumphantly away carrying pin and beam with it.

Suppose it was so, that the strength of every conquered athlete should go into the victor: then by and by who could stand before him! And suppose that the physical force of every animal slain would go into the body of the hunter and slayer; what a marvel of physical power the man would become, and nothing could withstand his onset.

Something like this takes place in the spiritual life. The force of the thing conquered becomes in a deep wonderful sense our own; and with every new triumph we advance still farther with increasing strength, until finally with bears, lions and giants conquered and dead behind us, and filled with a blessed sense of victory over every new foe, and all foes, we cry with John, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." and "who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

# CHAPTER 6

## THE COMPENSATING EXPERIENCE

WITH certain Christian people the expression, I have “a satisfying portion,” seems to excite wonder and disapproval. To some it savors of boasting, to others it sounds unscriptural, and to still others it betrays ignorance of the laws of growth and that constant advancement in divine things which should mark the course of the child of God. The idea of the objectors is that such a statement in its application to religious experience precludes all possibility of development and improvement, and means virtually a standstill, and so spiritual stagnation and death.

These objections are made in the face of clear statements of the Word of God to the contrary, and in strange failure to distinguish between the spiritual progress of the soul which goes on forever, and a divine grace and blessing nestling eternally in that same soul which is developing forever. If a constant growth and improvement in the spiritual life prohibit an abiding satisfaction and joy on earth, then that same advancement in eternity would prevent a glad, satisfying experience in heaven.

But the Bible is clear about fullness of joy in both worlds; and while saying that in the skies we hunger no more neither thirst any more, being led to fountains of living waters by the hand of Christ, it also says that even in this life a well of water can be placed in the soul, springing up into everlasting life, and having that, we “never thirst.” If this is not a satisfying portion what can it be called?

In closer study of the Scripture we find that it holds up just such a blessing, and that when men receive it, from that moment they seem to possess something which comforts them in every sorrow, supports them in every trial, cheers them in every peril, consoles them in all suffering and loss, and, in a word, proves the compensating blessing of life.

Given to the disciples in the Upper Room, and to others later, all who read the Book of Acts and the Epistles will see that the followers of Christ



obtained an experience which prepared them not only for living but for serving, preaching, suffering and dying. No matter what was said about them, or done to them; no matter whether slandered, scourged, imprisoned or slain — yet through the trial and to the end there was such faith, holy triumph, and rapturous joy that all could see that beyond the tormented body were spiritual regions where the earthly tortures could not come. That back there and up there was a something which consoled and comforted and compensated the suffering followers of Jesus beyond all words to describe, and thought to understand.

As an experience it affected and does still affect God's people like wine. The multitude honestly supposed for a time at Pentecost that the one hundred and twenty were drunk. The "new wine" explanation of that day is not held to now, but the spiritual intoxication, as exhibited in gleaming eyes, shining face, shouts, laughter, weeping and physical demonstrativeness, is supposed to be the result of cerebral excitement, mental frenzy and wrought up physical conditions. Men seem to be as slow to understand God's works today as they were in the beginning of the first century.

Nevertheless the experience is with us still, a great, glad, upwelling, perfectly satisfying joy, whether people understand it and us or not. Who in such a weary, heartbreaking world as this would not have it? Who on hearing of such a grace could ever rest content until its obtainment?

There are certain occasions when this satisfying portion, this compensating blessing is especially precious to us. Blessed at all times, yet there are hours and occasions when it is thrice blessed.

One is a time of persecution.

It is noticeable in the gospel narrative that whenever the disciples are called upon to endure great suffering for Christ's sake, that a mighty spiritual uplift would be granted them, and they would burst forth into songs of praise and shouts of victory where usually groans and lamentations would be expected. Beaten with stripes they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ; and unjustly condemned and cruelly handled they sang praises at midnight in a dungeon. It seemed that they possessed something in their souls God-given and constantly

replenished, which extracted the sting from human maltreatment, and richly repaid them for all pain and shame suffered for the Son of God.

When we thus describe the experience of the early Christians we are simply drawing a picture of what is going on in hearts and lives today. It is the same gospel, and the same Holy Ghost. To live godly is still to suffer persecution, but with the detraction, misrepresentation, ostracism and all the many and varied trials which befall the devoted man or woman, there comes instantly the gracious sustaining power and reward in the breast, and the filling of the soul with an experience so sweet, tender and satisfying that the man is beyond all question far happier than his persecutors, and seems to be caught up in a third heaven of holy calm and victory.

When a boy we remember that our mother was accustomed to make in addition to her pickles and preserves a certain amount of blackberry cordial. She placed the rich, sweet, fragrant fluid in bottles and stationed them in a row on a shelf in the closet. To this day I can recall their soldier-like appearance with white paper labels on their black sides, containing the words "Blackberry cordial," written in my mothers beautiful handwriting

The cordial was a kind of panacea for children's maladies and troubles. More than once, on account of failing appetite, or some bruise or cut received by a topple from the fence or a fall from a tree, a sip of the cordial would be given the weeping youngster, and his lips smacked with enjoyment, and a pleased smile would overspread his face while the tears still rested in heavy drops on the eyelashes.

So God has a cordial which is a compensation for the blows, cuts and bruises received at the hands of men. It is quickly placed to the lips when cruel words have been spoken, or heartless blows have been struck, and at once the pangs are forgotten, the soul is warmed and fired, the mouth is filled with laughter, and we walk unburned in the furnace, and in rapturous communion with the "form of a fourth" which is that of the Son of God. Who of us have not felt these things, and can testify that our happiest days have been when men were saying and doing all manner of evil against us!

Another time that the compensating experience is realized is in the hour of earthly loss.

The day is certain to come when reputation will be struck at, influence in certain quarters be seen to wane and fail altogether, and friends grow cold and fall away. These losses may take place not from wrongdoing, but for faithfulness in the Christian life. The Savior Himself perceived that he had no reputation with the rulers of the church, felt that He was cast out, and saw great numbers of His followers leave Him. We cannot expect to fare better than He did, and, indeed, if true to Him, will enter upon similar sufferings.

That experience certainly must be blessed which sustains one in such hours; and not only keeps us undismayed as friends grow cold and fall away, but even rejoicing; while we say with Christ, "Will ye also go away yet am I not alone, for the Father is with me."

We once read of a little girl who was an orphan, and raised in a large household where she was continually domineered over by every member of the family. Her wishes were never consulted, her rights were ignored, while her few playthings were constantly snatched from her by the hands of the older and stronger children. She had become so accustomed to yielding and giving up everything that when she had anything in her hand she held it with a loose grasp, as if she did not expect to keep it long.

This is the spiritual attitude of the true follower of Christ. What he holds in his hands he does with a light grasp. He is ready for God to take any material mercy from him when He will, and not only that, but even when men strip him of rights, privileges, enjoyments, comforts and other blessings of life, he will have that left in his soul in the way of grace and glory to amply compensate him for the loss of all.

A third time that the great satisfying joy is felt is in the time of sorrow.

We knew an elderly preacher in a Southern State who was sanctified. When he was eighty the greatest trouble of his life befell him. One morning he learned that his son, a promising young lawyer, had been murdered by a Negro man for the sake of a few dollars. The peculiarly agonizing feature about the crime was that the young man had been shot and left for dead in the woods, but had lived four days stretched on the ground alone in the

forest. A hunter discovered him a little while before he died, and received from his dying lips the name of the murderer and the manner of the crime. When the news reached the aged father he sank upon his knees on the floor in prayer; and in a few moments gasped out, "The Book! the Book!"

The Bible was handed him, and, opening with trembling fingers the pages, he began reading aloud with shaking voice, in the midst of the sighing, sobbing household, from the fourteenth of John: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God: believe also in me. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again" — and lo! while reading these last four words the glory of God filled him, shouts burst from his lips, and a dozen awestruck souls saw how God can so comfort a tortured, agonized spirit that its burden is carried like a feather weight, grief is flung to the winds, while heaven itself seems to have descended, filled and fairly transfigured the man.

Another time the compensating blessing is observed as well as realized is in old age.

There is something exceedingly pathetic in the sight of one who has outlived most of his generation, and is now dwelling in the midst of a new one. Friends, companions, playmates, schoolmates and oftentimes the family itself have preceded him into the graveyard and the other world, and he is left with scarcely a single soul with whom he started out in life.

It is a situation of unenviable loneliness, a life of peculiar trial. The old find themselves forgotten, overlooked, thrust aside, and often feel sadly in the way. Among the peculiar features of that time of life is the habit of waking up a good while before day. One can imagine the heaviness and sadness of those early wakeful hours, unless heaven has a grace to sustain and cheer.

Thank God there is such a blessing for the old which gives them songs in the night, a holy joy though overlooked, and prevents them not only from souring and becoming bitter, but causes their protracted stay on earth to be a blessing to the family, and the very thought of their departure one of unspeakable pain.

We recall in our early ministry a lovely old patriarch of Methodism who was nearing his ninetieth year. He had a way of waking at three o'clock in the morning, and from that hour until day he spent praising God softly in

the night, rubbing his hands in the great joy which filled his soul, and alternately laughing and crying with the rapture which flooded him. He had the compensating blessing.

A final time when this peculiar grace becomes evident is at the hour of death.

The Scripture says let wine be given to him who is ready to die, alluding to a custom that was thought then to be humane. In a deeper and better sense God has a wine experience for His dying children. It is a blessing to be obtained in life, so that the man can carry around in him the preparation for death, and so sudden dissolution will be instant glory. The people who enjoy this grace are ready to go at a moment's warning, and always "die well."

It is no ordinary death. The cup is at the lip, the draught is deep, and the blazing inward joy flashes in the eye, and gleams in the face in a way unmistakable.

In fact, it is not death, but a departure, not defeat, but victory, not dissolution so much as translation, not a man going down before the last enemy, but a human spirit disentangling itself from the ruins of the falling body, and with rapturous smile and lifted head and hand saying, "I know that my Redeemer liveth; and though, after my skin worms destroy this body yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom mine eyes shall behold and not another."

No Christian need fear death who obtains this blessing. With its marvelous living and yet dying grace, he is ready for the yoke, or the altar; ready for the battlefield of conflict and also prepared for the gaping wound, the litter and open grave. There is something about the grace which robs the sepulcher of its terror, takes the sting out of death, and causes its possessor to go down into the grave not only with calmness and assurance, but with smiles and shouts of joy, so that the scene looks like a beginning instead of the end of life. The tomb itself seems a doorway through which, as the triumphant spirit passes, the light of the glory world streams and, falling upon the dying face, lights it up and tells, in its silent but all impressive way, of the certainty and blessedness of the world which has just been entered.

# CHAPTER 7

## THE ROD OF MOSES

WE read in the Bible that God was about to induct Moses into a great work for which he had been preparing him for years. The self-distrustful man had pleaded his slowness of speech and conscious inability to perform what was expected of him whether he went to the people or stood before Pharaoh. It was then God asked him what he had in his hand. Moses replied, "A rod." Then followed at that moment and in succeeding days a series of most astounding works, wrought at the command of God, through that same simple rod.

The teaching evidently was that the rod was nothing, as Moses himself was nothing, but with God using one or both, anything could be done by them. The main end was to secure a devoted man who would obey God, and go forth to work for Him with anything that heaven directed. If this could be done, then nothing could be made something, and something could equal everything; and all this because God used the nothing or the something. Such a procedure also had the effect of developing faith on the part of the worker, keeping the human instrument humble and at the same time bringing all the glory to God as men saw plainly that He was taking "things that were not, to bring to naught things that are."

This divine method has not been discontinued. Whenever God can get a man completely surrendered, He thus uses him and puts a rod in his hand for conquest. Sometimes the gifted and great of the earth will not resign themselves to the will of the Lord, and He is compelled to employ ordinary and common instruments; in a word, things that are despised, called weak, and considered nothing in the judgment of the wise of this world.

God's main effort is to get a man completely given up to Him, who is willing to say anything, do anything, be anything, and go anywhere that the Lord commands.

When such a cleansed, humble, perfectly obedient life is found, two things becomes immediately apparent: first, that God uses the man; and, second, that the smallest, simplest agencies and instruments in such a man's hands become powerful and effective. He goes forth with what men would agree to call weak weapons, and yet accomplishes far more than others who appear on the field with arms of approved pattern and recognized superiority.

For instance, we have seen a man who was a graduate of a great university, also of a theological college, possessed several degrees, was a polished speaker, dressed immaculately, had elegant manners, was intrusted with the pastorate of the largest churches, and yet utterly failed to lead men to salvation in his own church or elsewhere. We have seen this same man followed in the pulpit or on the platform by another who had never been to college, and only a short time to school, felt his disadvantage in this and other particulars, bore himself meekly, preached plainly, and yet in ten minutes had brought heaven down to earth, and in twenty minutes more had the altar filled with penitents, while the fire was falling and salvation rolling like a flood.

At the same time little groups of preachers could be seen discussing the spiritual phenomenon before them, and asking how was it, and how could it be. The man had nothing, so to speak, in his hand. The sermon had not a single new thought, not a flash of genius, no rolling period, or glittering sentence. It was a mere stick, And yet look at this line of weeping, agonizing, praying, shouting, rejoicing men and women at and around the altar!

They were correct in saying the sermon was a stick, but then a Moses was behind it. The man wielding it was of ordinary powers and maybe slow of speech, but he had been up in the mountain and seen God. He had taken the two degrees of the Christian life. He had been to Mt. Calvary and obtained the pardon of his sins, and then gone to Mt. Zion and tarried in the Upper Room and received the baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire. So God filled the man and used him, and the divine-human influence flamed in what was a stick of sermon, and lo! it became a wand of marvelous power.

It is simply amazing to look over God's arsenal and see the simple weapons and instruments which He has used in His kingdom for the achievement of great victories over His enemies. We find such things as ram's horns, trumpets, pitchers, lanterns, rods, jawbones, musical instruments, handkerchiefs, slings, stones, hammers, nails, a vision of blood, water, a sound in the trees, and other strange and manifestly inadequate things. And yet with these same weapons we behold toppling walls, sacked cities, destroyed armies, terrified nations, and kings, queens and the mighty ones of earth brought down trembling, horrified and overwhelmed before God.

In the present day the simple instruments are still used, and God is still getting glory from the very feebleness of the weapon held in the hand of His servant.

As truly as ever God could ask the question of his devoted and victorious follower, "What is that in thine hand which has split seas, cracked rocks, brought down the lightnings of heaven, and filled the breasts of the hardest with terror and their lips with mourning?"

The answer would also still be the same, "It is a rod."

Yes, it was a mere stick. The sermon, prayer, song, talk, gesture, cry, shout, look, tone, were nothing in themselves. But a true man had hold of the stick, and God had hold of the man, and so something always happened.

We once witnessed the discomfiture of a large camp ground over the failure for nearly a week of a number of star preachers to bring down the power of Heaven. One afternoon a man entered the pulpit whose every look showed that he walked with God. He preached a short sermon, and one that, examined critically by logicians and orators, would have been severely handled. They would have pronounced it a poor affair, a mere stick, and so it may have been, but God made it bloom and blossom, and break rocks, and call down floods of glory as it was lifted to the skies. Over two hundred people ran to the altar, and heaven and earth rejoiced and hell mourned over the work done that afternoon.

All the preachers on that occasion who did not go to the altar examined the rod in the preachers tent, and said they could not see what there was in the



sermon to produce such a wonderful effect. They failed to recognize the connection between the stick the man and God.

We recall an old hymn which a circuit preacher used to sing. Weighed in the poetic and musical balance it would have been found sadly wanting in some particulars. Critics would have rejected it, but the man never sang the song with his rapt, faraway look, and Spirit-touched voice but hundreds were melted.

We remember another preacher whose sermons were simple and ordinary, but when in preaching he became filled with the Holy Ghost he had a laugh so loud, exultant, triumphant and indescribably awe-inspiring to the soul, that it invariably sent a panic to the hearts of sinners and backsliders, and yet God's people to shouting. No trumpet blast on the battlefield ever produced a more remarkable effect. Something was incarnated in the laugh that thrilled Christians, and literally terrified the ungodly and backslidden. Some fled from the tabernacle, some sat rooted with awe in their seats, and others came rushing to the altar. God in some way was in that laugh, and gave it its marvelous power. If the Holy Ghost had left the man, the laugh would have had a flat, hollow sound, creating hardly a thought, and certainly no conviction. It would have been a stick again. But the Spirit was in the man, affecting the membranes of the throat, and hurling out the laugh upon the listeners with a strange, piercing force and overcoming power until it was like a projectile shot from a cannon in heaven. The sound was like a javelin in the heart, or a scepter of authority, waving before the eyes of the people.

We knew another worker of the Lord who sent forth a peculiar cry when his heart was full of holy joy. It was so unmistakably genuine, so full of a great inward rest, and bubbling gladness, with such a note of complete victory in it, that whenever it shot forth from the lips of the Spirit-filled man it always brought conviction to sinners and quick, overflowing responses and shouts from the people of God.

Then we recall a man who had simply the word "Amen;" but when filled with the Holy Spirit he said it, or, rather, cried it aloud, it was equal in service to the charge of a platoon of the White Horse cavalry of heaven. It always lifted the mercury of the meeting and sent a thrill of hope, faith and joy over the audience.

Still another we remember who had the simple word "Yes." It was a little word, and is uttered millions of times unnoticed by people, but when that man with clear, joyous, yet choking, trembling voice, said it, it went through the audience like a Damascus blade.

We knew still another man, who had a leap. He rarely gave it, and only did so when he reached a point where words were utterly unable to express the joy and swelling triumph of his soul, and then he would give one of those jumps. When it took place unpremeditated and Spirit-inspired, it never failed to electrify sinner and saint, and God's presence was always strangely and powerfully felt.

Let the reader gather up the rods and sticks, count them, see how few they are, and how evidently weak and insignificant they are; then observe what God has done with them in faithful hands, and the result is to give God all the glory.

The power of the instrument, of course, sprang from its peculiar connection of the stick, the man and God. If the man slipped out, the stick was simply a pole in the forest or lay an overlooked fagot on the ground. If God slipped out, neither the man nor the rod could do a thing.

We have seen a man who, in his faithful days, had wrought wonders with mere sticks, yet afterwards drift from God and break the connection. Then we have seen him use the old-time weapons with which he had achieved so many victories. The same sermon was preached, the song sung, the shout raised, the leap made that had been so effective in other days, and lo! they all fell flat. The stick with God's blessing on it was a wand of power; but the wand without God became a lifeless fagot.

God long ago taught this painful lesson to the view in the matter of the ark. They had got to thinking that the power was in the sacred vessel, so when it was brought into camp prior to a great battle how they shouted. But God had left them, and that day the Israelites were defeated, the priests slain, Eli fell dead, and the ark, which without God was nothing but a box, was taken.

Many we not forget that even Paul is nothing, and Cephas is nothing apart from Christ? What shall we say, then, of a rod, weapon or instrument of any kind in their hands?

The stick is nothing without God. The sermon, song, shout and cry are nothing but puffs of wind without God. Or, they are like handfuls of dust blown away by the breath of men at whom they are hurled.

But if God is in us, and with us, that despised dust becomes a sandstorm of the desert, covering caravans. The breath from those consecrated lips is felt to be a hurricane of moral power. The stick is transformed into a scepter of power waving before the astonished eyes of the people, prevailing with God, opening and closing seas of difficulty, and bringing the fires of heaven to run along the earth until the enemies of the Lord plead for mercy and the people of God are led forth with a great and perfect deliverance.

Well may we pray to the Lord to preserve the unity of the trinity of the stick, the man and God.

# CHAPTER 8

## THE LIMP OF JACOB

Jacob, in the face of a great trouble looming up in the near future, had met God on the side of the brook Peniel. The prayer of that night in its length, agony, wrestling spirit and great triumph has swept up to a first place among all victorious supplications.

At daybreak the man of God crossed the brook as a conqueror in the spiritual realm, and called by the Lord himself a prince. As he left the place of his triumph and went on his way, the effect of a touch given him by the Almighty became manifest. A conqueror went forth, but he was lame. He was a prince, but he had a limp.

The Bible says he halted upon his thigh. This statement, quietly made in Holy Writ, is to the mind of the writer full of significance. It arouses one to observe the curious fact, that all of God's princes on earth have limps. They are, however, far from being the same. There are several classes of them.

One is God-given.

This was the case with Jacob. The same fact is seen in the slow or stammering speech of Moses and the thorn in the flesh sent to Paul. It is a rare thing to meet a man much used of God, one who is evidently a prince and prevailer in the spiritual life, without being impressed with the fact of the limp. We do not mean sin, or even weakness of character. We refer to something that is God-given or God-permitted.

These things appear very plainly in the biographies of men who were great in goodness. Sometimes it was a physical blemish, or a delicate constitution, or a domestic trial or sorrow. It was certainly melancholy to see a man who had been aflame for an hour or more in the pulpit, swaying the crowd as God willed, suddenly sink down on the floor with face white as death with acute suffering, or lip and handkerchief crimsoned with blood streaming from the lungs. It was sadder still to see a man towering

like an intellectual and spiritual giant before a spell-bound audience, and an hour afterwards behold him in the privacy of a friend's home with his head bowed dejectedly on his breast, crushed and heartbroken over a history of shame and sorrow in his own family.

A gifted speaker we recall who would be afflicted at times with inability to connect his thoughts. He would be irresistible on a number of occasions and then at some important hour would be profoundly humiliated before a great audience through confusion of ideas, loss of memory and lack of command of language. The prince had been seen, but just as unmistakable was the limp.

We cannot give in this chapter a full enumeration, much less a description of these various "limps." When we add to what already has been mentioned, the lack of eloquence, logical power, offhand speech and mental concentration, we have only made a beginning of the list.

The question at once arises as to why God permits all this; and the answer is readily given now, and has been given long before by one who was thus afflicted. He said, "Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me."

This covers the ground. The prince is in danger. He might be puffed up by his own gifts and with the earthly and heavenly honor he receives. So the laming touch is given him as a kind of anchor to hold him down, or ballast to keep him steady, or a rope to prevent the balloon from flying away.

The reader will remember the story of the eastern king who had a man to follow him about and remind him again and again that he was mortal and would soon be in the grave. So this messenger of pain and humiliation has a language and message of its own. Remember who you are, it says. Do you observe your limp?

Moreover, the limp is given or permitted to show the people that the man is not divine. There is such a tendency to hero-worship in the human breast. Such a disposition to bow down to gifts in others with almost the first appearance of superiority, genius, or success the cry is made the gods are come down to us, and straightway the garlands and oxen are brought out for gifts and sacrifices.

Not all humanly applauded men will do like the apostle and cry out: “Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you.” The trouble is that many individuals love to sniff such incense and will not correct the people in their unwise and wrong adulation. So God gives a limp to the prince.

A second class of limps is recognized in character weakness.

Such lameness, of course, God is not responsible for. The man himself is alone to blame.

We have all seen this person. He has a royal mind and a gifted tongue. He is heaven-honored again and again in his work, and yet is observed afterwards doing and saying things which puzzle, humble and distress the church of God, and cause the tongues of worldly people to go at a great and mortifying rate.

Such limps are beheld in foolish speech, giddy actions, buffoonery, imprudent conduct and a score of similar things. The limp is also seen in untidy dress, a slovenly kept house, a disposition to borrow money and an indisposition to pay debts.

The people saw him do well in the pulpit. He prayed powerfully in the meeting. He talked well, convincingly and convictingly at church, when, lo! the next hour or day as he went forth and crossed the brook everybody saw him limp. We recall such a preacher of whom we heard much as a boy. Every one spoke of his great gifts in the pulpit. The people were proud of him on Sunday, but during the balance of the week he was a mortification to them. One of his weaknesses was a continual hinting for gifts. One of his members, a most excellent man, in speaking of him uttered these remarkable words:

“When I see him in the pulpit I think he ought never to come out of it; and when I see him out of it I feel he ought never to go back into it.”

In a word, the prince limped.

A third class of limps consists of conditions for which the man is not responsible.

He never had the benefit of an education, and is made keenly to feel it in the midst of his useful and successful life. At times, just the memory would bring embarrassment and create a sense of mental halting in him. He felt as he spoke his burning words that he occasionally limped. He knew also that scholarly men in the audience saw that he halted. This, of course, deepened the pain of his heart.

A fourth class of limps seen in princes is a certain lack of refinement of manners.

The style of eating is coarse, the speech blunt and rude. The finger nails are cleaned in public, often during divine service; the hand is sometimes manipulated as a napkin, sometimes as a handkerchief, and the fork used as a toothpick.

No one thinks of calling these practices sins. They simply jar and grate on certain sensibilities. They act as a sudden letting-down of exalted conceptions. The man who looked like a prince in the pulpit, as he crosses the brook into social everyday life, is seen to halt upon his thigh. He is a limper as well as a prince.

The shock is so great to some people that previous good done is neutralized, while others, who feel the grandeur of the man in spite of his limp, can but wish that the lameness could be cured. As we meditate upon these phenomena in the pew and pulpit we draw some conclusions.

**First**, a prince who has a limp given by the Lord will likely never be delivered from it in this world. Paul prayed fervently in this regard, but the Lord would not remove the thorn, while at the same time he assured his servant that his grace would be sufficient for him.

**Second**, when men possess only the limp and have not the prince nature as a kind of compensation for the lack of the spiritually great and good in them, the case is simply intolerable.

**Third**, much of the human limp we can be delivered from, and so we should strive to correct ourselves at those points where we offend good taste and shock a true culture.

**Fourth**, if the choice has to be made, we would far rather be a prince with a limp, than no prince at all.

**Fifth**, whatever else happens, let us all see to it that we are princes. Through grace any one can be a prince in the kingdom of God who will.

**Sixth**, if we have to carry a limp, let us see to it that it shall not be one of our making, but of divine manufacture.

**Seventh**, meantime let us exercise the greatest of charity toward all limpers when the lameness has no moral or rather immoral root. Perhaps, if we could see how little we look to others towering above us; if we knew what intellectual pygmies we were beside the angels; if we realized how little we knew, we would be glad to take a lowly place among the band of halting ones we have mentioned and adopt as our escutcheon and coat of arms a couple of broken thigh bones.



# CHAPTER 9

## THE RUIN OF ABSALOM

IT IS sad enough to see any man make shipwreck of his soul, but when the ruined individual is young, handsome and gifted, the sorrow felt over the everlasting overthrow is intensified many times. such instances are not lacking in the Bible, and abound in life. In almost every community Absalom is seen to live, flourish a little while, and then go down to ruin, all before our eyes.

The physical, social and family setting of some men is so far above the average, so striking to the eye, so fair to all appearance, that a shock of surprise is felt by many when informed of the moral fall and early death of one of these temporally favored ones. The worm was not suspected to be in the flower so long, when the petals suddenly dropped off and blew away before amazed hundreds and thousands. The gnawing wolf was not imagined to be under the cloak, until the man fell headlong before the gaze of the community.

There are some gifts that with the rarest exceptions bring calamity to those who possess them; and there are sins which, while not as externally ugly as other forms of iniquity, yet are just as deadly and will sooner or later pull down the man who opens his heart to them.

If we use Absalom in a kind of illustrative way, the truth of what we affirm will be plainly brought out. Several things are very apparent in studying his case.

First, Absalom was strikingly handsome.

Perhaps there never was a more perilous physical gift than masculine or feminine beauty. Both sexes desire it, grieve when they do not possess it, and yet it has led many to such heights of pride and vanity, to such depths of silliness and folly, and into such grave mistakes, missteps and final ruin, that to crave it is like wishing for damnation.

Many have been struck with the fact of the small number of really handsome men and beautiful women. But when we remember what an object beauty is for attack, what a cause for strife and envy, what a channel for temptation, and what a prolific source of transgression, we need not wonder any longer at the vast majority of homely people in the world. God has a purpose in it, and it is one of mercy. Life with its startling and harrowing occurrences has taught us that to be endowed this way is to increase vastly the power of Satan over the soul and multiplies the hazards and perils of moral probation.

When the Scriptures tell us of the comeliness of Absalom, we might know that trouble was ahead. The ruddy cheek, flowing hair and ingratiating manners, exciting admiration on the part of the women, and envy on the part of the men, could not but make the path of life perilous to any one, but especially to a man like Absalom, who had not divine grace to begin with to steady and save him.

It is doubtless with deep significance that the Bible tells us that one of the objects of the man's vanity was the cause of his destruction. The haughty head, with its luxuriant locks, on which many admiring eyes had rested admiringly, was caught in the oak and proved the means of his death.

On many a tombstone since that scene in the forest could be truthfully written, "Ruined by a beautiful face."

To this day the handsome countenance and courtly presence on platform or in pulpit atones with many for lack of brains or piety. Men inwardly sigh for the attractions which so readily open the way for the possessor to the attention, regard and cordial welcoming smiles of all kinds of circles. But could we see the slippery place in which the man stood, how much more it cost him to stand than others, what peculiar besetments came to him, there would be abundant cause for gratitude in not being similarly endowed, and more than ever could be seen the wisdom and love of God in making so many ordinary-looking and downright ugly people.

Again, we notice that Absalom was the possessor of very dark passions.

It was at his command his brother Amnon was murdered. The presence of that brother at his feast was secured through lies and treachery. It seems that in his hasty, vindictive spirit he could not wait on courts of law, or

the king, or justice, and in addition took one of God's prerogatives from His hand, who said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."

As an indication of the hasty spirit of the man, his inability to brook delay where his imperious will was concerned. When Joab failed to come to see him at his request, he had the barley fields of his father's general set on fire.

Our point in bringing these things out is to show the readers that when physical and moral destruction overtake a man, there is always abundant cause in the past for the ghastly happening.

Much undeserved sympathy is lost upon certain cases and outcrops in expressions, "What a pity," "So young," "So handsome," "So attractive," etc., etc. When, if we had the perpendicular view that God has of the heart and life, we would say, "What a piece of justice," "So old in sins" "So foul and ugly in spirit," "So horrible in the sight of heaven."

Third, the young man Absalom was an accomplished politician.

The reader has only to turn to the fifteenth chapter of Second Samuel and see how for months, if not years, he frequented the gates of Jerusalem, met the people there who came in from all parts of the country to the city, and with all the adroit arts of a finished politician paid personal court and attention to each one, and as the Bible says, "Stole the hearts of the men of Israel."

The result of this conduct can be briefly summed up in the words, conspiracy, rebellion, the dethronement and exile of David, war, the loss of many lives, and the death of Absalom himself.

From the study of a number of politicians, we are convinced that we have no right to be surprised at the sorrowful history and melancholy termination of such a life. Christianity demands that we be from the heart what the politician is on the outside. The latter simulates in interest and love, what the former should find bubbling up within his heart without deceit or hypocrisy. The politician is an actor of a part. The smile, warm shake of the hand, cordial inquiries about the health and prosperity of self and family, are not born of real love, but arise from a selfish purpose, to win the favor, influence and vote of the man thus addressed. This, of

course, is a hollow life, the action of a hypocrite, and is compelled to react damagingly and disastrously upon the moral nature.

The ease with which Absalom concealed his enmity to Amnon for years, until he could wreak his vengeance upon him; the equally skillful way in which for quite a flight of time he dissembled with his father as to his designs, and at the same time deceived the people as to his purposes upon the throne, all go to show what a polished, consummate dissimulator this son of David was.

We have often wondered how people can be so easily hoodwinked by such characters. One would think that they would recognize the wolf under the sheep's clothing, and see the beguiler under the smiler. But they do not in most cases, and did not in this instance, all of which goes to prove to what perfection Absalom had brought the art of a practiced handshaking, face smiling and apparently deeply interested manner, when all the while the hand hardly knew who had it, the deeply interested air was simply a studied pose, while the real man was far away, and the true face behind the smiling mask, if seen, would have shocked the poor dupe into a state of horror or precipitated a rapid flight from the fearful vision.

Who wonders that sorrow, shame, and oftentimes ruin are the end of such a life?

A fourth feature of Absalom's character was his ambition. He wanted to be king, and plotted to that end. It resulted in his premature death.

One of the greatest intellects the world ever knew puts in the lips of one of his characters the words, "I charge thee fling away ambition." A greater than he has given us a book which has much to say of the unhappy end of such lives. A notable line of names is given us in its pages of men who schemed, plotted, fought and murdered to reach positions of rulership and power. Some reached the place, while others failed, but all went down with a crash into ruin which proved not only a temporal destruction, but a spiritual and eternal one as well.

Leaving the history of kings, generals and courtiers moving in large military and political realms, we have only to look into what is called everyday life to see the same evils at work and the same inevitable failure and fall. We have seen men fix their eyes on positions in church and State for which

they were not fitted in head, heart or life. We have seen thee take their day dreams and visionary hopes for indications of qualifications as well as assurances of success. Later they grew restless and unhappy as the coveted thing did not take place; and became an amusement to their enemies, and an affliction to their friends with a double manifestation of conceit and folly. By and by, when the crushing disappointment came, they sank under it, drifted into a condition of heart bitterness, life moroseness and chronic fault-finding, and finally were hauled to the cemetery ten, fifteen or twenty years ahead of time.

The head of Absalom caught in the branches of an oak with leaves fluttering about it, when he aspired to have it encircled with a band of gold, sprinkled with gems, is a ghastly commentary in the handwriting of Nature, on the woeful end of certain wrong earthly ambitions. Let me crown thee, said the Oak, with grim humor, and, catching poor Absalom's head firmly in a fork of its limbs, it garlanded him with some dry foliage, while the feet of the aspirant after high honors dug into and dangled in mid-air.

Somehow, as we gaze upon the sickening spectacle, we think of the two last, miniature, wave beat kingdoms of Napoleon; the paper crown of Jack Cade thrust on his decapitated head; and the title of "Bishop" given in secret amused conclaves of preachers to the brother who beheld the office from afar, desired to embrace it, was persuaded of it, and died without the fulfillment.

A final feature of Absalom's character is seen in his filial misconduct.

There never was a tenderer father than David. His love is seen in his grief over the death of the first child of Bathsheba. It crops out again in his sorrow over the untimely taking off of Amnon, and it is beheld in the agony displayed over the killing of this same unnatural, ungrateful, disobedient and cruel son, Absalom. The words of the stricken father will never be forgotten, and will always stand out as one of the most pathetic, heartbreaking cries ever uttered by mortal lips, "O, my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee; O! Absalom, my son, my son!"

It is difficult with some, and impossible for many others, to read these words today, three thousand years after their utterance, without the tears springing to the eyes; or, if read aloud the heart swells, the throat chokes, and the voice utterly breaks down under the tender power and indescribable pathos of the lamentation.

And yet this was the father that Absalom plotted against, ran out of Jerusalem, heaped shame and contempt upon on the roof of his palace, pursued with his troops beyond Jordan, and fought against with full intention to overthrow and kill.

Honor and obedience to parents is one of the commandments which God sent to the world from the skies, writing the law with his own finger on a table of stone. The Bible says it is the first commandment with promise, the words being added to the law that long life shall be given to the child who observes it. Its violation under the Mosaic dispensation was death by stoning. In addition God put the Spirit of prophecy upon one of the Bible writers to say, "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it." It looked like Law and Prophecy had met in the case of Absalom. The body of the young man transfixed by javelins showed that death had come according to the Law, and the head, fixed in the tree favorable for the beaks of ravens seemed a ghastly preparation for the fulfillment of the words of the Prophecy. If the ravens did not get the eyes of Absalom it was not because the dreadful feast was not ready. Doubtless it was because he was the son of David, His own servant, that God kept the black-winged birds back from the swinging body of the strangely arrested and imprisoned man.

One of the marks of a decadent age, and pointed out by Paul as a sign of the end of the world, is "disobedience to parents." We have heard expressions used by children that on the first occasion we and no idea of whom they were speaking. It was hard to realize in the terms "the governor," "the old man," and "the old woman" that the being who had given them birth, fed and sustained them, were referred to. With a great shock we are made to feel that although Absalom is dead, the sin of Absalom remains.

In visiting Jerusalem some nine years ago we were shown what is reputed to be the Tomb of Absalom. I was told that to this day people of that country in passing the sepulcher cast a stone at it, the rock being often accompanied with an execration. What sin of the young man is uppermost in their minds we do not know, whether it was his pride, vanity, treachery, ingratitude, filial disobedience, wiliness, impurity, heartless ambition, or whether they were all remembered. We only know the stone is cast, and the memory of the man is abhorred to this day.

Perhaps the most solemn lesson of all which can be gathered from the sadly ended life is, that some persons go to ruin in spite of everything that is done for them. David struggled upward from obscurity and poverty, through every kind of opposition and difficulty to the highest place in the land. Absalom the son of David, started at the top, with wealth, position, honor, good looks, a princely bearing and the tender affection of the king at his side, and pushed his way through all, down, down, down, until he knew almost every vice and reached the horrible skull-strewn bottom of moral ruin while still in the bloom of young manhood.

It is not truer that some men are going to rise and succeed, in spite of earth and hell, than it is true that others are going to degradation and perdition in spite of warning and advice, prayer and sermon, men and angels, the church and heaven, and in face of all that can be done by a merciful, long-suffering and omnipotent God.

# CHAPTER 10

## THE REJECTION OF SAUL

IT IS a very dreadful thought that a time can come and does come in this life when God casts off a man. But hell is also a fearful fact, and yet it is as true as it is awful, and it is agreed that sad and heart-sickening as is the subject, yet we owe it to God and to human souls to hold up this dark side of the moral universe. We have to declare the whole counsel of God, to be faithful servants and messengers in order to deliver our own souls.

There is a gentle and merciful side to the gospel, and there is a rugged, unbending, just and punitive side. There is a bleeding Lamb in Redemption, and yet that same being is called the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, and men pray at the last day to be delivered from His wrath. Much is said about God's readiness to accept the vilest and worst of men, and this is all right; but it is not the less true that an hour comes when God leaves a soul, and that departure is eternal. Moreover, this divine withdrawal may take place with one who has been his servant and follower.

We not only have Bible statement of this fact, but life illustrations and confirmations of it in the Scripture. The Word of God says, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." David solemnly warns Solomon, "If thou forsake him He will cast thee off forever." And here in Saul's case, Samuel was charged by the Lord to tell him, "I have rejected thee."

It is vain to try to evade the force of these words by saying it was a rejection in regard to kingship over Israel. It was more. Saul himself said, "The Lord has departed from me and answereth me no more." Thus he lived, and so he died, a rejected man. His last night was spent in consulting a witch, and his last act was the commission of suicide.

About the fearful fact of the divine casting off and rejection of this man, gather several thoughts worthy of consideration.

One is that he was once a saved and accepted man.



The Word is explicit here in stating that God had given him a new heart. This occurred during his visit to Samuel, and after that prophet had conversed with and anointed him. The Bible says, “When he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart.” In addition it says, “The Spirit of God came upon him and he prophesied.”

Later on the man’s modesty and humility are evidenced in his “hiding in the stuff” when the people were seeking him for a king. This was the time when he was little in his own sight and God made him great. Afterwards he got great and God made him little.

A second fact is the man’s gradual approach to the calamity of the divine rejection.

For years we supposed that God cast Saul off for a single act, that act being his disobedience in regard to the destruction of the Amalekites and their property. But this was not the case. The transgression in regard to the Amalekites was really a culmination. Unmistakable signs of disloyalty and spiritual decay, long before, are seen in the man, who, step by step, approached his ruin.

One instance is beheld in his impatience in not waiting for Samuel, and irreverently taking the place of the priest at the altar. For this same offense God smote a king centuries afterward with leprosy. At a prior time he marshaled an army and inaugurated a war without consulting God. In his earthly wisdom he commanded a fast during the battle which unfitted the people of Israel by physical weakness from doing what they might have done. At the same time he had thereby laid a temptation before them from the ravenous hunger which possessed them, and they flew upon the animals, captured and ate them in their blood, which was forbidden by their law. In the rashest impetuosity he decided upon the death of Jonathan to fulfill one of his rash vows.

All these are the outcroppings of the state of his heart, which had already weakened and become untrue in the service of God. They were the steps that lead to the brow of the precipice from whence the traveler falls headlong. It was the gradual decay which precedes the ponderous and booming fall of a monarch of the forest.

If we had the minute moral history of all fallen and rejected Christians written out for our reading, we would discover that before the divine casting off, there had been a world of patience, warnings rebuke and striving on the part of God, and months, perhaps years, of moral stubbornness and perverseness on the part of the unfaithful servant of heaven. God had repeatedly forgiven, and the infatuated one had committed again the act or acts of folly until at last God said, "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone."

He who does not see how this can be uttered to a man or woman once religious, has not read the Bible, nor studied the history of the church, nor read the hearts of men.

A third fact is the inexorableness of the divine judgment.

Men have so persisted in looking on the love and mercy side of the Divine Being that they do not seem to realize He has a sterner side to His character, and that Justice is as truly an attribute of His nature as Mercy.

It is well to recollect that He who hung on the cross is to sit on the Judgment Seat; that He who is to say, "Come ye blessed," is also to say, "Depart ye cursed." The same mouth which declares that some shall go into everlasting life adds that others shall fall into an everlasting hell.

It would pay men to study the character of God, and find out who He is, and what He is, and not worship a creature of their own imagination. There is a time when God will cast a man off, and it will be final. He solemnly declares that men may mock and laugh at Him, but that the day will come when He will mock at their calamity, and laugh when their fear cometh. He solemnly affirms that then they will call, but He will not answer. Jesus forewarned the Jews of this very woe, while in tears. He told them they knew not the time of their visitation, and that their house would be left unto them desolate.

It has all been fulfilled, and for nearly two thousand years God has not sent a prophet to that people. The skies are locked to their cries, the veil is on their heart, their temple is gone, their nation scattered, and a judgment which men are powerless to remove is upon them.

The unchangeable attitude of God to this people for centuries prepares us to expect as dreadful a doom if cast off as individuals.

Not a particle of vindictiveness need be imagined nor is implicated. It is the conduct and bearing of an infinitely perfect character. It is the stand of One who has exhausted all remedies and efforts, and reading the future clearly, sees that it is a hopeless case, and so draws off finally and forever.

Upon the part of the Divine Being there may be a holy wrath in addition, toward a creature who has withstood the love, pity, entreaties and efforts of an infinite God in his behalf. Anyhow, the attitude above described, once assumed, is never changed. In the case of the Jews as a national judgment it is to remain until "the fullness of the Gentiles," which period may yet be hundreds of years away in the dim future. Until that time, vain will be every effort to alter that averted look of God. Darker still, the divine relation to hell is unchangeable. The word "everlasting" is the name of the key which locks that gloomy portal. The awful sentence, "given up of God," might truly be written over its gateway.

So with a man who is rejected by the Lord on earth; there is no possibility of his ever turning from sin and being saved. For that matter he does not want to turn. And one thing is certain, God never tries to turn him again.

We once knew of a young woman who married a man who was her inferior in many respects, and was undoubtedly unworthy of her. Still she loved him and was affectionate. One day, as she stooped to kiss him, he, being peevish and irritable, slapped her. She arose slowly with an indescribable look upon her face and said in measured words, "From this moment, if ever a kiss passes between us, you will have to give it."

They lived together over thirty years after that, but she never offered him another caress. She was one of the gentlest and purest of women, and a most faithful wife, but under the velvet of her refined nature was an iron bar of character that her husband had not suspected, but whose unbending firmness he was made to feel to the hour of his death. She never broke the vow of that morning. She never refused to let him kiss her, but she never again kissed him. There was a judgment of rejection of a domestic character in that home. We doubt not that the man himself, if now living, would be able to appreciate what is contained in this chapter.

Saul found that his casting off was final. He said, “God answereth me no more.” Samuel told him that God had rejected him, and the whole of the sad after life proved the truth of the statement.

That a great sorrow settled upon the man is evident to the Bible reader; and one might say, why did not God consider his grief, relent and restore him but the spiritually thoughtful will see that He did not from the fact that the sorrow was not a godly one. The Bible plainly distinguishes between the sorrow of the world, a kind of selfish grief, and godly mourning which ends in salvation.

It is evident that Judas did not have the proper kind of repentance. It is equally clear that Saul did not grieve aright. His comment on his conduct was that “he had played the fool exceedingly.” His greatest desire at times in the midst of his lapsed life was that Samuel would honor him before Israel. How dissimilar the case of David who was heartbroken in that he had sinned against God, and humbled himself in deepest contrition before Him. The difference in these emotions is so great in the moral world that one man is saved and the other lost. David and Peter grieved with a godly sorrow and returned to the heavenly fold, while Saul and Judas had the sorrow of the world and committed suicide.

The closing scenes of a God-rejected man usually show an increasing rush to greater sins and the final, fearful plunge into ruin.

No one can read about the last days of Saul without genuine heartsickness and pain. How swiftly and terribly the events follow one another that precede the last ghastly act. We note his fruitless effort to get a message from God, his consciousness of coming doom, his vain attempts to escape it, his midnight visit to the witch with peerings into the dark future, and the solemn words of the spirit of Samuel, telling him that he would die on the morrow. All these are features of fearful, sickening interest, and people read them as they would about an approaching execution.

When the ghost of Samuel told Saul about his defeat in battle and coming death next day, the Bible says that the unhappy king fell prostrate on the floor. His servants lifted him up, the woman prepared a meal, and they insisted on his eating. It was a dreary meal. Then followed the tramp back

over the mountains and through the plains under the stars. How far away and pitiless they looked!

The next day the battle with the Philistines took place, and Saul fought desperately, but did so with a sense of being forsaken of heaven, and so with a heart frozen by despair. His army was soon defeated and scattered, his son Jonathan killed, while he, hard pressed by the enemy, begged his armor-bearer to slay him. The man refused and Saul fell on his own sword and went unprepared and unbidden into the presence of the God whose favor and honors he had not appreciated, whose commands he had broken, and whose patience and long suffering he had exhausted.

When in the Holy Land a few years ago, I stood on the brow of a mountain range in Samaria and, looking across the plain of Jezreel, eight or ten miles wide at that point, rested my eyes on Mt. Gilboa, where the battle was fought, Jonathan was killed, and Saul slew himself. The shadow of a large cloud was brooding on it when I looked, while other mountains in the neighborhood were in the clear sunlight. The cloud-shadow peculiarly affected me. It looked like a mourning badge on the door, or a pall flung forgotten on a chair after the funeral. Anyhow, it was a fitting badge, as the shadow of a cloud, of a life which, beginning so hopefully, had ended so disastrously.

More than once I have seen fallen Christians who have most powerfully brought back to mind the unhappy king of Israel. They had enjoyed divine favor and honor, and yet began to go astray. They went deeper and still deeper, in spite of all that God could do, until at last any one could see that the Lord had given them up. They lingered around for years, trying to imitate old-time methods and motions, and give the appearance of other days, but all could see the failure, hear the hollowness of the voice, feel the deadness of the heart, witness the jealousy and rage against rising Davids, behold the moody brow, the restless life, and, finally, the sinking out of sight into obscurity, or the more tragic, by of being taken off by a sudden crash into complete moral ruin and death.

About one of these men, a minister of the Gospel said to the writer, in regard to the man's unhappiness and restless wanderings about:

“He reminds me of Saul in his last days of wretchedness and forsakenness.”

It is a fearful thing to be cast off of God. May we not tamper with those things which bring about this calamity.

Many of us have seen the difficulty with which men get back to God after having sinned grossly against him. Others tell us that, although taken back, they never feel the same, that something has been lost by their unfaithfulness which is not restored by repentance and amendment of life. Still others never get back. They seem to be and doubtless are doomed men. They have provoked God to such a degree that the Spirit is recalled. Some are handed over to Satan. Some are given up to believe a lie. Some are allowed to rot, and the balance of their days is a kind of superannuation of usefulness and influence, so that no matter what they say or do, people pay no attention to them. And some by the hands of other people, and some by their own hands end their wretched existence and break through the crust of time and fall headlong into eternity.

May we all be saved from the immeasurable woe of being cast off by the Lord.

# CHAPTER 11

## DOCTRINES OF DEVILS

THE devil has some remarkable ways of prosecuting his work of spiritual ruin and death. A favorite method, because a most successful one, is seen in his imitation of the works of God.

Sin is so dreadful a thing that with many it has to be sugar-coated to be taken; or cloaked and disguised to find entrance into the heart or home. Hell is so frightful an abyss that it has to be covered with flowers. The sights of moral ruin are so ghastly and gruesome that people have to be blindfolded in order to be led down into the depths of spiritual degradation.

Men who would not follow a wolf in his own hide and hair, are willing to be led by one in sheep's clothing. And there are multitudes whose main objection to the devil seems to be his cloven foot and rattling chains. If the first can be concealed and the second wreathed and hidden under ribbons and roses, their only objection to a Satanic master is removed. The devil knows this, and in his attempt to destroy a human soul is compelled to come as a deceiver; the hook is covered with attractive bait, the trap or dreadful is concealed, the battery is masked.

In line with this procedure of deception we notice his imitation of the works of God. It is not only that he comes as an angel of light, talking like God and trying thereby to deceive the very elect, but he counterfeits the work of God and would thereby puzzle and destroy the people. It is to be remembered that when the Lord sent forth Moses and Aaron to his work, the devil dispatched magicians to divide the attention of the multitude. The servants of God had a rod and the messengers of Satan came similarly supplied. Aaron cast down his rod, and the magicians cast down theirs. Aaron worked miracles with his, and they wrought wonders with theirs.

To this day the adversary keeps up this strange and horrible imitation of divine things. He recognizes the power of the Gospel and produces a

counterfeit one, which is so filled with a spurious love, pity and mercy as to allow sinning and has no hell. He notices the fact of a Spirit-called ministry, and at once puts his preachers in the field. Observing the power of the church and the readiness with which people assemble on the Sabbath, he dots the land with various kinds of Orders, Christian Science tabernacles, and halls of Free Thought.

Then he has his counterfeit revivals. The great stir and profound feeling of a genuine season of grace have to be imitated. He must work wonders with his rods in order to divert attention and confuse the multitude. So we behold great Union Meetings, with electric lights and abundance of sawdust, with flaring handbills, choral bands, rosetted ushers, star preachers in the pulpit, prominent laymen on the platform, card-signing in the pews, the general uprising to the inoffensive and liberal proposition that all who would like to meet their mothers in heaven to please stand for a moment, and the cheerful looking, eye-deceiving wind-up of the whole hollow affair by a general handshake. Spiritually lifeless and thoughtless people pronounce it a great success. They say so among themselves. They say it repeatedly, looking inquiringly into each others' eyes to be reassured, because of a certain vague, inward unrest as well as conscious ignorance of what constitutes a real successful meeting. So they shake hands again, and say over and over that it was a splendid meeting, while angels grieve over the stupendous farce and failure in heaven, and devils laugh themselves black in the face in hell.

In addition to all this, along the line of deception come the doctrines of the devil. God has them, therefore Satan must have some, and they must be imitations of the truth or they could never stand a moment with vast bodies of people. They must be apparently stamped in heaven. The lead must have a coating of silver. Some word of God must be engraved over and about the counterfeit to make it appear a genuine coin of heaven. So we have passed off on the people:

*License for liberty.*  
*Imputed purity for imparted purity.*  
*Antinomianism for obedience.*  
*Affinities for Christian friendship.*  
*Christian Science for Christian faith and prayer.*  
*Free love for perfect love.*



Unnatural sundering of family ties and relationships instead of the spiritual exalting of Christ as supreme over all.

*Penance for repentance.  
Reformation for regeneration.*

Church works for good works, and so on through the whole catalogue.

There are many more, but we devote the remaining space of this chapter to the mentioning of only two.

*One is "forbidding to marry."*

Paul mentions this in connection with his statement of "doctrines of devils." As a teaching of Satan it is an unmistakable counterfeit of Christ's words where He says that some make themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. His idea is clear to any well-balanced spiritual man. There are circumstances and conditions in life when it may be best for a man or woman not to marry. There may be a work undertaken for Christ which, on account of its peculiarity, may be best served or accomplished by a single life. Because of this fact Bishop Asbury refused to wed, although possessed of a tender heart and with strong home interests.

Now, to have this recognition on the part of Christ of exceptional instances lifted up as a general rule for observation, as a law imposed upon all Christians, is to be wise above that which is written, and graver still is to teach something contrary to that which is written. It is a devil's doctrine and a deplorable counterfeit of one of the divine teachings.

For God to institute marriage and bless it, and throw regulations about it, and then turn about and "forbid" it, would be to involve the Divine Being in the most remarkable changeableness and inconsistency. No sensible man, one would think, much less a Christian, who is not a fanatic, could believe this of God, and yet this counterfeit of Christ's words is out and passing current in many honest minds.

The reader of church history is well acquainted with the origin and spread of this doctrine of the devil in the Dark Ages in the Catholic Church; also of the profound moral disaster which followed upon its reception. The spiritual havoc it wrought in monastery, convent and parish was a sufficient proof in itself to show it was not of God.

That such a doctrine and practice should spring up now in the midst of an evangelical Christianity, and among spiritual people, creates a profounder astonishment than that felt when reading of its first appearance at a time when the devil seemed to have control not only of the world but of the church.

There is not only danger to the soul in going contrary to the Word, but in going beyond the Word. Satan endeavors to make all go down that he can in the first way, and is not the less diligent to secure the fall of others in the second. This last class are generally the morbidly conscientious and the uninstructed. The first class he gets to sin outright, the second he influences to run a duty to such extremes that injury to the body and influence, and finally sin itself, is certain to be the result. He of course starts them out with a Bible quotation, but sees to it that the fired up life runs clear past the depot, then into a side track, and at last down a bank with a final plunge into the woods.

If Satan cannot induce a man to violate the commandments, then the next attack will be to make him do more than the Scripture requires.

Fasting is all right, but the devil would have the conscientious Christian go to such an extent in its observance that instead of its becoming an act of grace it proves a means of prostrating the physical nature, weakening the mental forces, disqualifying one for the service of God, and in a word a bondage and affliction. Dress reform is right, but the adversary delights to turn the duty into a hobby and degenerate the woman or man into scarecrows. Just as plainly marriage is stated in the Bible to be "honorable among all," and God says "the bed is undefiled;" whereupon Satan would bring these words to naught by the twisting, distorting and misapplication of the utterances of Christ in regard to some becoming eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake, and by equally remarkable perversions of other passages in the Word. For a person to receive and defend this distortion of truth is simply to charge that God has foisted an impure institution on the world; it is to be wise above that which is written; it is to follow a doctrine of the devil; and it is to bring ourselves where Christ can say of us as He once did to the Jews, that we have ignored weightier matters and gone to observing the commandments of men.

A second Satanic doctrine mentioned by Paul is seen in the words, “Commanding to abstain from meats.”

That God in the Old Dispensation prohibited his people from eating the flesh of certain animals, we all well know. But equally well it should be known that the sanitary idea was not the main reason in so doing, but it was a typical method of teaching truth, and one of numerous ways adapted to make a peculiar people.

That this meat restriction has been removed we are doubly taught by the vision of the sheet containing all kinds of unclean animals and let down thrice before Peter under the command to “Rise, slay and eat;” and by the plain statement of the Bible, when Paul, in speaking of “meats,” says about them:

“Which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer.”

Today we have, in spite of all this, a class of Christians who prohibit certain kinds of meat like the flesh of swine; and still another class who forbid all kinds of meat. One is the Judaist, and the other the Monastic of the church. The first seems to be ignorant of the Word in its deeper and fulfilled senses and the other has gone beyond the Word and bids us keep a commandment of men that has its origin in a doctrine of the devil.

To hear these two classes talk one is made to feel that the world has rolled backward into the Dark Ages, and farther back still to the very twilight and beginning of spiritual things, while lessons that were supposed to have been finally learned have all been forgotten and need to be retaught again.

According to history as well as the Bible, there are one of three courses which a church or individual can take in the religious life. First, there is the way of backsliding, moral looseness and general worldliness. Second, there is the road of asceticism or monasticism. And, third, there is the straight path, which avoids both of the other roads, and that is neither loose nor ascetic, neither worldly nor monastic. It bears the cross, denies self daily, but is not sour or hermitic. It has liberty instead of license, and while free

is never free to do wrong, and while unworldly has not withdrawn its love, sympathies and labors in behalf of the world.

Both churches and individuals have gone off into the right and left forks of the road; some into worldliness and sin, and others to a dark, unbending, repelling asceticism. Both conditions are lamentable, and both are calamitous. The devil is determined if he can to get us into one or the other of these two ways. May the Savior deliver the church, and save us as individuals from these directly opposite perils. May we enter upon and remain in the strait way which is so narrow as to exclude sin, but so high that one in it can see and touch heaven all the time.

In this life we can be social, yet not convivial; joyful, but not frivolous; serious, but not gloomy; religious, but not fanatical; in the world and yet not of the world, and so following the commandments of God rather than the doctrines of the devil, we will glorify our Father in heaven at all times as pure, sound, wholesome, faithful, well-balanced, thoroughly saved men and women.

# CHAPTER 12

## A PORTRAIT OF SIN

THERE are many descriptions of sin in the Bible. They are given in order to arouse the torpid mind, awaken the conscience, and save the soul from damnation.

The Bible is a mirror into which a man is urged to look and see his likeness. Or, better still, it contains a gallery of pictures showing the nature, progress and end of a life of sin. The desire of the Spirit is to lead the sinner down the line until He confronts him with an image of himself, and there cause him to be transfixed and cut to the heart with this sudden vision of his own moral likeness gazing at him from the verse or chapter.

There are many sad descriptions of sin in the Bible, with its attendant misery and resultant ruin. The words “asleep,” “lost,” “blind,” “deaf,” “dead,” are all Scriptural figures to illustrate the state of a man out of Christ. Any one of them should be sufficient to start a soul on its way to Jesus for salvation. Among these pictures the writer has found one in Isaiah which is unusually striking and solemnizing. In the verse we allude to five very fearful facts are stated about the man. One is that he has a “deceived heart.”

It does not say that he is deceiving any one, but has been deceived himself. It is a powerful and heartsickening description. The word “deceived” alone is a volume in itself. The arch-deceiver of course is the devil. That he is an adept in the work and makes a complete success of it among countless millions no spiritually illumined mind can doubt for a moment. The fact is that before a person can be brought into any kind of transgression he must first be deceived. Hell must be denied or put out of sight. The fact of sin paying wages or bearing fruit must be disputed or banished from the thoughts. Forms of pleasure must be shown trooping along every path of evil and waiting with smiles for the traveler to approach. No word is said to the dupe that when he overtakes these apparent fairies of delight they will suddenly be transformed into harpies and furies with mental whips

and spirit scourges, to drive the victim frantic. All that and more is hidden from the blinded one who goes on in his stupidity to destruction and death.

We recall two instances of deception which we beheld when a youth that have often since recurred to the memory. One was the inmate of a lunatic asylum who fancied himself a great landed proprietor and railroad king. He spent most of the day in the corner of his room with a pencil and paper, drawing designs and plans of proposed valuable improvements, and the extension of his railway lines on his imaginary domains.

He is a fair picture of the sinner hoodwinked and fooled by the devil, his good sense stolen from him, dwelling on the coming pleasures and riches of a sinful life, that are as baseless and visionary as the wealth of the lunatic.

Another instance we remember was that of a young woman who was deceived by a young man. He had won her heart in sport, and was amusing himself with her, while he really loved another woman. We once saw them together when a lad at an entertainment given by a relative of the writer. She was hanging on his arm and gasping up into his face with a look of such devotion that we have never forgotten it in all these years. We recall also the smile he cast upon her, and yet he knew that in a month's time she would be crushed at his public abandonment of her. If she could have read the heartbreaking future that night she would have fallen down senseless among the feet of the dancers among whom she was whirling with that glad uplifted face. We saw her afterwards when the blow came, and she sank under it before the eyes of the community. We do not remember ever to have seen her smile again.

So, if the beguiled soul could look up and see the awful leer of triumph that Satan is throwing upon it! If deluded men and women could only know how soon their hearts will be broken with the knowledge of a lifelong betrayal by the adversary, they might well be horrified. But as yet they fail to penetrate the deception and go on their blinded and beguiled way.

Another description of this character is found in the words "turned aside."

This would indicate that the man had once been in the good way. He had started out all right, ran well for a season, and then, encountering the Deceiver in some form or manner, had been “turned aside.”

It is pitiable to see how many have been thus drawn away. They are to be beheld in every community and church. Their strength has been sapped in some manner, their locks shorn, and God is departed from them. Others are pressing eagerly onward and upward, while they first loitered, got to dallying with temptation, and finally stopped altogether. Like Amasa’s weltering body by the roadside, they attract a brief melancholy attention, and then the procession of life moves on and leaves them behind.

A third feature in the portrait is seen in the expression, “feedeth on ashes.”

The figure is tremendous. Think of a man actually eating ashes. Men would call to him and ask why he did such a foolish thing, and he would look up with a contemptuous smile and go on eating.

The thought contained in Isaiah’s simile is, that just as ashes is all improper diet, and utterly unable to meet and satisfy the demands of the body, so there are things in this world which a sin deluded man uses to satisfy the heart, that are as powerless to do what is desired as ashes to benefit the body.

There are many pursuits and pleasures in the world which to the spiritual life are as dry, juiceless, profitless, mocking and hurtful as ashes to the physical nature. The man with a deceived heart feeds upon them. We tell him that he is deceiving and wronging his soul, and he resents the remark or is amused at the interference, and goes on with his diet of ashes. We call attention of people to their spiritual state, to the starvation of their souls, to the utter inability of the literature they read, the social pleasures they indulge in, and pursuits they follow to satisfy and bless them. They listen curiously for a few moments and then quietly go on in the old employment of eating ashes.

The explanation of all this can be found in the “deceived heart.” The man is so deluded that he will not or cannot be convinced that what he is taking into his heart and soul is worse than profitless.

A fourth feature in the picture is contained in the words, “he cannot deliver his soul.”

The idea is that of moral paralysis. The spiritual nature has been so ignored, abused and perverted that it ceases to work or move in proper lines.

A remarkable thing said about sinners in the Bible is that they are “lost.” The man is still living, is in attendance upon the church doubtless, will live twenty years longer before he dies and falls into hell, and yet even now God says he is “lost.” He has reached a point where he will not and so cannot deliver his soul. This means he is lost.

A profound spiritual writer has observed that a man accustomed to falling into sin is already a lost man. Still clearer light can be thrown on the word “lost” by remembering what the soul is. In simple everyday language we say that the soul is that nature within us which possesses thought, feeling and will. When we observe the life of a sinner we notice that his thoughts are all of earth, God and heaven being entirely ignored or forgotten. His feelings or affections are confined to this world. Not a sensibility of his nature seems to be connected with the spiritual realms above. There seems to be nothing to lift him up or draw him heavenward. Instead, both in intellect and sensibility he is fettered to the earth. His will is completely without force or energy to do right. It has no movement in that direction. The trend and bent are toward evil. In a word, each one of the three departments or powers of his nature has learned to live without God; and in this dreadful fact we see that the man is lost. In this condition if a miracle of grace does not occur he is certain to be damned.

The final feature given in the verse is shown in the words, “nor say is there not a lie in my right hand.”

This is the crowning description of a lost man. He has a lie in his hand, and that, too, in his right hand, and yet he cannot say it is a lie.

In these words are crowded the facts of the loss of spiritual perception, departure of moral discrimination, and, worse still, speechlessness in regard to the very sins that may be ruining the soul.



We have seen people who have lapsed in the spiritual life drift into wrong habits, enter upon questionable pursuits and pleasures, and seem utterly unable to realize their sapping, deadening power. Others could see the “lie in the right hand,” but they could not, and even defended the life falsehood.

There seems to be hope for a man who admits that he is wrong, that the thing he is doing ought to be renounced; but when a man by persistence in wrongdoing loses the faculty of recognizing the moral quality of actions, and even defends that which is evil, he is unquestionably a lost man. This is beyond doubt a very sorrowful picture of a life, but it is true, for God drew it. We somehow feel that the touches of our pencil have not brought out the shadows as deep and dark as they are in the original. We can but trust that the man or woman who has drifted little or much from God will have their eyes directed by the Spirit of God to this portrait, feel that it is a likeness of the present self, or a prophecy of a coming life condition, and so be cut to the heart, and return unto the Lord, who will have mercy, and to our God, who will abundantly pardon.

# CHAPTER 13

## SOUL SAVING

WHEN Andrew found Christ, immediately he sought his brother, and, as the Scriptures say, “brought him to Jesus.” From this simple statement we draw several reflections.

The first is that the best thing we can do for any man is to bring him to Jesus.

Some lead others into lodges, into fraternities, and into certain social circles, and feel in so doing that they have conferred immeasurable favors upon the recipient. Entrance is obtained into great educational institutions, and positions secured in the army and navy; but what are these benefits to be compared for a moment with having been brought to Jesus? One is a temporal benefit that will disappear in a few months or years, but the other lasts forever, and gathers in blessedness as the ages roll on. To be brought to Jesus means the change from the slavery of sin to the service of God; it means happiness, holiness, usefulness, blessedness, heaven, and eternal life. The very thought of what is accomplished is enough to turn men into ardent, faithful, devoted soul savers.

A second reflection is that the best thing a man can do for himself is to bring people to Jesus.

We are said to have three natures, which in the language of the people, we call the body, mind and soul. The development of the physical nature without regard to the other two produces a giant such as God drowned in the Flood. The development of the intellectual nature alone will produce a devil, and this devil may be in hell or on earth. The development of the spiritual according to God’s Word and plan brings forth the saint.

Remembering as we do that it is the spirit and not the body which is made in God’s image, we are filled with a great horror to see men spending all their time and energy in the enlargement and perfecting of the physical and intellectual, and completely ignoring that nature within them which bears

the image of God. The gradual covering up and disappearance of the last, while the other is all that is seen of the man, constitutes a fact and visible phenomenon most shocking and fearful to behold. It stands to reason that the greater physical and intellectual giant a man becomes at the cost of the spiritual or divine side in him, the more dreadful is he to look at, and the more harm and injury he will work in the world.

God has so ordered it that the soul, after conversion, becomes its truest, highest and best self by working to save other souls. It may be in a broad or narrow sphere, in the pulpit or at the home, it still remains the same to lead others to Christ is to bless and develop our own souls.

When we remember what varied and constant calls on us are made in such a life; what demands on patience, self-control, pity, love and self-sacrifice; what ripening of meekness, gentleness and long suffering; what an outgo there is of all the powers of the spirit, we should not and cannot be astonished at the result, and see as never before not only the privilege, but the actual necessity of being in the active service of God.

A mere glance at the faces of those who live for the physical, intellectual or spiritual would be sufficient to convince any unprejudiced mind concerning the truth we have just laid down.

God says, "He that winneth souls is wise." The blessed effect on the man himself proves the wisdom. But this is not all; the benefit reaches into the other world — "He shall shine as the stars forever."

A third reflection is that a soul, to be saved, has to be brought to Jesus.

Here is seen the fact of the spiritual helplessness of man. If left alone the sinner would perish in his sins. If the nation should in like manner be neglected it would continue to sink steadily downward. Because of this fact is seen the missionary movement to foreign countries, while individual sinners are sought out for a like reason. It is the only way to save them. They must be brought to the Lord. So Nathan comes to the backslidden David; Ananias waits on the convicted Saul; Paul arouses the slumbering conscience of Felix; and Andrew goes after his brother.

Sometimes it takes a long while to accomplish this, and sometimes it requires a number of individuals to do it. The Scripture states with significance that “four men” carried and laid another at the feet of Jesus.

It is idle to expect salvation in any other way. The dead and sinful soul must be brought in contact with the living and holy Christ.

Some seem to be satisfied in bringing a sinner to the preacher, or into the church. This is not enough. He must, as the Greeks said, “see Jesus” in order to be saved.

A fourth reflection is that the verse quoted, “he brought him to Jesus,” shows the spirit in which we are to engage in the work of saving souls

The passage says Andrew “brought” his brother. In a word, men cannot be forced into salvation. The thumbscrew and body rack are confessed failures in the attempt to twist men into certain theological and spiritual shapes.

Neither can people be argued, lectured or scolded into the kingdom of heaven. This process simply develops the mule side of poor, fallen human nature. The soul cannot be ordered into right lives and deeper experiences such efforts end in failure. Parents commanding their children to do right, while they themselves are wrong, is a spectacle after this fashion.

Preachers holding up deeper religious experiences to their flocks while they themselves are not in the blessing, is another instance of the ordering method and its unflinching result — failure.

Time was that officers in time of battle were expected to be in the rear, and from that point sent forward their directions This, however, was found at last not to be best. Men want a leader. They need to be “brought” on to victory; and so we find today in the military world the officer in front waving his sword and crying to the men to come on. May we do likewise in spiritual things. May we not be content with loud calls to others to go forward, but lead the way. May we bring men to Jesus.

A fifth reflection takes the form of a question, How can we bring men to Jesus?

The reply to this alone would fill a volume. It is simply marvelous the different methods God has blessed in bringing men to salvation.

It has been done by a letter.

Men, by thousands, will testify at the Last Day to the power of a tender, Spirit baptized letter written to them by friend or loved one. None but the recipient knows the peculiar force of these loving, warning, entreating sentences in ink. How they sink in, how they disturb, how they are recalled in the day, and in the night how they play about on the walls of the mind, another strange handwriting of God! The writer is not there to be abused and found fault with — only the writing. Different from the writer, the writing changes not. It sticks to the text, repeats the same warning, has the same solemn up and down strokes, and becomes all the more effective from its unchangeableness. Sometimes the letter is not received or read until after the death of the writer. We have known of such cases. It would be a good idea for dying Christians to write such letters and have them to be opened and read by the unconverted loved one after they are themselves in the grave. It would be indeed an appeal hard to withstand.

Again some are brought to Jesus by a tract or book.

A tract laid on a doorstep by a gypsy led to the conversion of the famous Richard Baxter. A tract given to an unconverted farmer on the cars in St. Louis led, several months afterward, to his conversion, a revival in his town and the building of a church. A band of native Christians were found in a remote province in India. They were eight in number. They had been led to God by a tract left in their midst by a missionary who was not allowed to preach to them. In his diary was found the record, “Not permitted to preach in this town, I have left a tract. God bless it.” and God did.

Then others are brought to Jesus by a word.

In a recent camp-meeting a man appeared on the scene who evidently was under deep conviction, and it took the form of a violent, angry opposition. On the fifth day he surrendered and was gloriously saved, and then it came out that four years before he had been harpooned with a single word uttered by an evangelist. All those four years he had been writhing, twisting, fretting, worrying, scolding, fighting and trying to get rid of that word. But it was like an arrow that had gone so deep it could not be pulled

out. It was like a nail that had been bradded. It was a spike driven through and clinched on the other side. He could not move from the word and the word would not leave him. It was a perpetual memory sore and heart pang. It went out with him in the morning, and came home with him in the evening, and stood by his bedside at night. It seemed to lie on the pillow by his side. It looked at him as he dressed in the morning. It made an unfailling dish at every meal. No matter what other articles of food he had, this word always constituted a dish in itself. He would take it up, cut and carve it, try to trim it thin, bolt it down, or fling it away — but lo! at that next meal there it would be again, and if anything larger than ever. When he walked out it became a shadow that remained with him, now on this side and now on that, now in the rear, now in front, but always with him. There was no use in running, it kept up with him. In brief he was haunted by a word of God, spoken by a man of God. The Scripture was fulfilled which speaks of the spoken truth being like a nail driven in a sure place. May God grant us the ability to speak just such words.

Still others are led to Jesus by an act.

A father one night while sitting before the fire whittled a cross out of a small chip of wood, and holding it up before his little boy told him the old, old story. The boy grew to manhood, but he said he never forgot that pictorial sermon, and that it paved the way to his salvation.

Others still are influenced by what may be called the spirit of a man.

The patient attitude of a preacher once in a post office, as he gave way repeatedly to others, affected the writer, who was then an unconverted youth, even more powerfully than any words could have done. Truly we little dream how many eyes are upon us, studying us, and how our conduct, bearing and general spirit are impressing people all around more or less favorably in regard to our holy religion.

Still again, souls are brought to Jesus by the life itself. A gentleman once said in a testimony meeting that he had tried hard to be a skeptic, but one thing stood in his way and effectually barred him out of unbelief, a sinful life and final destruction. He said he could not climb over it. Then after a pause added that the barrier was the consistent life of his old father.

This daily life of the faithful Christian is the cord which is steadily being woven around friends and loved ones of the family, and sooner or later it will be found strong enough for God to pull with and draw them into salvation and the skies. Some of us may be dead, but the drawing will not be less vigorous, nor the cord-like influence less powerful when we are sleeping in the tomb.

This, after all, is the greatest proof and evidence of Christianity we have on earth — the redeemed lives of men and women. May we all be able to turn that gentle, but all powerful argument upon friend and foe, the family, the Church and the world, and see them flocking home to God.

# CHAPTER 14

## THE CHARACTER OF JESUS

IN THIS chapter we do not refer to the divine nature of Christ, for on that side of His wonderful personality He was very God, and hence infinitely beyond us. We speak of the man Jesus who was taken up into the Godhead, but who had a soul and body, and was distinctly human, as we are.

It is this very fact of the perfect humanity of the Savior that assures us of His sympathy, and gives us peculiar boldness and confidence in coming to Him not only for salvation, but for help in every time of need.

But this human nature covered a character, and the study of this character has the double effect of showing us how far the world has gone astray, and where the true path is for us to tread. In imitating Jesus we may be unlike most people, but we will be right, and will certainly be blessed.

One feature of the Savior's character was His lowliness.

He said of Himself, "I am meek and lowly in heart." This is only another word for humility.

Here at once we see how men have erred in their ideas of a perfect character. The Greeks had no word for meekness. The nearest to it was meanness. This was what it appeared to be to them. Meantime lowliness means lowness with many today, or is regarded as an affectation of humility.

Jesus lived so as to rebuke the pomp, pride and vanity of the world; and the blows He delivered by His words and life itself were simply tremendous. born in a stable, nurtured in poverty, raised in a despised town, engaged in manual toil, followed by illiterate people, riding on an ass into Jerusalem, dying on a cross — truly everything He did and said was like death blows aimed at the swelling arrogance of the world.



As we look deeper and nearer still and see the pride of those who called themselves His people; as we mark the semicircular row of dignitaries on the platform, the pompous walk of the prominent minister or layman up the aisle, we marvel in spirit at the utter dissimilarity to Jesus. In complete contrast we see Him washing the disciples' feet, hear Him saying that the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, brood on his words if any of His followers be great, to be the servant of the rest, and stand amazed at the opposite conception and practice of the Christian life today.

If the haughty manner, pompous demeanor, swelling form, guttural roll of voice, and manifest desire to impress others with one's dignity and importance are right, then Jesus is wrong. But if the life of Jesus was right, then these lives are wrong and their owners fearfully mistaken.

### **The simplicity of Jesus.**

Paul speaks of this in his epistle to the Corinthians. Moreover the beautiful virtue is evident in all the actions of Christ. It refers to simple tastes, unadorned language, and the unaffected, plain life of the Savior. That Jesus would speak in the florid or stilted language of some of His followers who can believe. That He would burden His friends with scores of foolish, minute laws about etiquette who can credit. And yet who so correct and considerate in all things as Himself?

It was a simple life with single-heartedness and single-mindedness apparent to every one, at all times. The verbose and pompous was not His style of speech, nor the put on or make believe His kind of life. He was all the grander for His simplicity, and never looked more divine than when sitting at the table with a few humble men about Him, the meal consisting of a piece of fish and a honeycomb; and at another time simply bread, which He broke, and looking up to heaven gave thanks.

We have noticed that when men are truly great they are plain and simple in their style of living. It is the consciously weak individual who needs external impressive help, who borrows feathers for the jackdaw nature or swells the toad life to look like an ox. The spiritually great are both simple and humble.

Once a gentleman called to see Dr. Winans of Mississippi, the leading preacher and theologian of that conference and the acknowledged leader in the General Conference. The visitor, in approaching the residence, passed a humble-looking man in the garden, whom he supposed to be the gardener. He asked him if the doctor was at home and received a quiet affirmative reply. The gentleman rode on to the house and fifteen minutes later Dr. Winans came into the parlor. The visitor discovered at once to his surprise that the supposed gardener was Dr. Winans.

During the Civil War the writer as a small boy was in Meridian, Mississippi, at a time when General Forrest and the major generals under him had a conference at the Ragsdale Hotel. Without exception all these superior officers wore plain uniforms. We saw General Forrest, who was commanding a corps of twenty thousand men, bring in an armful of wood and throw it on the fire in the public office; The same day we saw a third lieutenant, arrayed in feathers, brass buttons and gold braid on his sleeve, and in our boyish ignorance we first felt disposed to regard him as commander-in-chief of the whole Western Department. The above actual scene needs no explanation or application on the writer's part.

### **The sincerity of Jesus.**

By this we mean His frankness, openness and absolute truthfulness. He was a being who never spoke anything but the clear, unadulterated truth. No falsehood, prevarication or fabrication of any kind ever passed his lips. There was no magnifying beyond verities and realities; no strained language, no highly coloring of pictures beyond truth; and no extravagance of utterance in any of His many statements, conversations and discourses. He always spoke the truth.

Nor did He trust to the ambiguities of language to hide His meaning, and never resorted to the politician's art. There was nothing double about Christ.

There is scarcely anything more sickening to the soul than to be compelled to be thrown with insincere people, and listen to their hollow speeches. The nausea, not to say suffering of spirit, is indescribable which is produced by hearing protestations of friendship and affection and yet have the proof that the speaker has not been the kind man or true friend to you

in other places. The appearance of interest, and even gush of manner, becomes all the more intolerable when we are aware of the doubleness.

On the contrary, to be cast with sincere people is restfulness itself. You feel that you are safe in their hands, and know that your name and reputation will be protected by them, whether you are present or absent.

One of the charms about Jesus is His faithfulness and truthfulness. He is truth itself.

### **The unchangeability of Jesus.**

The Bible says, "He is the same yesterday, today and forever." This feature alone is sufficient to bind the human heart to Him. He is ever the same. He is the loving Christ, always faithful, pitiful and compassionate and ready to bless and save.

In this world we find change everywhere. Not only circumstances and conditions alter, but people do not remain the same. Friends lose interest in you and turn away. People who once loved you grow cold. Relatives become estranged. Members of one's own family are alienated. These things constitute the greatest trials and shocks of life. Some people never get over them.

You start out with some Christian friend to whom you confide everything. The thought that the day will arrive when that friend will cease to be interested in you, and even be prejudiced against you, never enters the mind. And yet such an experience we doubt not comes to all.

In the holiness ranks we have some men who have a habit of kissing each other. Others equally sanctified prefer to shake hands. When the kissing brethren met the writer in this cordial way he naturally supposed that they had a deeper affection, and also a profounder work of grace. He also almost unconsciously drew comparisons rather unfavorable to the handshaking brethren, his judgment being that they were colder. But time is a strange revealer of men and things. The kissing brethren have not proved the best friends of the writer; while the handshaking brethren, who are less demonstrative, have been far truer to him. The pain felt concerning these changes is all the more intensified by the abuse of the sacred pledges of love.

The faithfulness of Christ becomes all the more attractive and beautiful to the soul after these experiences with men. and the heart leans back and settles comfortably in the blissful fact that Jesus is the same always. Time, distance, poverty, unpopularity, all of which have such influence upon the judgments, affections and conduct of men toward one another, have no effect whatever upon Jesus, unless, indeed, He becomes tenderer because of human loneliness and suffering.

If any condition of human woe above another serves to show this beloved trait of Christ's character, that condition is sickness or disease. In the Savior's life on earth the people brought forth the afflicted and laid them in the streets in ghastly rows before Him. The ground was an awful mosaic of human suffering, of convulsed countenances and writhing forms, of faces flushed with fever, or white with approaching death. But He would stoop down and lay His hands upon them and bid them "be whole." No loathsome sight altered the lines of pity on his face, and not even the horrible spectacle of the leper kept back that pitiful hand. The same touch was laid upon the foul, decaying body that was given to the sick girl or the young man lying on his bier.

This unchangeable love and pity of Christ are seen today in His treatment of His people who pass through the trying experiences of old age and disease. It does not look difficult to love and cherish one who is young and attractive, but those same bright and beautiful beings become dreadful to look upon from the effects of senility and some loathsome disease; and yet all can see, and they themselves testify to the fact that the Savior was never nearer to them and never more loving and tender.

A fifth feature of the character of Jesus was His willingness to serve others.

The writer was once very much struck while preaching, with the "I wills" of Christ. It rushed upon him as he spoke that Christ never refused to go anywhere or help any one when asked. The frequent call, Master, do this, help me, heal me, come to my servant, come to my son, come to my daughter who is grievously tormented with a devil, was always met with "I will." The thought was so affecting showing as it did the amiable, unselfish heart and life of Jesus, and so in contrast with, the best of His

people, that the eyes filled, voice choked, and we fairly broke down in the pulpit.

It is curious to see Christ start out to visit some distant home, where He was expected to heal the sick or raise the dead. He would be interrupted again and again on the way with urgent cries and calls for pity and help of every kind. Yet He answered them all with the same accent of sympathy and love, would relieve the pressing want, give deliverance to the sin or disease oppressed, and then press on to the place for which He had started. In traversing the line of the special duty or work of the day, He would make a series of divergences, loops of mercy, as they were, making at the close of the day a very remarkable and glorious pathway.

It was this quiet, loving acceptance of these frequent interruptions to the main work that gives us such an affecting view of the heart and character of Jesus. Where most of us would either fret or repine, or wonder why we were so deterred and hindered in the special labor of the day, Jesus would take all such breaks and interruptions as parts of the divine plan, or would bring His own calm, conquering, loving nature to the rescue, and smooth out the wrinkles, harmonize the discordances, and make the divergences look at the close of the day like a straight, shining highway of glory.

Who wonders that this same Jesus has become the moral standard of the world; and who doubts that if He be lifted up He will draw all men unto Him?

# CHAPTER 15

## THE DRAWING POWER OF CHRIST

THE Savior said while on earth, that if He should be lifted up, He would draw all men unto Him. The reference was to His crucifixion, and its effect on the hearts and lives of men.

That Christ drew multitudes after Him before His death, and still vaster crowds today, as no one else ever did or can, is an indisputable fact. The question of interest is, What is the secret of this influence, the explanation of this power?

One reason is to be found in the wonderfulness of His life.

But for the fact that the constant repetition in the home, Sunday-school and church of the Savior's amazing history has familiarized the mind with their wonder, men would simply be overwhelmed at the narration. Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, raised in poverty, without the learning of the schools, and without social, political or ecclesiastical influence, He had nothing in a human way to help Him. On the other hand, He was constantly met with the bitterest opposition from Church and State, and at last put to a shameful death outside the city walls. Yet this same man, dying a felon's death at the age of thirty-three, has fastened upon himself the reverential gaze of all nations and ages, captured chronology, made men date all things from his birth, and become the moral standard of the world.

Where is there anything like this? Alexander, Caesar Mohammed, Napoleon, conquered with their swords. but this Man of Galilee said to His disciples, "Put up thy sword," would have no army, refused legions of angels, told His followers to expect ridicule, rejection and death, and trusted all to His perfect character, beneficent life and victorious death. The result has been that He is the central and loftiest figure in the world's history and thought today.

A second explanation of Christ's influence is found in His moral or spiritual beauty.

There is something about physical beauty which draws. Men turn aside to look at a charming object, whether it is a flower, statue, painting, or person. As there is such a thing as physical loveliness, so is there moral beauty as seen in character and life.

An individual who possesses one or more of the virtues and graces called love, truth, goodness, patience, purity, gentleness and kindness, is felt to be an attractive person, will be sought after, and stand high in the estimation of people. But Christ had them all, and in their superlative excellence. What men were in measure and part, He was in fullness, completeness and perfectness.

We have all seen a person who was truthful, but not kind; another who was pure, but not gentle; a third who was generous, but not patient; and a fourth who was loving, but not honorable. Frequently the soul, attracted by a feature of moral beauty in one, would find itself suddenly disappointed, pained and at times disgusted with a moral lack or blemish.

In Christ there is no such disappointment. He is beautiful all through. He has moral completeness and harmony. Every feature of a perfect character is in proper place, and the spiritual eye gazes delightedly on one who is at all times right, and who doeth all things well.

An additional striking feature of the Savior's character was its harmony. There was an exquisite balance of faculty and attribute. Each duty was seen to be in just relation with other obligations. There was an utter absence of one-sidedness. He was morally symmetrical.

Then there was nothing spasmodic in His life, none of those swift transitions which so puzzle us in people. All of us know how our admiration and affection for worthy individuals have suffered great shocks from these very things. They would become hobbyists in doctrines and martinets in duty and discipline. They would burn and then freeze; spring forward and then fall back; assert with great heat some things, and soon after retract what they had said; give counsel in different ways in as many days, and altogether try the patience and shake the confidence of their acquaintances and friends.

We once heard a lady say of a certain member of the family: "Just as I begin to have regard and respect for him, he does something to completely

undo the good impression.” all of us have had such acquaintances, and may have furnished material ourselves for similar pain to our friends.

But when we look to Christ, we see nothing of this kind to confuse and distress us. He is steadfastness, unchangeableness, fixedness, and faithfulness itself in the moral world. This, of course, appeals most powerfully to the soul, and constitutes an unspeakable charm in the life of the Savior.

A third power of Christ over the human heart is found in His death for us.

The story of the cross will never get old or lose its power. Nothing has ever been done which so moves men as the tragedy on Calvary. Goodness died for Wickedness; an innocent man suffered for the guilty. Then, such a death as it was!

The description of the crucifixion has been given countless millions of times, and yet men find themselves listening with the same interest and awe as if for the first time. The words, “He died for us,” go to the soul like an arrow; and the thought, “He died for me,” has softened myriads of hearts, and sent the tears streaming down the face like a torrent.

We have known children brought into the world at the cost of the young mother’s life. In after years, when grown, they could never mention the name of the domestic martyr without their eyes filling.

In Russia a nobleman was in a sleigh with his family, when they were pursued by wolves. When it became evident that they would be overtaken, the servant, who was driving, quietly handed the reins to his master, and before he could be prevented, leaped from the vehicle, and in a moment was covered and destroyed by the ravenous beasts. This delay of the animals for a few minutes enabled the nobleman to escape with his family. In recognition of the sacrifice a monument was erected by them to the memory of their preserver, and they never spoke of him afterwards without their eyes filling with tears.

We had a far greater danger on our track. The wolves of an eternal night were after us, and Hell was yawning for our souls. But Jesus, seeing our peril, leaped down before us, and with the monsters of Death and Hell surrounding and covering Him, died for us. Who wonders that millions of



eyes overflow every Sabbath at the Old Story of the Cross, and that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is felt to be a perpetual monument of the wonderful act, never failing to solemnize the mind, while the heart has melted times without number under the solemn strain and words of the Communion hymn:

*“He dies, the Friend of sinners dies;  
Lo, Salem's daughters weep around;  
A solemn darkness veils the skies,  
A sudden trembling shakes the ground.*

*“Come, saints, and drop a tear or two  
For him who groaned beneath your load;  
He shed a thousand drops for you,  
A thousand drops of richer blood.”*

A fourth power of Christ is His personal love for each one of us.

With our little group of friends, and small home circle, it passes our comprehension to see how the Lord can love with a special affection each one of the myriads of earth. But He is God, and such a thing so difficult to us is possible and even easy to Him.

All of us know the peculiar influence exercised over us by one who loves us. It is impossible to keep from them. To be told that a certain person has expressed regard and admiration for us is to invest him at once with interest. Their love for us draws us to them. So when we read in the Word that God so loved us as to give His Son, that Christ so loved us as to give Himself for us; that in addition, He regards us with a personal affection; that the solitary wandering sheep in the mountains is remembered, followed, sought and found with rejoicing; the heart is at once awakened from its moral stupor and despair, and is drawn toward God. When the thought obtains entrance in the mind of the sinner that Jesus loves him, even him, then salvation is begun. When in the Christian life the Holy Spirit repeatedly impresses the same fact upon the believer's soul, that soul becomes conscious of an increasing strength, and closer walk with God as the result.

The great burden of the gospel message and ministry is to declare this wonderful truth to men; that in spite of ingratitude, unworthiness,

sinfulness, backsliding and every form of faithlessness, Jesus loves them. It is this that breaks the heart at last, and draws men to Him.

We once sat by the deathbed of a man who had been an infidel all his life. At the age of sixty, and after a sickness of months, and only a few days before his death, God forgave his sins. His sorrow over his misspent life was something most affecting to witness. One sentence, however, above all others, he kept repeating with floods of tears. He did not seem to be saying it to be heard, but it was the expression of an inward thought which continually pressed upon him. "Oh," he said, "to think that the Savior loved such a sinner as I have been."

We never read aloud the chapter on the crucifixion without observing the breathless attention of the audience. and we firmly believe that those grand old hymns which depict that amazing scene of divine love and mercy could not be sung before the roughest crowd without solemnizing and silencing the throng.

It is said that a missionary once saved his life from the hands of a band of African natives by relating the story of the cross. They were about to put him to death when he secured a temporary suspension of the sentence by the statement that he wished to tell them a story. He told them in their own dialect of the marvelous birth of Jesus, His peril at the hands of Herod, His holy, beautiful, beneficent life, the hatred of His enemies, His betrayal, arrest, scourging, mocking and crucifixion. Their interest in the narration deepened every moment. and when at last the preacher told them of Christ's prayer for His murderers as they nailed Him to the cross; His thoughtful care of others in the midst of His agony; His patient endurance of human wrong and physical suffering; how the heavens were robed in black, and men continued to mock; how He extended mercy to the thief at His side, and bowing his head accepted death to save a ruined world, with the cry, "It is finished," and "Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit;" sighs, tears and groans swelled the breast, filled the eyes, and burst from the lips of the absorbed listeners. It is needless to say that the missionary was not killed.

A Fifth cause for Christ's power over men is the fact that He holds in His hand blessed gifts for men.

It is not simply that He has pardon for the sinner, but purity for the believer. This is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost and fire. This is not only the one who casts out devils, but brings in the angels, and, better still, the Holy Ghost. He is the one who is to crown us at the last day, exalt us to thrones, and give us authority over cities and kingdoms.

This fact alone seems sufficient to arrest the thought of men and fasten the gaze of the world on such a being.

In the political and military realms, when a man has position and power, and so has offices to distribute, he becomes naturally the center of observation, and draws men to him. If a man had ten thousand dollars in his pocket for the reader, one can readily see how the eye would be fastened on the individual, and the constant effort made not to lose him in the crowd.

But these promotions and gifts are nothing, compared to what Christ has for the soul. They are not only richer and nobler in character, but eternal in duration. Hence it is that as men hear of and believe in the Son of God, His drawing power steadily increases, and they not only come to Him, but gladly leave all to follow Him.

The old cry is still uttered, and still rings down the ages, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." And another, "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

And still another, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? Know ye not that we shall judge angels?"

And yet another, "Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones; and every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren or sisters, or father or mother, or wife or children, or lands, for my sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

Then comes the summing up, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto

God and His Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, amen.”

Who wonders that as men read about this wonderful Christ, learn of His coming kingdom, and hear of His glorious rewards, that they fix their eyes upon Him, give Him their hearts, surrender their lives, and patiently, faithfully follow Him to the end?

# CHAPTER 16

## “THESE SAYINGS OF MINE”

GREAT discoveries of papyri have recently been made in the sands and ruins of Egypt. The scholars tell us that much information will be gathered from these ancient rolls.

Meantime while reading in the Gospel, now nearly two thousand years old, we have discovered some sayings of Christ uttered long ago. We have brought them up, and out, for the information of the people, and for the consideration of the children of God. Great discoveries may be made by poring over them. We may find out our true relation to God. Also whether we have changed, or the truth has altered. Whether the Gospel has drifted or Christians have lapsed.

Some one has said that the Bible is a much praised, but also a much neglected volume. The two practices are often indulged in by the same individual. Maybe the eulogium is intended as a kind of salve to the conscience for the failure of the duty.

In like manner we notice that Christ's words are held up as worthy of universal obedience, but at the same time it is startling to see how many of them are completely ignored.

The Savior referred to His utterances as “these sayings of mine,” and asserted that such were their importance that if a person heard them and did them not, he should be “likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell; and great was the fall of it.”

Men agree that the sayings of Christ are true and should, in a general way, be kept. But when it comes to their special and individual application that is another matter, and when it comes to keeping them all, then that is a very serious affair indeed, and hardly to be thought of at all. The “sayings” are right, but the applying them to one's life would, at times, be very

inconvenient, and at other times impossible. In fact the “sayings” had better remain sayings, and not be transformed into doings.

According to this idea of many, the Christian life is Utopian, a beautiful system to contemplate, but not possible to possess and practice. This view of course degrades Christ to the rank of a visionary reformer, completely eliminates the practical nature of the gospel, and overlooks the promised power from heaven that shall enable us to do all that is commanded.

But we started out to show that while there is obedience to many of the Savior’s commands, there are other directions of His which are regarded and treated very much like certain words that have become obsolete in a language.

Take for instance what He says about divorced people marrying. Only for one cause can it be allowed. If we have not that Scriptural ground of marital unfaithfulness, then, “whosoever marrieth committeth adultery.”

What a storm it would create if the community should agree to call them such. And yet this is the brand which Christ puts upon them.

Another of His sayings refers to our daily language, “Let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.”

This is not to be construed literally, for Christ himself said more than yea and nay, but is a warning against extravagant speech. Of course it forbids expletives, oaths, and all that is felt to be a perversion and degradation of God’s great gift to us, but it also aims a blow at highly colored language, the piling up of adjectives, adverbs and interjections in the description of any and all things.

We are all familiar with this kind of writer and speaker. Everything is “grand,” “awful,” “gorgeous” and “magnificent.” They never saw, never heard, never felt, never dreamed, never conceived anything like it in all their lives before. It was the most powerful sermon, wonderful prayer, sweetest hymn, greatest altar service, biggest revival they ever saw, heard of or read about.

The effect of this kind of talking and writing really weakens description. Then by and by through frequent repetition it has a damaging effect on the person himself. Certain faculties and sensibilities become blunted, and the way is prepared for actual and outright lying.

But we go down a little deeper. This time Christ speaks about the money question. "Lay not up for you selves treasures upon earth."

Now we do not believe in taking an extreme view of these words as forbidding a man to make all adequate provision for the support of his family, so that they will not be left paupers and beggars on the community after he is dead. We agree with Paul that a man should provide for his household, and in addition we believe that parents should endeavor to give each child a trade or profession in order that they in turn might be self-supporting. This is all right. The practice which Christ struck at was the striving for and laying up of wealth.

We know what will be said at once in reply, as to who shall decide how much a man must possess, and what is wealth; that what will do for one, will not another.

My reply is that Christ will lead every individual in this matter who will allow Him. The only point we are trying to make in this chapter is that so far as the world is concerned, and many Christians as well, the Savior might as well have never spoken. This is one of his sayings which they do not like, and have no idea of following.

Another saying of Christ refers to hospitality and the giving of feasts. The very injunction to be kind to those who can never repay you, is a hard commandment to some people, but when it comes to the description of the character of the company which Christ bids us invite to our banquets and feasts, the breath would verily be taken from many a family, social, and church circle the instant it should be heard. We gravely doubt whether any of our leading churches could hear the description read, and the preacher amplify and urge the duty upon them as being true, without a broad and general smile being plainly seen. Listen to Christ's words upon the subject. "When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind."

Such a person doing this today would be called a crank and yet Christ said do it.

That a holy, beautiful joy would spring up in that breast for such an act or series of acts, surely none can truthfully deny. Yet no one seems willing to seek joy in that way. This saying of Christ is regarded as one of the impossible commands.

Still another saying of Christ refers to the non-resistance of evil. The exact language is, "resist not evil." Moral philosophers tell us that this does not mean that man is to allow another to walk up and burn his house, and kill his child without doing something to prevent.

Granting this, it does mean an utter absence of all retaliation, and more than that, a patient submission to wrong.

Some are doing this. We know of a number of God's people who have been repeatedly slandered, and they never make a reply. Of others deeply wronged in various ways, and they never strike back. They leave the matter with God.

But not all do this. So as a startling novelty in the ethics of some religious people we commend this saying of Christ, "resist not evil."

Another saying still refers to the removal and destruction of the dearest things that are found to be hurtful to the soul. Think of a man pulling out his own right eye, and cutting off his right arm with a knife in his left hand. What a painful, agonizing process. Yet these are the strong figures used to show that no matter what suffering it entails, certain heart and life idols have to go for the spirit's sake.

Many of the present generation refuse to do this. They have discovered another gospel, which is easier and softer every way. The sayings of Christ are too severe altogether. They are beautiful, but will not do to live by. So the lust of the eye is gratified, the worldly circle sought after, the private dram indulged, the tobacco quid rolled under the tongue, the tobacco farm and store kept up, the cigar dreamily smoked, and other practices too numerous to mention followed, which without being vile yet certainly deaden the soul, and prevent a deep and sweet communion with God.



Another saying of Christ was directed to an obliging spirit. If a man comes borrowing, we are not to refuse him. If he asks for one's coat, give the cloak also. If he begs you to go a mile with him, go with him twain.

There is a great deal of surly Christianity, or rather so called Christianity, for the religion given us by the Savior is not cross-grained, but considerate and gracious.

The word "borrow" evidently shows that it is not a fortune the man is asking for, but some small favor. The cloak is added to the coat, and the second mile to the first simply as a figurative way of describing a person who does not empty himself with one deed of favor, but has kindness in abundant reserve over what has been done. Most Christians are exhausted at the beginning of the second mile stage, and bankrupt in feeling and deed when the cloak experience is reached. Happy is the man who can stand this strain and drain on him for Christ's sake and the soul's sake.

There must be something in this saying of Christ, that we are not to "turn away" from such people. Not one of us but will remember that when we have helped some individual, and he came again as a borrower on our patience, sympathies, time, and material help as well, and we refused him, or as Christ says, "turned away," we always felt heartily ashamed of ourselves, and from the depths of a troubled spirit wished that we had gone five miles with the man, instead of two, and not only given the cloak, but also shoes, stockings, necktie and everything else he had requested. Moreover we may have been kind for the fifth, sixth or tenth time, but if we break down on the eleventh occasion, that one disobliging word and act seems to outweigh, in our minds, all the obliging acts that have gone before. We may not be so measured and weighed in God's mind, but it is the way we feel in our own at the time of failure.

Other sayings of Christ crowd upon us which we can not expatiate on, but barely mention.

"Take no thought for the morrow," that is, do not worry.

"Let not your left hand know what your right hand doeth."

"Whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all."

"When thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room."

“Cast the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother’s eye.” In a word, we are to reform at home, before we go to work on our neighbor; we are to have a private surgical operation on ourselves, before we cut and slash into somebody else.

We mention but one other saying of Christ. This last is in regard to the treatment of our enemies. He seems to be sure that we will have them. They may be made in different ways, and very possibly by a faithful walk in the path of duty. But this is not the point made then and that we are making now. The question is how to treat them when made. The “saying” is very clear and explicit. The dullest mind need not make a mistake here.

The duty is divided into four parts according to the saying, and each specification is stronger than its predecessor. We give them in the order mentioned by the Lord.

“Love your enemies.”

“Bless them that curse you.”

“Do good to them that hate you.”

“Pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute.”

About this we are certain that most of our readers will agree. One is that according to the practice we see about us, the direction of Christ seems to be a very novel treatment of that class of people known as “our enemies.” Second, that such a treatment would very much astonish our enemies. Third, we cannot help but believe that such a course, if adopted, would about annihilate most of our enemies, that is, turn them into friends.

But who, but a very few, cares for the sayings of Jesus, the Perfect Teacher, the Incarnation of Love, Truth and Wisdom, the God-man, who “knows what is in man,” and the best way to win him? And who stops to think that He who said these very words is to try us at the Day of Judgment!

# CHAPTER 17

## THE CANDLE OF THE LORD

IN THE Bible is the statement that “the spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord.” There is nothing said idly and unmeaningly in the Scripture, and such a declaration as this especially demands attention. The natural question of the mind is, where is the analogy, and what profitable lessons can be drawn from the figure?

One thought is that a candle is made to give light.

It is both made and the object of its making is illumination. It is to shine for the benefit of others. Some few seem to have been manufactured as ornaments, but that is not the rule, and on examination the pretty thing is discovered not to be a genuine candle, but fashioned of some substance which does not support or feed a flame. The genuine candle is for light.

So God made the soul, and created it to shine and burn for the help, direction and comfort of others. Its mission is not for ornament, but usefulness. It is not set up to be admired, but to give light.

A second thought is that a candle needs a candlestick.

The one suggests the other. One is a complement to the other. It is not only convenient and necessary for a candle to be in a candlestick, but it is dangerous for it not to be. It not only rolls around in a very irregular way, but in its very rolling is likely to set fire to the house and destroy it.

The candlestick, according to the book of Revelation, is a church. The soul of a man needs the help and protection of the church. The candle of the Lord has to be set in a candlestick. We must have the communion, comfort and all the assistance possible for us, that is to be realized from religious association. He who tries the independent method, holding himself aloof from Christian organization and religious assemblies, not only deprives others of what he is and has himself, but robs his own spiritual nature of what is possessed in the godly lives of others.

St. Paul likens Christians to a body of which Christ is the head. The human frame is bound together by bone, ligament and muscle, and out of many parts is made to be one in appearance and reality.

We all are pained to see a dislocated member of the body, an arm or leg out of joint, and we even more deplore the sight of a dislocated church member. Amputation, mortification and death are certain to be one of the results if the case is not speedily corrected and healed by grace.

Coming back to the figure of the candle, we repeat, it is for the candlestick. We do best in the church. Taken out and rolling around in a loose and irresponsible way, we are apt not only to injure ourselves but to set fire to and destroy others.

Never did a candlestick have more certainly a socket for the candle than a true church has a place for a true child of God. Moreover, a man never looks better than when standing up straight for God and salvation in the household of faith, the church of Christ.

A third thought is that the candle has to be lighted.

There is nothing in the wick and sperm to strike fire of itself or in any way produce a flame, and so, while capable of securing and supporting the fire when it comes, yet it has to be lighted, it cannot ignite itself.

The soul of a man is in like condition. Left to itself the spiritual flame and light would never be seen. In spite of all its great capacities and possibilities, the spirit is helpless when it comes to creating true spiritual life. It has to be brought to salvation through human and divine agency. God has to light the candle.

We all recollect when the Holy Spirit fell on the wick of our hearts and we blazed up. Thank God with many of us it is still burning. In spite of the storms of life, and the hurricanes of Hell, God's candle is aflame in our breasts today.

We all likewise remember many blessed sights in the candle lighting line, in our protracted and camp meetings. It is a spectacle never to be forgotten to see a sad, tearstained face suddenly become luminous with salvation. the candle had been lighted within and its radiance flashed through the soul windows, the eyes, and brightened and beautified the face. It reminded us

of a house standing dark on the street, when suddenly some one inside lighted the lamps or gas, or turned on the electricity, and then it literally sparkled before us, an object of genuine pleasure to the vision.

A fourth thought is that the candle has to be trimmed.

One who remembers the old-time household luminary all recall its lengthening wick, gathering ashes and fading light. Because of this a pair of scissors or snuffers were kept constantly on hand and frequently applied.

In like manner the Lord's candle needs attention, and so every soul has a perfect knowledge of spasmodic shining, internal hindrances, and the frequent use of divine snuffers in providential dealings that are too numerous and varied to mention.

We all know what it is to have the ashes knocked off, to be cut down, to be trimmed up and made in various ways to shine better. Under grace every divine stroke and touch improve the Christian's light.

A fifth truth about the candle is that it is not to be placed under a bushel.

This is Christ's own statement and appeals to our everyday knowledge. Its application to the Christian life is powerful, even though the figure is such a simple one.

The disposition with many is to hide the heavenly light. Some people are constitutionally timid, some are afraid of being thought hypocrites, some are morbidly conscientious, some are afraid of men, and some have been deluded by the devil. and so through a multiplicity of reasons the candles lighted by the Lord have been obscured, covered up, or removed altogether from human view.

It is wonderful how many Christians want to live under a bushel. A house is not large enough for the body, but a peck measure is sufficient to cover the soul and religious life. They believe in back seats, silent tongues, and a general non-committal policy. God regenerates, sanctifies and blesses them, but they place the bushel of strict silence over everything.

It is bound to impress the reader that if one Christian can thus go into reticence and even complete silence, why not all; and if all did this then not a twinkle or ray of light could be seen in the world for God's glory and the

good of mankind. Every candle of the Lord would be under a bushel. This thought alone shows the falsity and faithlessness of such a course.

A sixth fact is that the candle is to give light unto all them that are in the household.

Christ says, "Put it on a table," that all may see it, and that it might illumine the room or house for the family.

We are to shine and can shine for God in the household. If we are truly religious it is impossible for people not to observe our light and feel our life. A candle shining on the table would not be more manifest if its line than we in ours.

We have noticed that the members of the family do not say much about the candles but they feel its benefit none the less, and move about safely because of the light. So we are not to be disheartened if the family circle does not praise or comment upon our light, and at times seems to overlook us altogether as we are doing our very best. The fact remains that they feel us, and but for the faithful, steady shining that is kept up under every discouraging circumstance and surrounding God only knows what would become of the household.

A seventh fact is that the candle shines afar and so directs the wanderer, and even at times saves.

Who has not seen a light shining quietly miles away across the fields, and been faithfully guided by it to the point of destination? On coming to the house we found a candle had been sitting on a table that while giving light in the room had also shone through the window and sent a gleam far off to the belated and confused traveler.

The writer was once crossing a prairie. Night came down, and our watch showed that first nine and then ten o'clock had come and gone. It was a dark, desolate plain, with the wind making a mournful swishing sound as it swept through the yellow grass. Suddenly we saw a single gleam of light shining peacefully far ahead in the distance. When first seen it must have been ten miles away. It not only cheered us in our lonely ride, but guided us in the journey we were making. By and by after midnight we reached a village on the railroad, but all of its lights combined, in house and street

and depot, did not gladden us like that solitary candle which had helped us in that long, lonely journey.

We read once of a ship at sea which had been saved by the light of a single candle shining through a window. The vessel had been blown out of her course, and there was no lighthouse on the coast toward which she was drifting in the darkness, when suddenly the lookout from the foretop caught the gleam of the light in time to warn the helmsman to bear off and away in safety. How little the woman dreamed that night as she placed the candle on her table how many lives would be saved by its faithful shining.

In like manner it is perfectly marvelous what a single devoted Christian life can do in the family and community. In utter absence of fussiness and boisterousness, but in perfect meekness and gentleness, the very tranquillity of the life strangely moves the heart and convinces the head. Such lives not only cheer but actually guide and save scores and hundreds of souls who are struggling with the storms of this life, beating aimlessly about, and drifting upon the breakers of sin and ruin.

God has set His candles here and there in the world to light men on the way to heaven. As we pass from the shining influence of one we find ourselves in the life circle of another. They are lights of the Lord placed in homes and churches, stationed in low and high places, and shine forth and shine on as the months and years roll by. For their light to fail means sorrow, failure and eternal death to many; while their faithful shining in God-appointed places means a happy multitude of bloodwashed souls in heaven.

An eighth fact is that a candle can light others.

We were once presenting this thought to a large congregation of children. We placed quite a row of candles around the altar. Some had been lighted before and been blown out, and some had never been lighted. Taking a burning candle in our hand, we held the flame to the new and dead wicks of first one and then another. As we progressed down the line, an ever-lengthening row of sparkling lights was of course left behind. The scene was a beautiful and impressive one. It was a sermon in figure which doubtless reached every heart and stirred every soul in the audience.

It is a blessed thought that when we are filled with converting and sanctifying grace, we can under God light other people and put them in a flame. We come into their sad, sinful, backslidden and useless lives, and, through word or deed inspired and blessed of God, touch them, the fire falls, the human wick catches the divine flame, the light springs up and a blessed redeemed life begins from that moment, to bless men on earth, and by and by to shine in heaven forever. Every soul we win for Christ means a new candle lighted for God in this world.

What a beautiful sight it must be from the skies to see a long line of shining lives springing up on earth, because of the faithfulness of some Christian man or woman. And what a thrill would fill such a man's soul if he was allowed, as he was entering heaven, to look back and see the long, glittering line that through Christ he had led into the light, and who were still shining, though he himself was taken away.

Finally, a candle can be blown out, or burn up.

There is a great difference in a candle's being put out by a blast of wind or going out in the socket of the candlestick from a well-spent and useful life. One is an extinguishment by an unfriendly element, and the other is a natural and proper exhaustion.

There is likewise a great difference between a blown-out Christian and a burned-up Christian. One is a backslider, the other is a martyr or a servant of God worn out by the labor of many years. One falls into sin, the other sinks into the grave.

On Dr. Adam Clarke's tomb, back of City Road Chapel in London, is the design of a candle expiring in its socket. Underneath is the pathetic sentence, "In giving light to others, I myself have been consumed." We read the words with tears filling our eyes. The candle of the Lord in his case had not been blown out, but had burned up. It was a glorious end of a blessed life.



The Lord grant us all a like faithful life and triumphant death. May we light other candles to take our place when we are gone. May we bring the heavenly flame to those who never had it, and relight those who have gone out in darkness. May we extend the glittering lines, and multiply the shining ones of grace, and push back the darkness everywhere, until a firmament in the spiritual life will be seen sparkling on the face of the earth.

# CHAPTER 18

## THE POWER OF A GOOD LIFE

MUCH is being said and written these days in regard to spiritual power. The popular conception is that it is a distinct gift in itself to be sought after and received separately. As thus presented there is no trouble in filling the altar at a conference, fashionable church, union meeting or convention.

The argument in defense of this conception is based on Christ's words, "Tarry in Jerusalem until ye be endued with power," and "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you." Their inquiry is, if this is not a separate grace why is it that nothing else is referred to in the passages quoted?

The reply to this argument is that the "power" Christ is speaking of is not a simple anointing for a special occasion or service, but a lifelong blessing, and connected invariably with the purification of the soul. In the seventeenth chapter of John, the Savior in praying that His disciples might have this blessing, speaks mainly of "purity" as seen in the words, "sanctify them." This time He dwells upon the second feature, "power."

It seems to have escaped many that the Baptism with the Holy Ghost, which naturally, properly, logically and morally follows the birth of the Spirit, is in itself a double work of grace. It purifies and it empowers. So that Peter speaking of it afterwards said, when the Baptism came upon them which Christ told them to tarry for that they might receive power, that then their "hearts were purified."

As an additional proof that the words of Christ cannot be construed to restrict the disciples to simply one thing, it is well for the reader to look at the marginal translation of the words and find it thus expressed: "Ye shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you." Whoever receives the Baptism with the Holy Ghost which purifies the heart will have power. The two go together. When the soul is purged from inbred sin,

Christ enters the man, and the Holy Ghost comes in to abide forever. In the cleansed, surrendered, given up and obedient life, God dwells, and flows forth with an influence more or less powerful according to the measure of the man's devotion, prayerfulness and obedience.

There is no question but that increased and prolonged prayer coupled with life faithfulness will increase the inward sensation or consciousness of the blessing itself, and add to the volume and force of its movement on the outside world. It is for each Spirit-baptized Christian to say how much power he shall have.

Concerning the reality of this power, whether in pulpit or pew, whether turned upon the world or exercised at home, there can be no question. In the pulpit the blessing is, so to speak, focalized for an hour with favoring adjuncts and therefore readily recognized. In the home circle with the influence distributed over a greater radius, the effect is gentler, but still the power is there.

As taught in the Bible and seen in life, God dwelling in the soul of a man or woman cannot be hid. He is felt in the man. Something in the individual's voice, eye, manner and life shows an unusual spiritual state. His presence impresses, his words are remembered, and he becomes, consciously or unconsciously, a blessing. An actual influence of a spiritual character as certainly proceeds from him as a vapor comes from the sea, or light and warmth stream from the sun. In a word, he has power.

For a number of years we have seen demonstrated in churches, camp grounds and conventions the fact we have been stating. We have listened to great intellectual discourses that had none of the power we speak of in them. We have heard other sermons that were great and overwhelming, because God was in them; the preacher filled with the Holy Ghost stood transfigured before us, and the audience hung upon his words spellbound or rather Spirit-bound. It was a storm-like rush of power that all could recognize.

Again we have heard still other Spirit-baptized sermons of gentler manifestation, but not the less effective. The preacher began with simple speech and quiet manner, but in a few minutes he had secured the

profound attention of the crowd, and a tender, holy influence came down upon all, which we knew to be of heaven.

One occasion we recall. The man was evidently humble, and filled with the spirit of prayer. He made no attempt at oratory, but talked on until he had the attention of every one. He was saying something, and the Holy Ghost was brooding on what he said. As we looked at the man we could all but see the rays of the Spirit streaming out of his face; a steadily increasing force went forth from his voice, and all became conscious of a rising tide of heavenly sweetness in the tabernacle. The explanation was simply God shining forth from and through a man given up to Him. It was the power of a good life.

Of course this applies as well to the social and home circle. If Christ is allowed to dwell in us, He cannot be hid, and spiritual influence is the inevitable result.

Such home power has not the help of hymns, prayers, the presence of congenial worshippers, and the inspiration of the special occasion. So it has peculiar difficulties to meet and contend with. Still if God abides in the soul, a holy influence, in spite of every kind of hindrance, will come forth and be recognized, felt and accomplish its work.

Once while in Europe I was standing in a large cathedral on the Rhine, listening to the Vesper Service. The day was far spent, and the immense building was but dimly lighted. Over a hundred feet from me stood a priest waving a censer. I noticed for several minutes the little puffs of smoke from the oscillating vessel, and realized nothing else; but at last a delicate and pleasing odor reached me. The frankincense and myrrh had been slowly but surely making its gentle, sweet way to me, and finally did so. In a little while it had permeated the entire atmosphere. The perfume had conquered.

This is the way that Christ-filled men and women make themselves felt. This is the power of a good life. By gentle movements of the redeemed character, by quiet oscillations of the life, the Holy Spirit wafts forth from the human censer the fragrance of that which has been placed within, and in time the divine deposit is bound to be recognized by all in the boundary

lines of that particular life, as swung by a heavenly hand. Such a life tells on the home.

A very charming writer speaks of her mother's influence in a way to confirm the thought we have been advancing. She said that their household at times was stormy; that in the midst of one of these disagreeable scenes she has seen her mother descending the stairs with a holy restful look upon her face, and in five minutes everything would be quiet, and yet her mother had scarcely opened her lips. She said that her presence was so serene, eyes so kindly, voice so gentle that something actually seemed to proceed from her, stilling the turbulent family, like oil poured upon the waves. It was the power of a good life, a God-filled soul.

Such a life is felt in the home of death. Such persons may talk less than others, but what they do say seems to be weighted with blessed meaning, and an unction is in the voice, and a quieting influence in the presence, so that the dying themselves feel it and look to them, and the living bereaved ones realize it and cling to them.

Such a life is recognized at the altar where numbers are struggling for pardon or purity. They are not noisy, they do not lecture, scold or confuse with cross-questionings; but in a quiet loving way which invites confidence, lead the trembling soul step by step to the place where Christ alone must deal with the spirit, and there leave it full of prayer and expectancy for the coming Savior. God seems to give such people souls at every altar service.

Such a life can flourish in the room of an invalid. We knew a Spirit-filled woman whose health was so feeble that she scarcely ever left her house, and yet her spiritual power pervaded the entire neighborhood. If people got into trouble they went to her. If they fell into sin, they told her about it. If they were confused in regard to duty, they sat at her feet, and she with a face shining with holiness, and directed by God's wisdom untied the knots, solved the problems and showed the proper course to pursue to the bewildered and heartsick one. Truly the Lord swung that frail censer in the sickroom and as surely the fragrance of the life stole forth, refreshing and gladdening many souls who will rise up and call her blessed at the last day.

Such a life steals upward from the grave. The tomb cannot confine in its portals the influence of such a man or woman. He being dead yet speaketh. The very mention of the name recalls the life with its blessed deeds, and is like opening a vase of precious ointment.

We once stood at the foot of the grave of a preacher whom we had known when a boy. He was a very saintly man. His face impressed the writer as a child with its halo-like appearance. He had been dead twenty years, and yet no flower bruised by the foot sent up more certainly a perfume than did the fragrance of this man's life, by the faculty of memory, steal upward through the sod and affected the mind and heart even more tenderly and powerfully than he had in life.

Over fifty years ago, a young preacher died of yellow fever. He was quite young, and had only preached three years when death came. But he was exceedingly devout in that brief life, and was unquestionably a God-filled man. A few years since an entire annual conference adjourned one of their services and went out three miles to the cemetery and stood silently, thoughtfully and deeply affected around the moldering tomb of a man long ago turned to dust and ashes. But something had not died. The presence of one hundred preachers around the sepulcher proved that. His influence still survived. It had drawn scores of men from a business session, to a cemetery, and filled them with a spirit of prayer and consecration. It was the power of a good life.

Just a couple of reflections in conclusion by way of application.

The highest and strongest wall that parents can build between their children and hell is just such a life as has been described. They may die without seeing their salvation, but from the battlements of heaven they will yet behold the son and daughter going down at last under the argument of that faithful Christian life, lived so long before them. Such a life is a wall too high to climb over. May every parent build one.

Again, if we want the millennium to come, this is the way to bring it about. If God in a single surrendered life has such force, then God in other lives will have a wider sweep of power; and as the numbers increase, the divine influence should increase, until the glory of the Lord will at last fill every home, bless and fire every church and uplift and save every kindred tribe, tongue, people and nation of the whole earth.

## CHAPTER 19

### “THOU SHALT NOT STEAL”

THE words forming the heading of this chapter are instantly recognized by the reader as one of the ten commandments. It is a law written not only on the tablet of stone on Mt. Sinai, but on the fleshly tables of the heart by the finger of God. It is not therefore to be wondered at that we find it incorporated in all the statute books and moral codes of the various nations of the earth. Nor are we surprised that the violation of this commandment is attended with the forfeiture of moral and social respectability, and the violator visited with penalties more or less severe, according to the magnitude of the offense. A man detected in the act of stealing goods or money will get to know what eternal punishment means in the sense of never being fully trusted again by the community. Some may forgive and believe in the reclamation and reformation, but the majority will not.

So this commandment with others of the decalogue is carefully kept, even by irreligious men, so far as the letter goes, if for no other reason than self-protection. The thieving principle in them, if gratified at all, is kept within the words of the civil law, or operates under the sanctions of the looser code which regulates the business world, where many things are allowed that will never pass muster or go punished at the day of judgment. This might be called Business Stealing.

No doubt men who would not or dare not purloin from their fellow-creatures on the highway, have robbed them in business transactions. In plain English they have stolen, and grown enormously rich by such repeated stealings. They looked to the country at large, which said nothing, or whispered and muttered. They next turned their eyes to Wall Street and to the great Exchanges, and the men there said it was all right. They forgot to refer the matter to Him who descended upon Mt. Sinai and wrote the words of the commandment. They said it was a sharp, clever business proceeding; but God said it was downright theft.



Nevertheless this kind of stealing is regarded by many as a decided improvement on picking pockets on the streets and roads, that it is much more respectable, and so is ardently defended, especially by those who succeed in the matter, while others who have lost their all by it as bitterly condemn.

Then there is what we would term Careless Stealing. If the reader desires light on what is meant here, let him approach his center-table and see if there are any hymnbooks there which belong to the church, and which he has never paid for. It would be interesting also to know how long they had been away from the place where they properly belonged. Next let him go to his library and look at the title-pages of the volumes before him and he would discover a startling number belonging to other people.

There is no intentional roguery here, but a careless kind of purloining. That carelessness, however, ought not to be in the heart, and needs looking after.

But there are still other forms of theft. David says, "Thy commandment is exceeding broad." It goes further and stretches wider than many such to realize. Jesus opened the eyes of men here by saying that men could break the law regarding adultery with the eye and heart. So with the commandment prohibiting stealing, it can be violated in more ways than those already mentioned.

In addition to open robbery, business theft, and careless pilfering, we have Reputation Stealing.

It is a fearful thought that a good name and consequent influence can be stolen away. Any right-thinking person would far rather be robbed of money than a good reputation. The first can be replaced, but how difficult it is and oftentimes impossible to recover from the effect of a foul slander. It cannot be overtaken, for it secured the first start and keeps traveling.

It is marvelous how people who would rather die than take a copper cent from another, yet deliberately with tongue or pen steal from a fellow-being that which is far beyond gold or silver in value to the possessor, his hitherto unclouded reputation.

The thief in this instance is oftentimes not certain about the truth of the report, but nevertheless gives vent to his suspicions, and perpetrates the foul, heartless robbery. The effect on the wronged human life can be imagined with but little trouble.

Then there is Musical Stealing.

We do not mean that men are robbing to the accompaniment of song and musical instrument; but that the stealage itself consists of songs and hymns. For instance, we heard a lovely hymn in California, with words and melody by two parties whom we will call A and B. Some months later we heard the same hymn exactly, note for note, and with but the change of a single word, sung by another man, whose name was at the top of the piece as the author and composer. His name we will call X. It was with quite a shock we made the discovery. Now came the question, Who had committed the robbery? That God's commandment had been broken there could be no question. The only mystery was who was the thief? Was it A and B, or was it X? Perhaps we will never know until the last day. But we will know then.

A startling additional thought is that we have seen the evidence of musical theft three times in the last year; while a leading singer tells me that as a practice it is common.

Still another form of theft is the purloining of striking illustrations heard in pulpits and on platforms. Illustration Stealing we would call it.

Of course we all have to draw in a general way from the knowledge of others on every side; and these multitudinous facts and truths we can, so to speak, grind up and make our own. We do not refer to this, but to a man's appropriation of the striking and purely original presentations of another, his taking the individual coloring of a subject, the vivid illustrations which belonged to the speaker or preacher, and passing them off as his own mental property and treasure in other places.

Now, when persons bear away in notebooks and in memory these same striking thoughts, arguments, illustrations and incidents and reproduce them as if their own intellectual offspring or property, we unhesitatingly pronounce the act a theft. The fact that it is a literary robbery does not alter the moral character of the transaction. Something has been stolen.

Sometimes this reproduction may be done unconsciously, and so there is no sense of guilt or condemnation. But the conscious, deliberate act stamps the character of the deed as robbery.

But may not the striking thoughts and illustrations of other speakers be used? Certainly. They may and should be utilized. But truth, honor and justice clearly point out the way in which it should be done.

The writer, like many other public speakers, has in his sermons and talks quite a number of vivid illustrations taken from his personal life and family history. In addition he has some others which he obtained from different individuals. But whenever he uses this latter class he invariably says, as "Dr. A — said," or "as I heard Brother B once relate," etc., etc.. This he has to do to retain peace of mind, self-respect of soul, and also to keep from being called a literary thief.

We once unwittingly gave great offense to a preacher, who was taking down one of our talks quite voluminously by crying out in a mirthful spirit:

"Give me credit, my brother."

After the sermon he waited on us with an aggrieved face, and the severe words, "Have you a copyright on all your utterances?"

The reader can imagine the hopeless, helpless feeling which swept over us as we listened to these words. There was such an utter absence of certain delicate instincts of the soul, as well as gross ignorance of laws that rule in the literary work, the breaking of which is to be promptly branded a plagiarist, or book thief, that as we considered the case words utterly failed us.

But there is still a greater, graver theft; where a man not content with taking striking thoughts, appropriates the whole sermon, divisions, subdivisions and all. This is Sermon Stealing.

Dr. Linfield of Mississippi, who is now dead, was a very gifted preacher. His discourses swept through the various stages of the admiration, imitation, appropriation, not to say confiscation of his brethren. On a certain occasion he attended a large camp-meeting on the seashore, and had scarcely arrived when he was promptly interviewed by three preachers,

each one of whom made the remarkable request that he would not deliver certain sermons of his, as they had taken the liberty to preach them on sundry and various occasions, and would now feel no little embarrassment if detected in the theft. Their regret seemed to be not in having committed the pulpit purloining, but in having been discovered in the deed. This by the by is the same kind of sorrow felt by the regular street pickpocket when arrested.

A prominent evangelist told the writer that he had recently tracked one of his sermons across the entire length of a state.

The fact of this kind of pulpit thieving is matter for genuine wonder; for if God calls a man to preach the gospel, that man should certainly be able to preach.

Two explanations alone then can be given for such conduct. Either pride is the cause, the man being unwilling to deliver sermons according to his own mental caliber, or it is laziness.

We had colored people in the South who pilfered because seriously disinclined to work. So it may be with some who are called to preach, they are too indolent to dig a sermon out of the Bible and their own brains and hearts, and so let others perform the labor for them. Anyhow the act is a violation of the law, "Thou shalt not steal."

Let it be understood that it is perfectly legitimate and proper to use a sermon, or striking thoughts and illustrations, or any good thing we hear or read, provided we give credit to the speaker or author from whom we obtained them.

Not to do so is not only wrong, but makes matters quite embarrassing to the true owner of the goods when he comes around and finds another man's name and brand stamped upon his own mental property. A strange jumble is at once seen, in a remarkable reversal of characters. The plagiarist is at first thought to be the wronged man, and the true man is regarded as the pulpit or platform thief. As the light breaks in as it always does in these matters, there occurs another reversal of characters, the jackdaw is stripped of his borrowed plumes and the penalty of violated law is visited upon the transgressor.

In a word, looking upon the eighth commandment, it is well to keep it. It pays never to break it in any way or under any circumstances whatever.

## CHAPTER 20

### “GOD WAS WITH HIM”

IT WOULD be hard, both in the Bible and in history, to find an individual who was as bitterly wronged and fearfully tried as Joseph. Envied and hated by his brethren, sold into slavery, persistently tempted to sin in high quarters, lied against and slandered, put into prison for a number of years on a false charge; surely nothing, could have been added in the way of suffering and sorrow to an already overflowing cup.

But out of all this calamity and affliction, he came at last, with the double victory of a spotless character and public deliverance and triumph. From poverty he leaped to affluence, from obscurity to fame and power, and from the prison to a position next to the throne. The explanation of the marvelous triumph and transformation is found in the words of the caption of this chapter, “God was with him.”

Doubtless the whole history of wrong was permitted that the subsequent deliverance might teach a vast body of moral martyrs some important lessons. Meanwhile the simple statement that “God was with him” is alone full of most comfortable suggestions.

One is, that with the consciousness of the divine presence, reverses and wrongs of all kinds are easily borne.

We have only to look about us to observe that some people are quietly enduring burdens from year to year, for which others go into drunkenness and even commit suicide. Men are ready at once with explanations to account for the difference, and attribute to education and temperament that which really belongs to God.

It was the abiding Christ in the heart that lifted the man up and over the reefs and breakers which had wrecked the other lives. The four words, “God was with him,” contained the true explanation of deliverance.

It is not difficult to step down and out of high positions in state and church with the presence of God as a constant conscious possession. And it is even pleasant to be overlooked and left in a corner when the soul

knows the grace of unbroken divine communion, and the heart is warm with the loving presence of Christ. How sweet and cheerful and unretaliative one can be under the wagging tongues of criticism and slander, when the voice of the Savior is heard continuously within, and His smile is never lifted from the soul.

And yet in the above paragraph three trials are mentioned that are perfectly unendurable to many of God's people. We have seen men go down into bitterness, gloom, sin and to a premature grave on account of them. They have not the grace which makes one gladly willing to be set aside, overlooked, discounted and abused. We have seen Christian people go into positive sulks because not invited to sit on a platform on some public occasion. We have known stewards and other church officials never recover from having been relieved from some ecclesiastical position. And a number of times we have heard preachers in a certain church speaking of the broken-heartedness, bitterness and untimely death of two prominent ministers who had been disappointed in the obtainment of high office in the denomination to which they belonged.

He who has the "God with him" experience can stand all this and much more besides. He has something so much better than men can give and possesses that which is so superior to anything that they can take away, that he can afford to be cheerful and even joyfully no matter what people may do or not do.

A second comforting reflection is, that with the divine presence in the heart and life, one can patiently wait while under severe trial and wrong for the slow-coming deliverance of God.

Think of being in prison a week. Now add to this a year. Three hundred and sixty-five times the lonely prisoner has seen the shadows steal through the grated niche high up on the wall and darkness fill his cell. Now lengthen this period to fourteen years. The infant that was born the day the prisoner entered his dungeon has now become the full-grown boy or girl, and people in the prime of life have become old and gray-headed. Let the reader conceive himself to be the prisoner, and that in addition to the long immurement he is in prison on a false charge. The world outside has forgotten him. Life, with youth, hope, strength and health, is fast slipping away. The pleasant sights and sounds of nature are shut out. Only prison

bars and walls are to be seen, and only sighs and groans from fellow-captives to be heard, and all this for over a decade of years. What an opportunity for despair of self, hatred to man, and the casting off of all love for and loyalty to God.

And yet this was Joseph's condition. To earthly judgment it was simply unendurable. But he bore it, keeping sweet in spirit and faithful in life, till relief came. For fourteen years he lived before a closed prison door, waiting for its opening, and keeping true to God in spite of the wrongs of his life and the fact that his wrongers were free and apparently happy while he, the injured and innocent one, was being made to suffer.

The only reason he did not sink under the heavy combination was, that "God was with him."

It takes the same grace today to endure a similar trouble.

It is hard to endure unjust treatment. It is fearful to be persistently wronged for years. It is a bitter trial to have a door of iron as it were shut in the face by human hands, and have to wait for the divine Opener and opening. The human instinct is to take the matter in our own hands and knock down the gate or dig underneath and escape.

But this will never do. The outside world is not prepared for our coming. We have to wait awhile. The Lord is getting us ready for the deliverance and working with others for the same end. But as He has to labor with men and women who are free agents, He cannot deal with them as He would with matter, and so cannot work as fast as He does when He manipulates clay. So it takes time to open the door. Happy the man who will await God's time, and keep sweet until that hour comes.

Sinners are never able to do this. Many Christians cannot. The daily papers in their record of desperate deeds prove this statement. Such people fret over their imprisonment, strike at the jailer, afflict their fellow-prisoners, clank their chains, rail at everybody, blow up the gate and take their own lives.

We read of men in financial embarrassment using money not their own. They could not wait on the Lord. We hear of others who, through jealousy, incompatibility and domestic wrong rush into divorce courts, and

even to suicide or murder. They could not wait on God to open the prison door.

But others can. They are not less keenly alive to the bitterness of their surroundings, to the facts of unappreciation and uncongeniality, the torture of morally opposite lives and the burden of a grievous wrong which has been done them; but still the heart is fixed, the picket remains on his lonely post of duty, the trumpet continues to sound, the divinely polarized life turns tremblingly but always truly to Christ. They who act thus are those who have "God with them" in the heart and life all the time.

One other reflection of comfort comes to the mind from the study of the words. If God is with a man the hour of complete and perfect deliverance is certain to come.

It matters not how great the wrong, or how deep the trouble, the relief will arrive. The door that is shut upon the child of God may be thick, and double locked by human power, and closed for a long time, and men and devils may be there to keep it shut, but it will open. It is bound to open.

It suddenly unclosed to Joseph, and it will suddenly do the same to the reader if he abides faithful.

When we were in the Holy Land some years ago we observed a large gate in the eastern wall of the Temple square, which has been shut and blocked up for centuries. The tradition out there is that it will never open until Christ comes, and at His approach its ponderous leaves will fly wide apart of themselves. This legend becomes a parable of consolation and instruction for the life-imprisoned Christian. There is a gate shut upon the reader which he cannot unlock. Do not try to do it. Let Christ do the unbarring. When He comes to your relief the heavy doors will roll open in such an easy way as to astonish and delight you.

Happy and wise is the man who waits on God to do this; who will not take certain matters that are above and beyond him in his own hands, but instead will trust to the God of Joseph. He it is who knows all about the door, who is behind it, who put his servant there, and He it is who is pledged to bring that servant out.



Wesley waited twenty years on God from the midst of a domestic hell, and kept at his work all the time. One day the prison door quietly opened, and he stepped forth into liberty.

We know of a merchant who, with the greatest marital and household infelicity, was repeatedly under violent temptation to take affairs in his own hand and blow up the door, climb the wall, or in some way escape from a providential surrounding which he could not understand and felt scarcely able to endure from day to day. But God was with him, and he waited; and the day came that his entire family was given to him, and the home became as delightful as it had formerly been unbearable.

It is remarkable with what a little thing God brought Joseph out of trouble. He employed no army, or mighty physical convulsion to cast down the prison walls, but used a dream, giving the interpretation of it to His servant.

The mistake of many of God's burdened children is that as they look at their peculiar life imprisonment or confinement, they do not see sufficient power in anything around them to bring deliverance. They beheld no siege guns, battleships and other adequate forces to affect the rescue, and failing to see them they cease to expect the relief. But it will come, and with methods as light as a dream. In all this God gets glory to Himself and increases the faith of His child. It is marvelous the power of little things when in the hands of God.

To destroy Haman and his far-reaching plans, and save the Jewish people from destruction, God was under no necessity to raise an army, but simply gave King Ahasuerus a restless night so that he could not sleep, and through that apparently trivial circumstance the tremendous prison of Circumstance was knocked down and Mordecai, Esther and the Jewish people were delivered from a general massacre.

It is also remarkable how God was preparing the country outside for Joseph's exaltation. The famine of seven years in Egypt, while doubtless a proper scourge sent on sinful people, was also in the providence of God intended to be the means of His servant's increasing honor and glory.

In a word, we can safely trust God at all times and in all circumstances. He has not forgotten his followers in the prison where men have placed him.

He will in due time bring him forth, and even before the relief appears, is working to that end. When the delivered one comes forth he will be both astonished and gratified to behold a strange kind of outward preparation for his arrival. Work, elevations, dignities, honors will all be awaiting him, and all of which has been foreshadowed in the history of Joseph.

In a word, when God is with a man, he is also for that man, and if God be for him who can be against him? If God is with a man that means he can engrave on every human fetter the sentence, this shall fall off, can write on the prison door, this shall open, and cry to the lonely prisoner within, you shall yet come forth. Thank God for the comfort, instruction, present assurance and prophecy of coming good in the words, "God was with him."

# CHAPTER 21

## THE FRIEND OF GOD

THE sentence above is scriptural, and was spoken of Abraham. Such was his character and life that James says “he was called the friend of God.” One could hardly conceive of a nobler epitaph on a tombstone than this. Nor could any one desire a more blessed sentence to fall from the lips of the Judge at the Great Day than the words “He was the friend of God.”

No one can look at the moral conflict going on in the world without seeing that God needs friends. such is the struggle taking place between heaven and hell on the middle ground of earth, that the forces of Nature are out of the question, and man is used in deciding the momentous questions of truth and error, sin and salvation. That the cause of God may triumph, hearts and lives devoted to God are needed; in a word, friends. It would be impossible to estimate what Abraham was to God as he moved in his heaven honoring life through observant heathen nations. Like Enoch, he will convict his generation at the judgment bar of God. They were and will be condemned again because of his faithfulness and godliness in the midst of their wickedness.

When God found another friend, Paul, it is wonderful how he used him, how he swung from land to land, from sea to shore, and from dungeon to Caesar’ palace. He had need of his words and life. He had a pair of lips upon which He could count. He had heart that was true to Him under every circumstance, and a spirit that no man could intimidate or divert from a divinely imposed duty. So God swept him around. Doubtless Paul wondered why he was thus cast about, but has long ago understood it in heaven. The Lord had a friend and was using him for all he was worth in the years he had to live. That Paul was perfectly content and even joyful over this use is evident from his language when he said he gladly suffered the loss of all things.

Paul is dead, the conflict is still on, and God still needs friends. Where will He find them, and what will such a friend be when found? Let it be

understood that the idea is not that of being friendly to God. Many are friendly to Christianity who are not the friends of God. It means something to be a friend.

We doubt not if the reader follows faithfully the definition of friendship and applies it to the Christian life that he will get under conviction.

One attribute or feature of friendship is love. There can be no friendship without it. But a man with a variable and imperfect love does not measure up to what is in the word friend.

In like manner to be a friend of God there must be love. This love is not natural to the heart, but is the result of regeneration or the new birth. That this love is defective is taught by the Bible and proved by experience. The Methodist church speaks of the blessing of perfect love coming after conversion; and the Scripture is clear in the statement that the Lord will circumcise the heart that we may love Him with all the mind, and all the strength, and all the heart. This is perfect love. And now as it requires a perfect love to make a perfect friend, we see that the friend of God becomes such upon the accomplishment of a second work of grace.

A second feature of friendship is that of trust. It must be a perfect confidence to measure up to the requirements of a true friend. A man calling himself one's friend who is affected by every evil report and by changes in time of trouble and misfortune, does not deserve the name of friend. We have seen earthly friends grow cold under the breath of calumny, and drop away because of distance and time. They were poor friends.

The friend of God clings to Him in the face of general disloyalty, in spite of dark providences, and unexplainable withdrawals of the divine presence.

We once had a friend against whom some fearful slanders were uttered. Not only tongues took the matter up, but so did the papers. When the facts reached the writer in a distant city a thousand miles away, he sent a telegram flying over the wires to the sufferer in the words: "I still believe in you." This is just what the friend of God will do, no matter what men say against the Bible, against Christ, and against the Divine Providence, "I still love you and believe in you." Indeed Job sent a marvelously similar

telegram through the skies to the Throne. Under the permissive providence of God his children had been killed, his flocks destroyed and stolen, and his health wrecked. From the very ashes in which he sat he sent this message to heaven: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

A father was leaving his home to be gone for months on a long trip. His little boy, a prattler of five or six years old, said: "Good by. I love you three days and a hundred miles." His little girl, somewhat older, was at first silent as she watched with filling eyes the retreating form of her father, and then cried out with a choking voice, Good by, papa. I love you all the miles and all the days."

This is what the friend of God will say. No matter what happens, and what comes, and what goes, Lord, I will love you and trust you through all.

A third feature of friendship is that of sensitiveness to the name and honor of a friend. If assaulted in our presence you will either speak out in his defense or walk away from the company of such detractors.

We have often wondered how a Christian could stand by and hear God's name profaned. We do not believe that the true friend of God can do it. Either he will gently and firmly reprove, or show by his manner that he is grieved and shocked, or leave the company of such people.

Once in a large gathering of delegates to a convention things were going hard against an absent member. For a while it looked as if he would be cast overboard. Just at that critical moment a delegate arose and addressing the chair said, "Mr. President, I wish it understood that I am this man's friend," and then followed such a noble and true defense of the absentee as to produce a complete revulsion of feeling in the audience, and sent the man's stock as high as it had been previously low.

How we wish that God had such friends. The followers and adherents of the devil make themselves instantly known on boat, car and in hotel. Why should Christians have to be fished up and pulled forward? Why should not our very presence cause certain forms of sin to slink away abashed under our protesting tongues or solemn, rebuking gaze?

A fourth feature is devotion to a friend's interests.

How coolly and unconcernedly a man will view the rifling of a stranger's store. But let the property be that of a friend and he dashes in at once with a cry and shout to scatter the marauders.

It is impossible for a friend of God to see the Lord's cause droop and suffer and do nothing for its relief. Not only time and energy, but his money will cheerfully flow for the help of the cause of Christ.

In a camp-meeting in a certain State the finances are so run that the public pay all the expenses, and the Christian tent holders not only escape from a taxation usual in other campgrounds, but are even delivered from the cost of a ticket of admission upon the grounds. We were not surprised to find a notable absence of joy and liberty among these people, and that others seemed to be more blessed.

A fifth feature of friendship is that of fondness for the company of the one beloved. The trouble is not in coming but in staying away. A law is asserting itself. Words of affection are drawing, and you feel you must see the friend and that frequently.

The friend of God loves to be in His presence. He not only cultivates that presence in the street, but gladly leaves the company of friends, and even the family circle, to go off alone to be with and commune with Him.

Private prayer is not a burden; the night season not dreary; the closet of devotion not lonely; because there the smile and whisper of God are sought and blessedly realized in the soul. Hours thus spent go by quickly and delightfully to the friend of God. Intolerable and impossible to others, it is a joy and privilege to him. It is here he gets the deep, rested look, happy smile and shining face that so impress outsiders. Here he learns blessed and beautiful things, which afterward sparkle in prayer and conversation, and he stays so long in his trysting place under the Tree of Life that when he rises and goes back to the walks of men he shakes off the very dew of heaven upon those who come near him.

A sixth feature of God's friend is that he knoweth what his Lord doeth.

This is Christ's own statement, who divides His followers into servants and friends. The servant knows some things, and not all. The friend in a nearer relation, in a closer companionship, sweeps far ahead of the mere servant.

A final feature of God's friend is his perfect obedience to any and every command of Heaven.

Christ said: "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." This is the divine rule by which we are to measure ourselves and see who and what we are. It is not profession here, nor experience, nor visions. Obedience is the test and declaration of our friendship to God.

This is where and how Abraham earned the title, "the friend of God." He did everything that God told him. Commanded to go out into a strange country which he had never beheld, yet he went, "not knowing whither he went." Directed to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice on an altar, he never hesitated, but took the lad, laid him on the pile of wood and drawing his knife was about to bury it in the breast of his only son, when God arrested his hand, and told him it was enough. He had obeyed the divine word and proved that he was the friend of God.

In like manner we are to prove our devotion to the Lord. According to Christ's definition we have no right to say we are God's friends if we are disobedient. But thanks be to His name, if we keep His statutes, walk in His commandments and hearken faithfully and obediently to His voice, we have the right to attach to our names the four words, "the friend of God." It is far better and more to be desired than any title that a literary or theological college can give us. It is the choicest degree of heaven. It will greet us in the resurrection, meet us at the judgment, follow us into heaven, and flash and blaze through eternity, while the poor honors, titles and dignities of this world shall have been forgotten for ages.

# CHAPTER 22

## THE WEAPONS OF GIDEON

SOME of the most valiant servants of God at first showed great timidity and self-distrust in entering upon their life work. With lives of marvelous victories and achievements, yet they required at the outstart a great amount of coaxing and encouragement ere the hand was laid upon the sword and the lip placed upon the trumpet.

The shrinking of Moses, the fearfulness of Jonah and the dread of Esther will at once be recalled by the reader. Among these trembling ones appear Gideon, whose name is now a watchword for boldness and courage. Like his apprehensive predecessors he made the mistake of looking first at the enemy, next at himself, and not first, last and all the time at God.

The Lord had to give him three signs in order to arouse in him the spirit of faith and fearlessness. The first was that of the wet fleece; second, the dry fleece; and third, he was permitted to go down in the night and hear what the Midianites were talking about in their tents. To his amazement he heard enough to know that they were in deadly fear of him and already defeated in their spirits.

Most of us in minor degrees have begged in the outstart of some Christian work for heavenly indications of God's will and approval. The request for the wet and dry fleece manifestation is well known to us all; and the still more remarkable sign of the talking in the tents at night has more than once fairly electrified us who were allowed to listen. We have often wished that we had preserved some of the sayings of the world and some of the utterances of a high ecclesiasticism, which in every instance showed consciousness of weakness and error, and a heart bowed down with an apprehension of coming ill and ghastly defeat. Truly if the devoted servants of God knew what sinners and halfhearted Christians were thinking and saying, they would rise up in mass and take the land.



But the divine preparation of the worker is not as remarkable as the means used to secure the victory. All are familiar with the fact that the implements of war with which Gideon went forth to accomplish the defeat of the Midianites were to all appearances utterly inadequate to accomplish the design in view. What could pitchers, trumpets and lanterns do in the face of a vast and thoroughly equipped armed host that swarmed in the valleys and on the hillsides and had come in the confident expectation of annihilating Israel?

And yet God triumphed over them, as He will finally obtain victory over every foe. He did it then, and will continue to do it in the future, with inferior numbers, and with agencies and instrumentalities that are universally recognized to be insufficient in themselves to achieve the triumph. By this method the Lord will hold steadily to His plan of crushing human pride on the one side, keeping His own people looking humbly to Him, and yet showing to the whole universe at last through the very weakness of the instrument and the greatness of the victory obtained, that the triumph was not of man, but of God.

When Gideon, in reply to God's question, said he had only thirty thousand men, the Lord's reply was that these were too many. So he sifted them down by different processes to three hundred. Now when victory came men could see it was not by human might, but by divine intervention and help. The selection of the instruments already mentioned capped the climax, so to speak, in the showing to all ages to come that the battle and the victory were of the Lord. Three hundred men with unmilitary weapons conquered a vast host armed to the teeth. The only explanation to be given was that God was with the men, and touching the homely things they held in their hands, transformed them into engines of omnipotence, and made both man and weapon irresistible.

He who is accustomed to genuine revival work is never surprised at the history of Gideon and his band. It is not an event that happened once only, away back in the early ages of the world, but a something that continually takes place where God's people fall into line and put themselves in His directing hands. If we will consent to be in the minority, to be little, discounted, despised, set aside and even ignored; if we will offer upon His altar the gifts we possess; if we will let Him use them and

us as He desires, then there is bound to be victory, great, amazing, overwhelming as it was on that wonderful day.

Of course it is God who wins the battle. It is not by might or power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord. Yet there are human and spiritual conditions without which God will not send forth His irresistible influence. It is the tracing out and discovering of these character relations or performances which brings light to us today in the burning desire to know what we should do to behold great and lasting victory.

One fact stated in the Bible narrative is that “every man stood in his place.”

Here is the harmony and agreement seen on the day of Pentecost, when all were with one mind and one accord. Here was concert of action, and, above all, individual faithfulness. The line formed must have been a thin one, but this was offset by the fact that each man stood in his place.

We wish the words could be burned into the heart of every child of God. Each one has a post of duty. There is a place in the home, church, social life and state that we should occupy. There is a spot in pulpit or pew, in prayer or class meeting, in Sunday-school or mission, in sick room or slum, in hospital or prison, where we should be. There is a place of duty where God wants us to be, and when conscience or the Spirit takes up the roll call, He wants us to say, “Here.” Not to be there means, not simply personal forfeiture of divine favor and future reward, but loss to the cause of God, and calamity to the souls we might have benefited.

There never was a great work done for souls on earth but a certain number of men stood in their places. Temptations came thick and fast to wile them away. People said their position was needless and ridiculous. The night of waiting was long. The camp fires of the enemy were many. The heart of the watchers at times grew faint, but nevertheless they stood.

Such faithfulness is one of the human factors that God can use. It is never without its power. May we take the lesson home.

A second fact was that they “blew their trumpets.”

One can readily imagine the panic which seized upon the hearts of the Midianites when from their different quarters they heard as many

hundreds of trumpets blare forth in the night. The shock was terrible, confusion reigned, and the flight at once began.

This blowing of the trumpets is happily applied to Christian testimony. Concerning the strange influence and power we cannot doubt who have seen its effect on multitudes and have read the words of Christ, "They overcame by the word of their testimony." We have noticed a whole congregation of spiritually dead people fairly electrified by the warm, glowing testimony of a single individual, in a word, by the blowing of a solitary human trumpet.

What if the number of trumpets is increased? Think of the effect on a large audience of a hundred fire baptized servants of God leaping to their feet and crying out that they were fully saved.

The writer was once the pastor of a great dead city church. He brought in suddenly a holy man of God to hold a meeting, and in a few days the fire fell, the power came down, and twenty-five were sanctified and one hundred converted. A number of the members of the church did not attend at all during the week, and so were perfectly unprepared for what they saw and felt on the following Sabbath. The evangelist, after the opening prayer, instead of taking a text and preaching, called for testimonies. Instantly twenty people were on their feet declaring what God had done for their souls. They were as quickly followed by others in different parts of the house, in the gallery, under the gallery, at the door and in the choir. It was a scattering fire, but most startling in its influence. To this day we recall the bobbing heads, jerking bodies, astonished looks, and even panic-struck faces of those unconverted, backslidden, lukewarm and cold, formal members of the church. Such was their state of mind that we doubt not that if some stentorian voice had cried out, "The sword of the Lord and Gideon," many would have fled precipitately, as did the Midianites.

May the trumpets be blown. We have seen their use turn the tide of battle in the favor of Heaven many times, and expect to behold the like result as often before we die.

A third fact was that Gideon's band "broke their pitchers."

This is not without significance. These bodies of ours must be given up, and, if need be, sacrificed for the cause of truth and Heaven. The pitchers

or vessels must be broken. It was prophesied of Christ, “the zeal of thy house hath eaten me up.” He spared not Himself. He so toiled for the salvation of men that at the age of thirty-three, men guessed him to be fifty. It is significant that they did not say, “Thou art not yet forty.”

There is such a thing as spending and being spent in the service of the Lord; a losing one’s life for His sake and the gospel. The pitcher is broken not for display, not in penance, not for plaudits, not even for reward, but through burning love for Christ and souls.

It is the body thus given up for Christ and His cause that arrests the attention and convinces the minds of men. It is one of the highest arguments. It is a sealing of one’s statements or testimony with one’s own blood.

Somehow the body as it is thus given, as the life is subordinated to the great work of salvation, the light which has been in a measure hidden shines through and out upon the world.

It is wonderful how the light of heaven shines from a body, life and reputation all broken in the faithful service of God. It matters not whether martyr stake, bullet, printer’s type or ecclesiastical gavel breaks the pitcher, how the glory of God streams through the crevices! Anyhow devotion to Christian duty is a factor God uses in winning His battles. Men may protest against it as folly, but they are impressed notwithstanding. History teaches us that the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the church; and in Revelation, while we read that the followers of Christ overcame by the word of their testimony, yet it is also added “that they loved not their lives unto death.” The pitchers were broken.

A fourth fact stated in the narrative is that the men of Gideon “waved their lanterns.”

In other words, we must let our lights shine. Is a candle lighted to be put under a bushel? Is it not to be seen? And when God puts our souls in a flame, when the fire of heaven is burning in our hearts, when the life is inwardly glorious from a divine work wrought by the Holy Ghost, are we to sit silent, veiled and hidden, while men by millions are stumbling, in the dark and falling headlong into a still greater and an eternal blackness? Is not the command to Zion, “Arise and shine”?

There is a light about a redeemed man's life which is as real as the radiance of a star. The latter does not more certainly appeal to the eye than the former does to some unknown law of spiritual vision. We feel this peculiar attracting or directing influence as certainly as ever the traveler has been affected by the star-like beam of beacon signals on ocean or rivers.

The lantern is to go with the trumpet; that is, the life must follow up and confirm the testimony.

There is no question that startling and terrifying as the three hundred trumpets were to the Midianites when suddenly blown in the night, yet the terror and panic were marvelously increased by the subsequent flash of their hundred lanterns, coming so quickly upon the clang of the bugles.

Before such a combination there seemed nothing left for the Midianites but to run; and that they did generally and most heartily.

May we never forget the combination. It will unlock and open the greatest ecclesiastical vault that has ever towered in pillared, sculptured, and yet cold and dead magnificence before us. The mystic words and signs are, each man in his place; a trumpet; a broken pitcher and a waving lantern. This means individual faithfulness, ringing testimony, the body a sacrifice, and the life all luminous with truth and the indwelling Spirit of God. May we see to it that we obtain and keep the combination.

# CHAPTER 23

## THE PLACE OF SAFETY

WHEN we remember the immortality of the soul, its coming destiny of happiness or woe, and especially the fearful assaults made upon it now for its overthrow and ruin, we may well ask where is the spot or what is the condition in which it can be said to be safest.

We all well know that absolute and complete deliverance from all danger is to be found alone in Heaven. When the Gates of Pearl close behind the entering soul, no human or infernal power can ever assail, distress, endanger or injure it again. Until the foot then presses the golden streets there is no such thing as certain and unconditional safety.

But while this is so, yet there is no question but there are places or conditions where even this side of heaven a person can be said to be safer than in other localities or states, and one that must be the safest outside of glory. It is quite amazing to see the mistakes made by different classes of people in regard to this most important fact. As usual false saviors and sandy foundations come to the front, a will-o'-the-wisp is taken for the Star of Bethlehem, and a bank of intellectual fog for the Rock of Ages.

One fictitious hope or resting place is Innocence.

It is remarkable how many land and glorify this negative state of spirits this infantile or unformed stage of character. Men write, and sigh, and rave about the spotless whiteness of "childhood's sunny years." They sing, "I would I were a boy again," whereas when they were in that interesting stage of life they were certainly in mischief with its resultant penalties, and as anxious not to be a boy. Poems are written about the purity of a baby's heart, when such is not the case, and can never be, until the Holy Ghost with his baptism of fire makes the nature holy.

Innocence is nothing but ignorance of evil, and the rule is that if God and religious training have not come in, all that such an individual needs is to behold the sin, and he at once falls into guilt.

Adam and Eve were both innocent, but when temptation came in alluring form, they both fell and that at once.

A second false hope is built on what we would call Place. That is, men ascribe peculiar sanctity and protective power to spots where there is strong religious influence and social restraint.

In sending the children to school or college great comfort is felt if the boy can be boarded at the house of one of the professors, or the daughter brought into the family circle of the resident minister. Others would save their children by keeping them at home. Another told the writer in desperation about her boy who had a desire to run upon the streets, "If he does not stay at home and behave himself, I will get a rope and tie him to my rocking chair." and still another lady told us her servant maid was a piece of perfection as long as she kept her under strict surveillance in the four walls of the family mansion.

As we brooded upon these confidences, we could but marvel at the quality of that virtue which only existed by restraint in a house, and melted like snow in the street. We moreover thought if ropes could save, God would have thrown down countless millions of coils of such material with information as to the best knots, and mode of tying.

The Bible thoroughly explodes the delusion by the history of the first pair in paradise. Could there be a better place than Eden for keeping right? And has there ever been a more heaven-favored spot in its guileless history, its peaceful, happy days, and heavenly associations? Yet says the Scripture, Adam and Eve fell into sin in just such a spot.

A third wrong confidence is placed in Position. Many crave for their friends and relations appointments in the church which they regard as guarantees for present and future safety.

It is true that certain offices and works are helpful, and the use of the means of grace which they require can be made to react in great spiritual benefit upon the soul: and yet it is equally true that many harden under the constant touch and contact with holy and heavenly things, actually becoming gross sinners.

Anyhow, just as one is about to conclude that position is desirable for the increased safety which it brings to the soul, the eye falls upon the dreadful statements of the Bible about the sins of the sons of Eli, the uncleanness of Joshua the high priest, and the fall of Judas from the apostolic college into all everlasting hell.

We scarcely recover from this before we read of the moral ruin of the famous Brooklyn preacher, and grow even sicker at heart with the sound of character downfalls still nearer home.

The true hope and safest resting place this side of the skies is to be found in Christian integrity.

We do not mean the character of the moralist, the outwardly blameless and respectable life of law-abiding citizens; but the bloodwashed character. We refer to the man who has been converted, then sanctified, and after that rooted, grounded, settled, established and confirmed in holiness. There is a maturity after purity. There is after pardon and sanctification a sweet, blessed settling into God which comes with the tests and trials of time, and the faithful dealings of the providence of Heaven. The soul rests under the shadow of the Almighty, and dwells in the Secret Place of the Most High.

Such a man becomes as fixed in good, as sinners are set in evil. There is indeed less prospect of moving him to do wrong, than there is to stir the transgressor to righteousness. Men do not look for such characters to fall. They are weaned from sin; and are spoiled for this world. Wicked people have given them up. They are no more expected to do wrong because they happen for a while to be in evil surroundings, than vile men are expected to change because they walk through a company of godly people.

Something has happened in the soul that makes its possessor superior to circumstances and environments. The man is no longer like a chameleon taking the moral hue of every locality and company, but is like a palm tree that can flourish in a desert. His salvation is within. His Savior abides with keeping power in his heart. He is fixed in truth and on truth. He carries his atmosphere with him. Though still out of heaven, he is already a saved man.



Such a condition is seen at a glance to be vastly superior to the three false hopes we have mentioned. In the first instance, innocence which is but ignorance of evil, can be destroyed in a single moment's time. In the second, if our trust is in place, then we can be safe only in certain localities, when we desire to be secure no matter where we are. If certain ministerial or official positions is our barrier against evil, then we are not delivered, for we may not remain in the office, and graver still, the great adversary makes particularly violent assaults upon men in high places.

Prohibition is excellent in its way; but what a sad thought it is that some can only be saved from alcoholism simply by destroying all temptations to drunkenness. It is like causing men to be pure by making them eunuchs. Or like an honesty produced by handcuffing thieves, or burning up pocketbooks and all stealable things.

We crave something more robust, and real, and virtuous than this. We want to hear the ring of genuine character. We do not want mere negation, but something positive with lightning force in it in the moral world. God has so set the soul of the writer against alcohol, that if the Mississippi river ran with red whiskey, and the hills on the banks were loaf sugar, and mint grew on the shore as tall as pine trees, and tumblers and spoons were in stacks on every side, yet he would not take a single drink.

The Lord can, by the blood of Christ, and the Spirit's purifying, settling, establishing work, fix a soul in this attitude towards every sin. You can go to a great city, be unknown in it, and yet behave yourself. You can be tempted and not fall. You can be thrown with ungodly people, and yet remain godly. Like Enoch, you can live a lifetime in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, yet walk with God the whole time, and at the end of your days gather your feet up into the bed, turn your face to the wall, and fall asleep in Jesus to awaken instantly in glory.

The history of the life of Joseph in Egypt was given to show what character could do for a man in the midst of temptation and cruel wrong. Innocence was not his savior, for he knew what sin was. He had not place as a refuge; and position had made of him a target; but he had the character of the redeemed. The Bible says God was with his and so we see him achieving such wonderful victories in the face of persecution and suffering, that he has become the admiration of the moral world.

The life of Daniel in Babylon was given us to show the superiority, power and victory belonging to character. The pleadings of appetite for the rich viands of the feast, the invitations, then threats of the king, all alike fell powerless before this marvelous, spiritual reality which dwelt in the soul of the young Judean. By this something which he possessed, and which really was himself, he flung aside temptation as one would brush down from a garment. In the same moral fixedness and fearlessness he raised his windows that looked towards Jerusalem, and contrary to the command of the monarch of the land, prayed thrice a day to the God of heaven.

He came through all his difficulties and perils victoriously. His enemies were destroyed instead of himself. His consistent life transformed idol worshippers into adorers of the true God. His name is felt to be a synonym for integrity and righteousness, for steadfastness in duty and faithfulness to God. The explanation of his triumphant life was his holy, heaven-wrought character. May we all enter upon this safest of places to be found this side of the Gates of Pearl.

The forces of heaven are not exhausted, the Blood continues to cleanse, the Spirit to fall, and God can still cause a man to stand in the face of every trial of earth and assault of hell. He can create as pure a heart, fashion as heavenly a character, and produce as loyal a life now, as at any previous age of the world's history. Oh for more such hearts and lives; hearts that are

*“Perfect and right, and pure and good,  
A copy, Lord, of Thine,”*

and lives that shall be epistles seen and read of men, the authorship unmistakable, and the argument unanswerable.

# CHAPTER 24

## FAITHFULNESS

FAITHFULNESS in any department of life is felt to be admirable, commendable and to be emulated. It is the path to promotion, and a sure way in most instances to the hearts of men. The statues in our parks, the names of states, cities, streets and ships constitute a language in itself which speaks louder than ordinary words concerning men's recognition and appreciation of this kind of character. The patriots of Marathon, the sentry who died at his post at the gate of Pompeii, the young Roman who leaped into the chasm, all these and other instances of heroism will ever remain as objects challenging and receiving the highest meed of human praise.

In the Christian life there is a greater need for this virtue which the world admires, because of the increased difficulties found in the spiritual realm, and the more momentous results which flow from the faithfulness or lack of it on the part of the man.

The devoted Christian on examination is discovered to have greater and more pitiless enemies, a mightier and more subtle opposition, together with a loneliness and lack of human sympathy which increases in exact ratio as one becomes holier and more Christlike.

The famous of earth are stimulated and fired to do great things on legislative floors and bloody battlefields by the presence of listening hundreds, or the consciousness that the world itself, through the camera, artist's brush, reporter's pencil and flashing telegram, is observing every movement, and present, so to speak, before every besieged city, and on every cannon-swept, corpse-strewn field of conflict. In the spiritual life some of the most fearful battles are fought within the breast, with no human eye or voice or hand to cheer and strengthen, while in addition there are domestic and social conditions existing which of themselves would be sufficient, but for divine grace, to drive the tortured spirit to distraction and desperation.

The true Christian life is found to be a solitary, misunderstood and greatly tried life. Not only will men oppose, but devils will attempt to drag it down. To advance deeper in spirituality while adding to the soul's strength and joy is also to increase outward difficulties and opposition. A smooth Gospel fares better with worldly people than the real Word. The moral trimmer is better fed, more richly clothed and kindlier received than the man who walks unbrokenly with God, refusing to compromise, and holding up the standard as he received it from God.

This fact is not only seen but felt as well. It, of course, adds to the temptation of being unfaithful. What is the use, whispers the devil, of such a consecrated life? Who cares, anyhow, what you do? See how you are overlooked, slighted, ridiculed, misunderstood, and despised! Take note of your loneliness! Observe what little change is produced by your discharge of duty in the home, the church or in the world at large! You might as well be dead and out of the world; anyhow, you ought to run.

In view of these things, faithfulness in the Christian life is seen to be all the more beautiful and blessed, all the more worthy of emulation, and well deserving the reward which God promises it shall have on the last great day.

Meantime as character indication and manifestation, faithfulness, in its different phases and situations, constitutes a delightful and most profitable study.

First, we have all marked it, when it was unappreciated and overlooked.

One difference between the time-serving, man-pleasing individual and the genuine character we are writing about is that the former must be continually recognized, applauded and rewarded, or all gladness of heart and performance of life end; while the latter acts from principle, and possessing, an abiding inner compensation, can live without the smiles and plaudits of men.

We all know the sickening experience produced in having to listen to people declare their own great deeds and achievements. They could not wait for recognition, but sounded their own trumpets most lustily in conversation or written article. Just as powerfully are we affected, in all agreeable ways by the spectacle of silent faithfulness. The man has been

true to God and to his fellow men, and the deed or deeds may never be heralded to the public in newspaper channels, and so be passed over and forgotten; and yet he is too noble and self-respecting a man to blazon abroad his performances by writing his own puffs and scattering broadcast papers which contain notices of himself and his work.

Again, we look upon faithfulness as it stands self-rewarded.

Men are busy today looking to outward conditions for happiness and blessedness. And while we would not underrate the comfort that comes from wealth and position in this world, yet it is not the less true that these things cannot bring soul content and abiding peace. Money, rank and influence cannot give what the heart craves. But there is a joy in conscious virtue and integrity which cannot be described in words. There is a character possession, a spirit wealth concerning which the servants of sin have no conception or appreciation. It gives the clear eye, uplifted head and unsinking heart in conditions where men go down by thousands. Without it a man is poor who is a millionaire, but with it he is rich though dwelling in a hovel and living on a crust.

Third, we behold faithfulness arousing the admiration of men.

A bishop of the Methodist church was walking down a street in Philadelphia, when he saw a crowd gathered around a horse and a wagon that had stalled at a corner. The animal was a noble one, but had been evidently overloaded to begin with, and in addition the right fore wheel having sunk in a deep rut, he was at a great disadvantage. He struggled like a leviathan, but every surge of the mighty form only deepened the rut. The driver knew the horse he was driving and never used the lash on his smoking glossy skin, but kept speaking kindly and encouragingly to him. The man's tone and evident faith in him seemed to put new life into the horse and caused him to do his best; for after each interval of brief rest given him, he would bend to his difficult task with an unmistakable determination to bring the wagon and load through, no matter what it cost. With each failure, while the noble brute fell back a moment with heaving flank and quivering scarlet nostril for another physical rally, one could see that his spirit was not conquered and he was bent on triumph. The crowd by this time had become dense, and a great human sympathy as well as curiosity was manifest in every face.

Again the driver spoke soothingly and kindly to the trembling horse who seemed to understand every word. When the last struggle began under the sharp ringing cheering cry of the driver above him, the faithful animal seemed to summon up every particle of reserve power he possessed, and with muscles standing out like ropes and corrugated iron, with breast bowed heavily upon the collar, With limbs straining against the ground, he gave a tremendous surge forward, and another, a still another, and then the mightiest of all, and lo! the stubborn wheel yielded, the wagon, with creak and groan, responded to the mighty power before it, and partly wrenched and partly lifted, came up and out of its muddy bed and rolled safely upon the solid pavement of the avenue, amid a perfect storm of shouts and cheers from the crowd. The center of observation was the horse, who stood a recognized victor on the street, all trembling with his great exertions and champing upon his foam-covered bit. It was a spectacle of faithfulness, and every one was thrilled, softened or fired at the sight. Some eyes were wet in the crowd, and there were others present who felt like putting their arms around the neck of this hero of the street and truck wagon and thereby relieving their hearts.

There is no need to apply the thought. We have certainly lived very unobservant lives if we have not beheld the overloaded, overworked child of God, and seen him triumph in spite of everything, when others had gone down in prostration of nerve, exhaustion of body and brokenness of heart.

The papers and tombstones give the cause of death in words and terms that are sometimes far from being true. The man died in the shafts. He was overloaded. Nevertheless the spectacle of faithfulness to the last has thrilled the heart of thousands.

Fourth, we see faithfulness acting as an inspiration to men.

The virtue may be in an individual or body of people; it may be a thing of the past or exhibited today; still it remains, affecting men's hearts and putting new life, strength and courage into many a sinking spirit.

In the battle of Manassas the sight of Jackson's brigade standing firm in the midst of confusion, carnage and death, steadied the ranks of other bodies of troops and helped to win the day. The cry raised at the sight of

the now immortal legion was, "Look at Jackson's brigade standing like a stone wall."

At the college which we attended there was a youth who studied every day until past midnight. Often when about to retire we would see his lamp shining like a star from his window when all the rest of the dormitory was enveloped in darkness and every student but himself asleep. That light was an inspiration to the writer, and has never been recalled since without stirring the spirit as it did then, an outward sign of the inward faithfulness in that room.

Of course the reader will not be surprised to learn that this hard working student took the first honor of the graduating class, and is now on the Supreme Bench of a southern state.

Faithfulness in the Christian life creates a still greater inspiration, inasmuch as the truths professed and suffered for are eternal in their nature and therefore much more important than anything in this life.

So to see a man standing for God and duty in all circumstances, in the face of every surrounding, in spite of all kinds of opposition, through prosperity and adversity, in youth, manhood and old age, is a spectacle of moral grandeur that will do more to make men stand for the right than the blare of war bugles and the harmonious crash of a thousand military bands.

One night in an audience in Europe the name of Chinese Gordon was uttered and instantly there was an uproar of applause. The same thing has been witnessed in the South at the name of Robert E. Lee. This is the heart's involuntary as well as voluntary tribute to human faithfulness. Thank God we have names also in the religions world which thrill and electrify the soul the moment they are mentioned.

We heard a preacher once praying before a large audience. He was saying, "Lord God of Elijah! God of Wesley! God of John Fletcher! God of Adam Clarke! God of Asbury and McKendree, answer by fire!" and before he had finished the sentence the fire fell; and the building was resounding with cries, shouts and hallelujahs. The names he uttered were of such faithful men that heaven answered to the roll call, and earth responded.

Fifth, we behold faithfulness working as an actual salvation to men.

Of course we do not mean a salvation apart from and independent of Christ; but that help and arm of power which the Savior Himself uses in rescuing the human soul.

Men seem to be first arrested and convicted by the contemplation of a devoted, consistent life. On the other hand they find an excuse and argument for evil doing and neglect of salvation in the moral lapses and faithlessness of church members and Christians. Here then is the power of a godly, faithful life; it is a flesh and blood syllogism that cannot be denied or successfully answered. Men first go down before it, then rise up under it, and start for Christ and heaven through its influence.

A milepost on a lonely road or broad uninhabited prairie is a powerful and welcome preacher. Thousands of travelers study its lettered face, its simple direction and pointing finger, and with relieved minds and hearts press on with assurance and courage.

True Christians are such mileposts. God plants them where they are most needed and bids them point others to the Lamb of God, to duty and to heaven. Men come up to us, study the character, scan the face, listen to our words, and observe the pointings of our life. Happy are we and well is it for the world if we point right. And faithfulness does give the right direction.

Surely it is blessed to feel that discouraged, bewildered and lost men have in our own steadfastness and Christlikeness read the way to truth and heaven, and pressed onward with new strength and hope in life, to find themselves ultimately in heaven. We read once of a road signboard that had been twisted around either by a storm or a human hand; and pointing wrong it was the means for quite a while of confusing, belating and losing travelers who did not know the road well.

Unfaithfulness is a twisted human signboard, pointing wrong and leading men to sin and ruin. Faithfulness says, "To heaven: this is the way, walk ye in it." As a result thousands will rise up and call such a man blessed in the day of judgment.

Finally, we behold this life faithfulness finishing its work here and entering upon eternal reward.



There is something very beautiful and affecting in the closing hours and scenes of a true servant of God. The world is eager to know what he said and did in the last moments of life, and such words and deeds are treasured as a rich legacy.

The record is that the godly died well. The battle was long, but the victory was glorious. The journey was full of besetments, difficulties and enemies, but the homecoming and arrival was blessed. These scenes are triumphant from the deathbed side of the question, but what must be the view on the heavenward side?

A preacher said that he once stood in the Union Depot of one of our great cities and watched the trains come in from every part of the country. The bulletin board in front of the office announced in lines of white chalk that No. 1 or 2 or 3 or 4 were "On Time"; and at the very moment there would come the long train rushing in. The locomotive was dusty, smoky, grimy, sprinkled with snow or splashed with mud, and stood panting like a thing of life after its long run of hundreds of miles through day and night, through all kinds of weather and all kinds of country. But it had brought in safely a dozen coaches loaded with hundreds of precious lives and it was "on time."

A couple of years ago in the city of New York a steamer was overdue. The wharf and pier head for several days was crowded with an anxious throng who peered through the mist on the bay for a sign of the home return. At last the telegraph announced that she had been sighted at sea! A later despatch said she was in the Narrows and nearing the harbor. After a while all eyes saw her slowly steaming towards her moorings. She had been in the grasp of several dreadful storms, her rigging was covered with ice, her boats had been swept away, one engine had broken down, and her pumps were going. But in spite of all she had fought her way through the hurricane, mounted ten thousand billows, kept up and afloat, and came in at last with five hundred passengers and a valuable cargo, which she landed all safe and sound at her home wharf, amid the playing of a brass band, the boom of a welcoming cannon and the shouts and huzzas of a great crowd on the shore. Battered and weatherbeaten as she appeared, yet was she more beautiful and inspiring to the eye, and was given a heartier reception

than if she had been fluttering with ribbons and flowers and figuring for some holiday occasion.

So the faithful enter Heaven. We see them start off here, and they see them come in over yonder. We mark them last in the Narrows of Death as they disappear under the horizon of Time moving out toward the vast open sea of Eternity. But the angels and the redeemed above see them entering the Port of Glory, sweeping up to the pier heads of everlasting light, and anchoring by the golden paved City.

The more dreadful the storms they encountered, the more fearful the perils passed, the longer the voyage, the more glorious will be the landing of the faithful life. What if these servants of God have been struck at, beat, beset, stripped and temporarily hurt and afflicted in the long, long voyage of life? But they sailed through and over all, and the very marks of suffering, the signs of sorrow, the effect of trials and losses and conflicts by the way, will be to heavenly eyes as scars are to the soldier, rents in a battle flag, and therefore badges of glory.

Surely if the news of an approaching ship which has crossed an ocean will draw a throng to behold and welcome it in, then who doubts that a multitude will gather to see a faithful human life come sweeping into heaven after crossing such an ocean as time, and meeting with such storms as blow over its broad, billowy expanse? Sighted away out in the offing, there is a glad rush in the spirit world to welcome the new arrival. A few on earth bend in tears over the deathbed to see the loved one go off, but a great throng in heaven gather with smiling faces, waving hands and outstretched arms to welcome that same redeemed one in.

As we meditate upon this homecoming of the soul, we do not wonder that one inspired should have cried, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and may my last end be like his."

*“Oh, what singing, oh, what shouting,  
When the ships come sailing home;  
They have stood the mighty tempests,  
They have crossed the ocean’s foam;*

*They have passed o’er stormy billows,  
But they now have gained the shore,  
The Anchor’s cast,  
They’re home at last,  
The voyage is safely o’er.”*

# CHAPTER 25

## THE STANDING BLESSING

SIN is properly represented as a fall. The sinful life is not a succession of falls, for the man has not gotten up anywhere to fall from. The whole nature and life is in the mud.

The call of the Gospel to such an individual is to “arise and stand on thy feet.” This was a frequent command with the Savior when on earth, and is so still. The plan of redemption is that men should arise and stay up after having arisen; that there should be no return to the wallowing in the mire. Of course there is provision made for the man overtaken in a fault, or betrayed into some kind of sin. But still the idea is to lift a man up, keep him up, and keep him going under any and all circumstances.

This is possible in a complete salvation. Not all however know the fullness of the Gospel, and so the world contemplates with surprise and amusement a life called the Christian life made up of an unending series of stumblings and fallings.

It is true that religious stumblers claim daily or annual recoveries, but there is no question that damage is done the soul by such a life, and grievous harm to the cause of Christ in the world.

The blessed proclamation now being heard all over the land is that God has a grace which will keep us from falling, and present us spotless before Him; that with the reception of the baptism of the Holy Ghost we enter upon this experience; that there is a standing blessing.

Paul is clear about this grace in Romans 5:1-5, showing the separateness and distinctiveness of the two works, the superiority of the second over the first, and stating that with the second divine work, “we stand.”

It is certainly very blessed to come into an experience where we feel settled, grounded and fixed, and also realize that we can continue in that condition. We know when we reach this state, just as we knew when we

were “down,” and later on that we were “getting up and going down,” and now still later that we have reached the standing grace and ceased to fall. Of the three states how much more desirable is the last than the two former.

We cannot better describe this experience than by adhering to the word “stand” as used by the apostle. It will be found to cover the case.

First, we stand within.

By this we mean that the soul has an established feeling. Certain old-time fluctuations have departed. The heart is fixed. There is a sweet consciousness of being upheld by an invisible but omnipotent hand.

The writer recalls a time when his heart would again and again droop as low in his body as physical laws would allow; and some days when it would defy such law and seemed to be where really it could not be, in startling nearness to the lowermost front button on the dress coat.

Something since then has occurred to counteract that tendency, and hold the spirits up. Loads and burdens are still flung upon the soul, but there is all inward steadiness, and the heart refuses to sink into the old quagmires of despondency and despair.

Then we stand without.

We refer here to the failure of outward pressure to put the man and his work down.

Then attacks may come from hell, or originate in strange and unexpected places on earth. Christ speaks not only of the hatred of the world for His people, but of the opposition of the synagogue, and the division and enmity of one’s own household. But it matters not if there is a blessing which will give victory to the soul, no matter who the foe is, and what that adversary says and does.

Men will be astonished that you do not go down. You may be surprised yourself. But as time rolls by you will realize, and your opposers will discover, that they have a hopeless task on hand. God has said you shall stand, and stand you will. Your adversaries of hell and earth might as well

pack their artillery, sound the cavalry recall, and retire the infantry to winter quarters, — you will not go down under their attacks.

This does not mean that you will not be affected by these assaults. For while in the flesh, with human sensibilities, there will be certain natural pangs of mind, heart and body from which there is no escape. Still, you will not go down.

Others may fall away, as they witness the battle and observe the stones and arrows fly; but you will not fall. The promise is that you shall stand.

We have a friend who has had several Conference trials, and numbers of violent assaults made upon him by press and tongue, in private and public, since he received the blessing of sanctification. The influence brought to bear against him was sufficient, according to human judgment, to have crushed him; but the facts are that he did not go down. Most of those who struck at him are in their graves, while he is still at work for God and rejoicing in the keeping power of the Savior.

We have watched a wagon go over corn in a field. The stalks bowed as the heavy axletree swept over them, but when the vehicle passed on, the stalks arose and began to give their cheerful rustling experience to the morning wind that blew upon them. It certainly must be very surprising and provoking to certain powers that have expended energies of a crushing nature upon an individual or religious movement, to find that just as soon as their creaking axletree of authority passed on to other parts of the fields the person or thing which had been run over and was supposed to be flattened out and lying meekly in the dust, was up again and acting as if no juggernaut had ever been along, much less rolled over them.

Third, we can stand alone.

Not all can do this. The observer of character must have perceived that many people must and can only run in companies. In revivals and reformatory movements, the first instinct is to look around and see who is on one side and who on the other. The sight of a minority, even though it be for the truth, settles it with many not to take part. Moreover, if duty calls them to stand at a post alone, the disposition is to forsake it and surrender what it stood for.

We know of a young soldier in the Civil War who was stationed as a vidette on the picket post. He stood the loneliness well for the first half hour, but as he listened to the sighing of the vast pine forest around him, heard the hooting of distant owls, and caught the lonesome cry of the whip-poor-will, his spirits sank, and disgusted with the whole military life he forsook his stand, crept back to camp and stole into bed. But for the demoralization attending the breaking up of the Confederate army he would have been shot.

The writer has often thought of this young soldier as an apt illustration of the class of people of whom we are now speaking. They cannot stand alone. They must have company. They only work with majorities. The instant they find themselves alone, hear the hooting of the opposition, and the whip-poor-will cry of discouragement, they become heartsick, panic struck, and rush for home and strict retirement. They want cover from all publicity and especially attack and persecution.

Thank God there is a blessing which enables a man to stand alone, whether in the family, social circle, church or community. Paul felt it as he preached on the stairs near the castle, with a howling mob below clamoring for his death. Peter realized it as he proclaimed the Gospel in the face of threats, scourges of the Sanhedrin and the prisons of Jerusalem.

It is as deeply and sweetly felt today as then, by men and women who are being passed through every kind of test for the sake of the truth they believe in and the experience which they enjoy.

Fourth, we stand on the promises.

God has many utterances for our good. They are called his promises. Some people seem ignorant of them. Others test them awhile and go to doubting. Still others plant themselves on these words and cannot be dislodged. They believe God is faithful who has promised, and will redeem His word in all things. So they abide for days, months and years longing for their fulfillment.

There are persons who are amazed at their simple faith; but they know in whom they have believed. They tested the Lord in justification, and He failed not. In trouble, and He was true. Then reading the promises that He

would purify and fill them, they stood again on the Word, and after hours or days of waiting, the fire fell and the blessing came.

With the coming of this grace of which we write is born the power to stand on the promises, a willingness to wait, and a serene confidence that God will verify and fulfill every word He has uttered to the last jot or tittle.

So a spiritual picture of such people would represent them with quiet, sunny faces, happy looking eyes, and praiseful lips standing on a great rock called the Word of God.

Fifth, we will stand on the Sea of Glass.

John said he saw such a company of the redeemed in the skies. As we read his description of them, victorious over the Beast which is the world, and delivered from his marks, and singing two songs, one of Moses and the other of the Lamb, and standing on a Sea of Glass mingled with fire, we seem to recognize the company.

The fact of their carrying harps in their hands throws still further light, revealing as it does a joyful praising triumphant nature. Like the harps they bore, they had been strung up, and next tuned up, and the instrument was made to be a type of the inward melody and harmony which filled them.

It also occurred to the writer that this company standing on the Sea of Glass could not have been a falling crowd of Christians on earth. That on the contrary they were so accustomed to stand for God and the truth on the world below, that it was the first and most natural position for them to take when they entered heaven. The very attitude declared who they were, and what they had been. Moreover, the Sea of Glass, and the fire flashing through its serene depths, symbolized the pure heart and the life filled with the flames of the Holy One, which enabled them to stand at last before God with harps in their hands, and recognized victors in heaven.

May the readers who are weary of the life prostrate in sin, or sick of the up and down career they have been having since their conversion, determine never to rest until they obtain that deeper work of grace called the baptism with the Holy Ghost. The inward result will be purity and



joy; the outward manifestation a life of holiness and victory; but the reward in the skies will be beyond the highest conception of the mind, and above the most ardent hope of the heart.

May we all learn to stand for God here, that we may stand upon the Sea of Glass in eternity.

# CHAPTER 26

## A SOLDIER OF THE CROSS

THE apostle had illustrated the Christian life by the Grecian race and wrestling match, and now describes it again under a military figure. It is a forcible illustration and as true as it is powerful. Among other things he says we must “endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” We draw several reflections from his statement.

**First**, the Christian life is a warfare.

There never was such a war as the one now raging on this planet. We trust there never will be such another. Look at it from any standpoint and its magnitude impresses. Some wars of earth have lasted thirty years but this one has been raging for sixty centuries. It really seems to have begun before that. Some wars cover in their progress several nations or countries before ending, but this has penetrated three worlds to our certain knowledge and may have gone into more. It is certain that one great battle had been fought in another planet before the struggle began on earth in Eden.

As for the forces engaged in earthly battles, the number rarely exceeds two hundred thousand; but in the war we speak of every angel in the skies or in hell, and every being born in the world has to take and does take a part. Whether men admit it or not, all are fighting on one side or the other.

If you notice the questions and interests involved in this conflict, it is not such things as a few cities or strips of country changing hands, with indemnities of several millions of dollars, but the issue is life or death, salvation or damnation, eternal happiness or everlasting misery, heaven or hell.

To many Christians this war is both internal and external, both a civil and foreign conflict. But there is a blessing which transfers the battle altogether to the outside. This is a blessed relief, but still the war rages there, and so there is need for sleepless vigilance, unbroken faith and heavenly courage.

**Second**, in this war God calls for volunteers.

Such is the character of this combat, and such the nature of the combatants, that there can be no conscripting or drafting into service. Force is not allowed and indeed cannot be. Christ never compels a man to follow Him. God never drives people into heaven. We must be volunteers; we must prefer to follow the Lord and choose Him and His side above all others. The day of judgment and the system of rewards and punishment are based on the fact of man's freedom of moral choice or power to enlist on either side. Men find themselves in that place in eternity for which they prepared themselves. No one is driven into hell or heaven. Men elect their future eternal abode. The volunteer system is beheld on both sides.

**Third**, in this war there can be no substitute.

In the Civil War in this country some men paid another man to go to the front in their place. He was a substitute and stood, marched and sometimes was shot down in his employer's place.

In the conflict between heaven and hell, where the earth is the main battle ground, there can be no such thing, although it is tried, as many of us see. Some men make their wives a substitute, others their preachers and priests. We have seen still others give their money to the church, but ask to be excused from the regular service of a soldier of Jesus Christ. But this is impossible. We are to be judged and rewarded for what we do. We are told to present our bodies, not another's. We are exhorted to do with our might what our hands find to do.

A substitute can do this for himself but not for another also. The wife must stand for herself alone; the preacher will be examined on his own merits. There is no overplus of faithfulness, or work of supererogation that can be transferred from one human account to another.

The fact that stares us in the face in the Bible is that every one must shoulder a gun and buckle on a knapsack and march to the front. As it was written of Gideon's band, it must be said of us, that "every man stood in his own place."

**Fourth**, in this war there should be no furlough.

In the armies of the nations the leave of absence for days or weeks is nothing uncommon. Sickness, fear of a coming battle, business matters, and a longing for home and loved ones, are the reasons for which furloughs are requested and granted.

In the Christian warfare furloughs are not to be allowed. Sometimes men take them, and then it is not properly a leave of absence but a desertion.

In the moral conflict or character war the battle is always on. Sudden assaults of still more terrible character may take place at any moment. Every one must be at the front. No one can be spared. Christians like the faithful Nehemiah and his company work and sleep and eat with their swords buckled to their sides and spears in their hands.

The fact that a tired Christian worker takes a few weeks in the mountains or at the seaside for recuperation does not put him out of the battle line necessarily. The hosts of hell are often in the sick chamber, and a man is called to be true to God and fight for heaven in the quiet summer retreat as well as in the noise and rush of a great protracted meeting in a large city.

The furlough system we strike at is when the man retires from Christian service. He lets down. He excuses himself from duty. He forsakes church, prayer meeting, Sunday-school, and class meeting. He gives up family prayer, religious reading and spiritual conversation. He has gone to the rear.

Some cessation of Christian work through lack of physical strength is right, and is not a furlough as we have just shown. There is another forsaking of spiritual labor that is reprehensible, and which is really the obtaining of a furlough for fear of a coming battle. Conscience will help the reader here. There are many vacant pulpits and empty churches, where the explanation is found in the furlough. Preacher and people all in excellent health have gone off for a vacation. On the door of one of these large forsaken city churches was a placard with the words "Closed For The Summer."

A mischievous person removed it one night and hung another with a picture of a sneering devil, and the words underneath, "I Take No Vacation."

**Fifth**, in this war there can be no discharge until death.

We enlist for a lifetime. The Spirit of God mustered us in, and death alone is allowed to muster us out. We get our discharge when struck by the “last enemy,” the breath leaves the body, and the sword falls from the hand. Men may desert the ranks before then, but there is a great difference between a deserter and a soldier honorably discharged from service.

The war lasts through our lifetime. Some of the fiercest battles will take place in ripe manhood and even in old age. It was thus with David, Solomon, Gideon, Jephtha, Samson and others in the Bible; and so it will be with many reading these lines now.

You are in peril still although you have won a thousand victories. “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” You may yet go down in full sight of heaven. Keep the armor bright, do not lay aside the shield of faith and sword of the Spirit until death knock them from your grasp.

Some men in our late Civil War entered for nine months, two years, etc. But in this war we enlist for a lifetime. Some people seem to go into the conflict for a few months, and some for a few years, and some quite a number of years, and yet give up at last before the final victory and discharge. The church is filled today with people who entered for six and twelve months; for one, two and three years. They got tired, discouraged, and discharged themselves, or in other words deserted.

If Paul had given up in the Mediterranean storm when he was clinging to the wreck of the old corn ship, he would have lost all he had gained in previous years of suffering, labor, achievement and victory.

If Peter had grown discouraged by his treatment in prison and on the cross, vain for him would have been all his early battles and triumphs for the cross. Vain the weeping in the night, and the restoration on the banks of lake Galilee. Vain everything.

To be faithful fifty years, and unfaithful to God on the fifty-first year, is to go down at last. This is like Solomon serving God in his prime, and in later life losing his glory and sinking out of sight among the false gods of his thousand wives and concubines. Such a spectacle is like that of a ship that had sailed all around the world, had weathered scores of storms and

escaped hundreds of dangers, and was now in full sight of the home port on the English coast, when suddenly it struck a hidden rock and went down into the deep before the horrified gaze of thousands of people.

Hear the word, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

**Sixth**, in this war we may expect hardness.

In our late Civil War many went to the front expecting a kind of picnic and holiday. They were sorely undeceived when real service began, and in marching, countermarching, trench digging, exposure to the elements, and a ghastly rain of shot and shell they found out in mud and blood, in hunger, exhaustion and wounds what war meant. Hundreds came back home to return no more to the front. The true and tried remained.

There is a hardness in the Christian life. The real warfare is not seen in skin deep union revival services, talkative preachers’ meetings, and great conventions of a social order, where hundreds of delegates skim through the land in coaches gayly festooned with streamers. This is ecclesiastical hobnobbing and picnicking.

There is a hardness in the true soldier life of our religion, known to comparatively few, made up of self-denial, cross-bearing, loneliness, persecution, hand to hand work with sinners and protracted and exhausting labors in the gospel.

The disciples were in the war. So were Luther, Wesley, and their followers. The Salvation Army is in the war, they are enduring hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. The Holiness Movement is in the war, sin is denounced, hell is attacked, and sinners are being saved.

It is sadly amusing to look at some churches today which think they are in the war, when they are simply on dress parade. They think they are marching when they are simply “marking time.” Some of them in their Sunday services remind me of “sham battles” on land, and “mimic fights” on the sea. The preacher shoots from the pulpit, the choir returns a volley from the loft, the people sit in rows listening for an hour, and then go home, and they call this war. Not a sinner has been slain, not a mourner at the altar, not a conversion in the whole service on Sabbath, and perhaps

the entire year. Marking time, sham fighting, dress parade, playing at Christianity.

We recall what was once said in our hearing of a prominent minister in a certain denomination who was a very eloquent and popular divine. It was said of him that he never struck an evil from his pulpit that had not been dead two thousand years. No wonder he was popular. If men want to know what war is in the spiritual life, let him follow Christ as he prayed all night and preached all day, besieged with hating Pharisees, who tried to entrap him in his words. See Him sweating blood in the garden, forsaken by many of His followers, and casting out devils from men and boys who foamed at the mouth and wallowed on the ground before Him. See Him assaulted by all the powers of hell, and the forces of a dead backslidden church. See him calm, loving, patient, faithful, and fearless under it all, pressing on the way of duty, ridiculed, despised and rejected to the last. Here was war indeed. What a contrast to what we see going on in much of the church life today.

Truly it is well for the truth's sake that the hymn "Am I a soldier of the Cross?" is in the interrogative form. Certainly it would never do for the great body of church members, as we see them today, to sing it affirmatively, "I am a soldier of the Cross!" Lord help us.

**Seventh**, in this war we do not always know the plans of our Captain.

There is a great difference of opinion among Christian soldiers as to some things our blessed Leader is going to do. They are divided in view as to whether the world is to grow better or worse before Jesus comes. They dispute among themselves whether Christ is to appear before the millennium or after the millennium. Whether He will come to a straightened up world, or come and straighten it up Himself.

In some quarters the altercation is "so sharp between Paul and Barnabas" that we venture to express a hope that the brethren will not get to blows. Thus far they have simply belabored each other with tongues, and stabbed each other with pens; while devils looked on and laughed with infernal glee. The columns of some papers remind me of rows of bayonets and actually set for the friends of Christ who happen to differ in opinion about the return of Christ. It is impossible to walk amid the editorial jottings,

without being reminded of open pen-knives planted point upward for passing feet. After patiently enduring for months the jeering and sneering thrusts, the sickened heart finds itself excused at last in quietly laying such papers aside to be read no more.

The Captain has not made his plans so clear, but there is an honest difference of opinion among his soldiers. Doubtless it is best that it should be so. It would not do for the devil and bad men to understand what Christ is going to do, so the plan in the Bible concerning the future movements of the Son of God is necessarily and properly made obscure. It is safest and wisest. This obscurity creates the difference of opinion about the second coming as to its when and how and why. The very best and wisest of men are on both sides. There is Scripture for both sides. We wonder how Christians can war about it. We know for ourselves, although no premillenarianist, we would be glad if the Lord Jesus would come today. We do not see how any child of God can feel stirred up or angry over the thought of a speedily returning Christ.

**Eighth**, in this war our Captain is bound to win.

This cannot be said of any other leader, for all others are finite, and have gone down and will go down under mighty opposition and general uprisings.

But Christ has all power. Hell trembles before Him. It was nothing for Him to cast out a thousand devils with a word. Sickness skulked away from His presence, and the grave itself had to obey Him and yield up the dead. Even when he was bound, men fell down before Him; and, although spiked on the cross, His murderers vaguely felt the slumbering power in Him which He would not exercise. His very dying cry frightened them! What will they do when they hear His triumphant voice in the clouds as He comes in judgment, power and glory?

We would be frightened to death if we were on the other side, which is already doomed and will be damned, if they do not repent. Jesus is certain to win. Sinners apprehend it, devils know it, the Bible teaches it, and real Christians feel it, and rejoice in it. The triumph is already in our soul. The general sweeping victory that is to snatch the world from Satan and bad men, and fill it with millennial glory, is yet to come. But it is coming. The



kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ. Glory to God for the promise, the prophecy and the coming literal fulfillment:

*“Jesus shall reign where'er the sun  
Doth his successive journeys run  
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore  
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.”*

Amen and amen! Even so come Lord Jesus.

# CHAPTER 27

## DEPARTED BLESSINGS

IN THE Old Testament occurs a sentence which has ever impressed the writer with a peculiarly pathetic power. The words of the sentence were uttered by a disguised prophet to the king of Israel. His statement was that a man had been placed, during the battle, in his charge for safekeeping, but that he had lost him. His explanation and excuse was, "as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone."

Though they were words spoken with the ulterior purpose of entrapping the king, yet are they not the less impressive and solemnizing. They seem to find a strange echo in the heart, and voice many a dull, aching memory. The sentence would make a proper title for many a chapter in one's life, and in addition constitute the running head of the pages which follow.

The statement stands true of the loved ones of the home circle.

We have all had them. They blessed us with their presence and love for months and years. We got to thinking they were fixtures, necessary to our comfort and happiness, and insensibly they were regarded as permanent settings in our lives. Like the lamp in the hall, the piano in the parlor, the bookcase in the library, the table in the dining room, they were needed, enjoyed and therefore must remain.

It was poor reasoning, a wretched logic, indeed. It was an argument formed by the heart and built perfectly regardless of the head, and the nature of the world in which we live. We were too busy to notice the weakness of the premises we had laid down. We were very much absorbed anyhow in business or pleasure, some fancied or real great life work. One day while thus busy, there was a rush of wings and we were left stripped and alone. There was an empty chair in the home and a new grave in the cemetery.

Some one reading these lines will recall hours of unbroken silence while he was absorbed in book or newspaper and the wife, now in the tomb, sat

near, engaged in needlework, and carefully refraining from disturbing or interrupting in any way the profoundly immersed husband.

Or the recollection revives of the little boy who used to sit up with drooping eyelids way past the hour of retiring in order to see and talk with the father, who, exceedingly busy here and there with lodge, fraternity or business meeting of some kind, forgot the child, overlooked the promised chapter or story to be read or told, and came in late when the little fellow was sound asleep in bed.

Meantime the fragile wife and the loving little fellow had but few days left on earth. Death had already marked them. But the business engrossed, earth infatuated man did not dream of it, and so one day while busy here and there — they were gone.

Again the words may be applied to friends of the social circle.

It is marvelous to note how careless and spend-thrift-like the young and some other classes are in regard to that beautiful, precious, sacred thing called friendship. To a man taught by time and grace, the ruthless casting off of friends is something heart shocking. He knows the necessity of the relation. He knows that the true friend is not so easily made, and when lost not so readily regained. He also knows that friendship requires something to be retained. The Scripture is definite here, as it says: "He that hath friends must show himself friendly."

The man absorbed in himself and in his work is certain to lose friends. People as a rule are not like Pygmalion, and do not twine their affections about statues, stones and other forms of insensate matter. We have no right to expect people to cling to us and delight in us when we continually ignore their rights, tastes, feelings and happiness, and actually appear oblivious of their presence.

The ivy may entwine itself about rocks and cold grave ruins, but men and women are not ivy plants. The tendril nature is there, but it is full of human longings and wants something warm and responsive to which to cling and adhere. If chilled or cast off here or there it reaches out in other directions and finds what it wants to the amazement and suffering of the man who was too immersed, too absorbed, too self-centred to retain the friends God gave him. While busy here and there they were gone.

Still again the words apply to what is called opportunity.

There is an old saying that every man has one chance for a fortune. The Bible teaches something better in regard to salvation, happiness and usefulness. There are many chances given the soul to turn from sin, and become blessed in itself and prove a blessing to others. These chances, as they are called, are really God-given opportunities. They come in the form of books, conversations, sermons, revival services and many forms of providential dealing.

In the beginning of life they seem to be numberless, and look like they will never end. But as the years roll by, this line of migratory mercies evidently gets thinner, the flocks shrink to couples, and then to the “lone wandering one,” and finally to a single swan-like note far up in the night air, and even that is a passing sound and gives way to profound silence.

In a word, whether the soul, by long indifference and hardening itself against God, at last becomes callous and blind, unable to recognize the presence of divine and spiritual things, or whether in judgment the calls cease, the strivings end, the opportunities for salvation are withdrawn, one thing we know, that while the man was busy here and there — they were gone.

He saw the angels stop in front of his tent, heard them calling, intended to let them in before long, and with this intention went back to his pursuits and pleasures. He certainly was very much absorbed, for one day he looked in the glass and saw that he was an old man. It was now high time to call in the angels, and so, stepping to the door to do so, to his horror he found they were gone.

Opportunities do not remain leaning against the door. They look in and then pass on. The old Roman story of the Sibyl who offered her books to the king, and burned up one every time she was turned away, and so came back each time with one less, contains a most solemnizing truth. We are certain to find it so in life. In the weakening of spiritual faculties, the gradual giving us up by people once interested in us, we see the library is steadily being destroyed, the angels are disappearing under the horizon, and life’s opportunities are gone.

In addition the words may be used in regard to time, or one’s life.

To a child the tomb looks a long way off; a man or woman of forty seems quite old; and a lifetime almost limitless. On the other hand, when people reach old age the very opposite impression is produced. It seems but a little while since they were children. A man of that time of life, writing in the Scripture, says, "Our days are as a hand breadth." Another Bible verse likens the coming and going days to the flight of a shuttlecock and the disappearance of an eagle in the air.

Time, in spite of the child's view and judgment, slips away, and is gone almost before one realizes it. The man has been so busy that he failed to count the years as they fled by. He was counting other things far less important to him, though he could not be so induced to believe.

At last certain unmistakable signs thrust themselves upon him. They sat down, so to speak, in the office or bedroom and insisted on an interview. Attention was called to the shortening breath, the difficulty in seeing at night, the uncertainty in descending steps, the failure to hear many words in conversation, the curious fluttering about the heart, with now and then a strange sick, sinking sensation. The mysterious visitors bent forward, saying with united voice to the suddenly aroused and bewildered man, "You are an old man; your life is near its close; time has almost ended with you."

Now, Time does or has certain things for us. Or some things have to be done in time or they will never be done. For instance, if a man would be an accomplished linguist he must start early ere the vocal organs lose a certain flexibility. To be a first-class performer on certain musical instruments one must begin in childhood, and take advantage of that suppleness of the fingers which in the flight of years will surely be gone. It is too late to enter one of the professions at the age of fifty. It is too late to plant cotton and corn in October. Time carries away on its ebb certain blessings which can only be had in its flow.

It is wonderful how we forget this fact as well in the spiritual life as in the physical world. Not to speak of the growth, development, enlargement and discipline of the moral powers which can only come with time, what shall we say of usefulness, when the period of usefulness has ended? How can a man who repents and is saved on his deathbed give a life to God which has already been spent in the service of the devil?

And so it comes to pass all over the land, that men and women busy in great or little things, some absorbed in large enterprises, others equally immersed in trifles, yet both neglecting the soul and salvation, wake up at last with an awful start to find that their day is ended, the night has come when no man can work, the hearse is at the door, and in a few hours their marble tombstone will be glistening in the starlight. While they were worrying over the price of stocks, the cut of clothes, the tint of ribbons, or some new rules affecting table manners, or social etiquette, behold, time with all its immeasurable, unspeakable privileges and possibilities has passed away and is gone.

A final application of the words may refer to Christ.

Some there are who, reading these lines, will recall the day and the moment itself, when Christ entered their hearts and lives. what a beauty and rest came into the soul, and how the world itself looked transformed. But by and by you became very busy. It may have been over secular works or even church work. Anyhow the eye and attention were more and more removed from the Savior.

Abiding within the soul Jesus saw how often He was unconsulted. There would be hours that not a glance would be cast toward, or a thought bestowed upon Him. So He arose and left, first lingering at the door and then finally disappearing out of the life.

This dreadful calamity takes places with a number who fail to observe it at the time. They are so engrossed, are chairmen of so many committees, have so many boards to meet, have so much to do at the store, so many engagements on hand, that Christ is gone before they know it.

Several preachers and a number of laymen have confessed to the writer that they had lost Christ and knew not how it happened. The explanation is in the words, "As they servant was busy here and there — He was gone."

Whether the Savior ceases to knock, and walks away from the door of the sinner's heart; or whether He arises and goes out of the soul and life of the Christian; in either case the woe is one of unspeakable magnitude; He the light, life, joy and salvation of the spirit is gone.

Better that every one and everything else go than Christ. Better that business should be dropped than Jesus given up. Better to have no business at all than to lose the Lord.

It must be a fearful experience to suddenly find a same great sorrow, in old age, or in death, that Christ is not in the life. What a crushing thought in the dying hour, what an everlasting pang in hell will be the memory that the poor, perishing things of this short life were allowed to separate the soul from Christ, that “while we were busy here and there He was gone.”

May God save the reader, the writer and all others from the folly, the irremediable ruin, the undying regret and everlasting despair which are certain to come upon and fill the soul that has lost Christ.

## CHAPTER 28

### “LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED”

THE words of the title of this chapter were among the last the Savior uttered to His disciples. Impressive and precious as all last words are, they were also remarkable in view of the circumstances which at that very moment surrounded the speaker and those to whom He was talking. Not only trouble was in the air, but death itself was approaching that little band.

In preaching the truth Christ had, so to speak, parted with His life. He was a doomed man. The high church circles whom He had unmasked and offended had already determined that He should die, and in the shape of a mixed mob was on the way then to arrest, give Him a mock trial, scourge, and crucify Him. And yet, knowing that all these things were coming to pass, that He would be slain, that the little flock before Him would be scattered and afterwards, at different times and places, be killed forsaken, yet in view of all this He said, “Let not your heart be troubled.”

There was nothing spoken to the disciples, but is also meant for any and all believers. These gracious words are for us today as truly as they were for Christ’s followers two thousand years ago. There were reasons for their utterance then, and these reasons are the same and just as weighty now. To any thoughtful Christian, several facts arise in the mind why God’s people should not carry in their breasts a troubled heart.

One is that such distress unfits the child of God for Christian service.

There is something about the cherishing or brooding over sorrow that paralyzes all religious power and activity. The heart freezes, the mind becomes dull, the tongue stiffens, the hands and feet feel like lead, and the life fairly stagnates. Needed as a helper and consoler in the world, here is a man demanding help and consolation for himself. It is amazing to note the number of Christians in the church who are being coddled, nursed, petted, patted and sugar-plummed on their way to heaven. Absorbed in their own



griefs and cares, they demand our attention that should be given to the unconverted, and fail to consider the surrounding woes of men, because buried in their own temporal and spiritual trials.

A second reason arising in the mind as to why the Christian should not be troubled, is that such a spirit and life but poorly recommend the gospel we profess. If Christ and His salvation are what the church declares they are, what room can there be for gloom and despair? The Christian ought to be the happiest man in the world. The Lord has promised us not only the life that now is, but that which is to come, and adds that all things shall work together for our good. The sight then of a black-dressed, crepe-veiled, long-faced, mournful-tongued, heavy-hearted, deep-sighing set of people calling themselves Christians is enough to set every worldly observer against the religion we profess.

A third reason against spiritual gloom is that cherishing a troubled heart is a reflection on God's love and faithfulness.

We once read of a woman who had lost her husband. For hours at a time she would sit in her chair robed in black and sigh and weep. Her little five-year-old boy was profoundly puzzled as well as distressed, and approaching her one day, he asked:

“Mamma, is God dead?”

The Spirit used the question of the child to arouse the woman, and show her the folly, unbelief, ingratitude and even sinfulness of such a course. She instantly wiped her eyes and said to herself, “I have acted as if there was no God, but from this moment I will cease to doubt and repine, and will believe, obey and honor Him in all things.” God has promised to see us through, His word has gone forth, and yet the disconsolate Christian acts as if either the promise had not been made, or if given would never be fulfilled.

When Payson was dying he said that if he had seen in life what he now beheld from his death pillow, the faithfulness of God at all times and in all things, he would have been saved a world of worry and needless pain. In other words, God is faithful, was so to Payson, will be so to us, and why then should we be troubled?

Strange to say, while the above three reasons seem to be full of force and commend themselves for their excellence, yet they are not the reasons Christ gave the disciples that last sorrowful night of His life, why they should not be troubled.

If the reader will turn to the fourteenth chapter of John and read, he will find three facts mentioned by the Savior which, if received by His followers, should banish every particle of heavy-heartedness and fill them with joy and comfort

One statement is, "I go to prepare a place for you."

The reader will recall that a similar speech has often been made by a husband to his wife. Compelled to leave her for distant lands, to be gone for months and years, he cheers her with the words that he is going to prepare a home for her.

It is wonderful how household discomforts and disagreeable surroundings can be endured by a woman who realizes at the same time that a beautiful home is going up for her in a lovely spot in some distant state. In fancy she sees the broad porch and lofty walls gleaming through encircling trees and shrubbery, and bears with a smile the cramped and narrow quarters which she now recognizes to be but a temporary inconvenience and affliction.

In like manner Jesus would cheer us with the thought that although absent in body from us, yet is he busily employed for our future comfort. He is preparing a place for us in the Kingdom of Glory.

What this fully means, who is able to say? but that it means something we cannot question. And what a thrill it brings us in the midst of all the hardships and trials of the present life to know that the Savior is having a heavenly mansion built and fitted for us.

The very absence of Christ takes on a new and beautiful meaning with the thrilling thought, "He is absent for my sake. He is working for me up yonder while I live for Him down here."

A second statement of Christ as a ground for our not being troubled is seen in the words, "I will not leave you comfortless."

The idea is that though far away in heaven, we are not forgotten. Jesus is mindful of us and so we shall not be overlooked. We shall be remembered and comforted all through the long absence of the heavenly Bridegroom in ways unmistakable and blessed.

If the reader goes back to the picture we drew of the man leaving his wife to prepare her a home, he will see that this additional statement still agrees with the figure. The absent husband with all his activity in the distant state or country does not forget the wife left behind. Constant letters and frequent remittances are tantamount to saying, "I will not leave you comfortless." And as the drafts or bank bills fall into the lap of the wife, as her moistened eyes read with eager interest the lines of love and devotion which tell her how she is remembered and cherished in that far away heart, one can see that she has not been left comfortless.

In still tenderer and more powerful ways Jesus consoles those whom he loves while separated from them. Although there is a great day of reward coming for them and a time of glorious entrance into the city of God by them, yet the Savior knows how the heart droops and sickens under sore experiences along life's road, and the weary flight of years which must roll by before heaven begins, so the faithful soul left on earth is kept in astonishment and delight at the frequent and heavy remittances of grace, and thrilled over blessed communications sent fresh from the skies. Verses and chapters of the Bible are lighted up with new meaning, the closet of prayer illumined with divine glory, the church becomes a door of heaven, the sermon a letter from God, while in holy reading by day and meditation in the wakeful night the Holy Ghost takes the things of Christ and shows them to the raptured soul, and fills the spirit with a mingled rest and joy utterly unknown to the world.

The third statement made by Christ why the heart of His follower should not be troubled is in the words, "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also."

The reader will observe that this third thought is still in harmony with the figure of the husband who departs for the sake of the wife to a distant country. While he goes, he proposes to return, and the day comes when, the house being finished, his plan accomplished, he does return and this time for his wife whom he brings to the new home.

This is the bright hope and joyful assurance of Christianity. The Lord is coming back to earth, and coming for His people. The Bridegroom, having prepared the mansion in the skies, is going to return for His bride and bear her away through the skies to the kingdom of Glory.

Some persons are looking for the coming before the millennium, and some after, but all will agree that Jesus is going to return and will come back for those He loves who have been separated from Him so long, and have been waiting with longing hearts for His appearance.

We have seen the homecoming of a long absent husband and father, and it was so tender and rapturous that a heart of stone would have melted at the sight. The aged father and mother, the wife, the little prattling ones, the older sons and daughters, the family servants, even the faithful house dog, were all there to welcome the solitary approaching figure who was so much to all in love, present comfort and future welfare.

But take the scene with all its smiles, tears, sobs, kisses, embraces and outcries, and multiply it ten thousandfold over, and what have we to compare with the return of Christ for His Church when He comes to receive her to Himself, introduce her into her beautiful heavenly home, and sit her down forever at His side!

No pen, pencil nor brush, no voice nor instrument of music can ever bring forth in their respective ways, on page or canvas, in band or orchestra, an infinitesimal fraction of the joy and rapture that shall be seen and heard in that hour. The long-expected Bride of Christ is brought home. The Church is at rest from all her toils and trials. The people of God, with the tears wiped from every face, with garments of light upon their bodies, and everlasting joy in their souls, are led into their final and eternal home and resting place by the hand of the Son of God Himself. What song can be sung, what words could be spoken over such a marvelous scene and hour but the song of Moses and the Lamb, and the cries, "Allelujah!" "Salvation to our God and to the Lamb!" — the very words which the Scripture declares shall be uttered.

May every discouraged, sorrowful Christian who reads this chapter look up and be comforted forevermore! How can we be troubled any longer when we have such statements made to us by the Savior, "I go to prepare

a place for you;” better still, “I will not leave you comfortless;” and best of all, “I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also?”

Truly, the weary soul will one day end its long flight over the billowy stretch of years, and fluttering into the Ark above will nestle in the bosom of the Redeemer. The soldier of the cross will be discharged finally from the greatest war of the universe, and hanging up his sword on the walls of his celestial abode, will know an everlasting peace. The traveler for heaven foot-sore and weary will come at last to the door of his tomb, step through, and instantly find himself at home, in the midst of light and love, to go out no more forever. The bride long expected and desired will reach the mansion prepared for her by divine hands and be met by the Bridegroom Himself. Leaning upon His arm, she will be escorted through shining ranks of angels and archangels, into halls and apartments of indescribable glory and splendor, while the very pillars and arches of the universe will resound and tremble with the songs and acclamations that shall ascend from the golden-paved city.

In a word all will be well with God’s people by and by. It is well now for that matter; but there is a home coming and a crowning day awaiting us in the skies, so sweet and blissful and blessed, that the bare thought makes us willing to bear the toil, endure the pain, and gladly suffer the loss of all things that we may win Christ and be found with Him in such a world forever.

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