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A model Christian

Theodore Ledyard
Cuyler

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A MODEL CHRISTIAN

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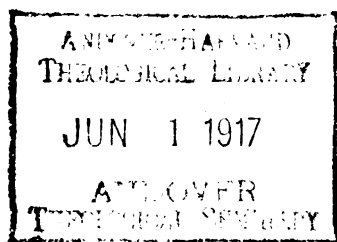
A MODEL CHRISTIAN

BY
THEODORE LEDYARD CUYLER, D.D., LL.D.

PHILADELPHIA
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I

A MODEL CHRISTIAN

A MODEL CHRISTIAN

I

BARNABAS—A MODEL CHRISTIAN

“For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith.”—ACTS xi. 24.

PETER's vision at Joppa introduced a new era in human history. To the fisherman-apostle, as he kneeled at his noontide hour of devotion, was revealed the glorious truth that God is no respecter of persons. This was not only the “gospel of democracy” for every land, leveling up all castes and classes into a common brotherhood before God; it was a gospel of foreign missions which proclaimed that the Gentile had as good a right to the offer of eternal life as the children of Abraham. That vision of Peter's opened the way to the evangelization of western Asia as Paul's vision at Troas opened the way to the evangelization of Europe.

The persecution which arose on account of the

heroic martyr Stephen "scattered abroad" many new converts from Jerusalem, even as a sturdy blow of the blacksmith's sledge scatters the fiery sparks from the anvil. Some of them enter the maritime coast of Phœnicia; some of them cross over to the luxurious and licentious island of Cyprus; others move northward to the superb city of Antioch. These early pioneers of the cross were not commissioned by "boards" or other missionary organizations. The book of The Acts is mainly the record of individual efforts for the conversion of individual souls. The souls thus evangelized were in great centers of influence like Jerusalem, Ephesus, Rome, and Antioch.

The American tourist who visits now the shrunken and miserable hamlet called *Antâkia* can form but a poor conception of what Antioch was in the days of its flashing splendor. It was the queen of the Orient, the capital of Syria, the third city in influence on the globe. Its population was about equal to that of Chicago to-day. Its natural situation was commanding, with the river Orontes flowing past it and the magnificent mountains of Lebanon towering above its walls. Grecian art and Roman wealth had enriched it with gorgeous temples of heathen dei-

ties, with sumptuous baths and theaters, with elegant villas upon its hillsides, and with expensive aqueducts carried across its adjacent plains. No capital outside of Rome was more imperial in its splendor or more corrupted by wealth and sensuality.

Among the mixed population of this Oriental mart of commerce were many Greeks. Some commentators insist that the word "Grecian" in the twentieth verse describes Hellenistic Jews. But as we are told in the previous verse that some of the gospel itinerants "preached the word to none but the Jews only," it is probable that this verse announces that the good news of salvation had begun to be offered to the Gentiles.

An immediate blessing followed. The omnipotent "hand of the Lord was with" these earnest preachers of the truth. The instruments were human, the power was divine. We pastors and Sunday-school teachers can do nothing without God, and it is equally true that in our departments God will do nothing without us. When God's hand and man's hand combine, then comes the spiritual harvest. The results which followed this pioneer preaching work at Antioch were of an admirable type, and a model of the best modern revivals. We are told that "a great num-

ber believed, and turned unto the Lord." Observe this process: the inward must precede the outward—the root must be planted before we can expect the tree. The root here is heart-faith in the crucified Jesus. As the result of this internal acceptance of Christ there was a conversion or "turning" from a life of sin to a life of serving Christ. When the hand of the Holy Spirit is laid on the helm the whole vessel swings round on its keel and "heads" in the opposite direction. We have no doubt that this fleet of new converts bore the colors of an open confession of Christ at the mast-head, and were all ready to go into action for Him at once. True conversion demands prompt confession and union with the church. As soon as a lamp is lighted let it straightway shine.

Good news flies fast. Jerusalem was the headquarters of Christianity, and what was going on at Antioch could not be kept long from the mother church. According to the literal rendering of the twenty-second verse, "the tidings concerning these things" (or converts) "was heard with the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem." In the judgment of that parent church the important work that had opened at Antioch demanded a master workman.

The man whom the Jerusalem church selected to be the city missionary at Antioch, and afterwards the foreign missionary to Cyprus, has never received the high honor through after ages to which he is fairly entitled. In our humble judgment he stands next to Paul, as the second most remarkable character who is presented to us in the roll of converts after the days of Pentecost. A gratuitous slur has been cast upon him because he afterwards had a "contention" with Paul about certain matters; but may it not be possible that in that contention Paul was as much in the wrong as Barnabas? Good men may easily differ and often dispute warmly about the best method of prosecuting God's work.

The original name of the gospel preacher who was delegated from Jerusalem was Joses or Joseph. As the brightest light is kindled on a point that comes out of a bed of charcoal, so this light-bearer of the gospel came out of one of the darkest regions of debauchery and idolatry. He was a native of the island of Cyprus. He was of a Levitical descent, but his country was proverbial for its licentiousness, and the name of "Cyprian" is to this day applied to one who has sinned away the purity of her womanhood. But as the sun can attract heavenward pure particles

of moisture from a slimy pool, so God's grace elevates many human souls from very filthy surroundings. One of the earliest converts to the gospel of Calvary was Joseph the Cyprian; and what a thorough out-and-out work was his conversion! In our times we discover conversions of the head without a change of heart; again, we see both head and heart renovated without much perceptible influence on the purse. But Josep was the subject of a spiritual revolution that reached to the bottom of his pocket.

Make way for him as the pioneer of the noble army of generous givers for the gospel. He may be called the father of Christian beneficence, for he is the first one specifically named who, "having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet." The whole host of Christian givers—the Thorntons, the Peabodys, the Lenoxes, the Dodges, the Tappans, the Stuarts, and the Baldwins—are all the successors of this "son of consolation." In modern days we do not often hear of Christians who sell their real estate in order to fill Christ's treasury. The reason why there are so many stingy professors in our churches is that their hearts are not warm enough to thaw out their purses.

With his new nature Joseph receives a new

name. He is christened "Barnabas," which in our Authorized Version is translated a "son of consolation." This would bespeak a fine character. "He who has consolation gives it, and he that gives consolation has it."

This were an enviable cognomen for every pastor and Sunday-school teacher, whose offices are not only to instruct in the truth, but to visit their flocks and to heal the broken-hearted. The later Westminster revisers give to the name of Barnabas the more literal meaning, "son of exhortation," or of persuasion. This would describe him very happily as a zealous and successful exhorter and preacher of the word. Being familiar with his gifts and his graces, the mother church at Jerusalem appointed him to "go as far as Antioch."

On his arrival there he found himself in the midst of what we now designate a "work of grace." So visible and impressive was this mighty work that Luke tells us that Barnabas "saw the grace of God"—*i. e.*, the manifest effects of the Holy Spirit's power in the conversion of heathen idolaters. This gladdened his heart with an unselfish and inspiring joy. Nothing quickens the hungry soul of a true minister or Sabbath-school laborer like visible results.

The spiritual atmosphere is charged with a sort of Divine electricity. It is a luxury to fish when the gospel net incloses a great multitude of fishes, yet he is not worthy of the name of Christ's servant who is not willing to spend the labor of a life to win even one precious soul from the pains of hell.

Barnabas comes in no jealous or fault-finding temper to criticise the labors of others; he rejoiced in the rich results already achieved, and "exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." Some ancient authorities read, "that they would cleave unto the purpose of their heart in the Lord." He directed them immediately to Christ, and bade them cleave fast to Him. He taught those awakened souls that faith was a transaction by which they joined their own weakness unto Christ's strength, their unworthiness to His merits, and their guiltiness to His full, pardoning grace. The atoning blood not only cleansed—it cemented. This is the secret of the only religion that holds out; and it holds out because it *holds on* to Him who declares that "none shall be able to pluck them out of My hand."

We always know what manner of spirit a man is of when we ascertain what gladdens him the

most or what grieves him the most deeply. Barnabas "was glad" to see these early fruits of the gospel of the cross. "For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." The Bible is chary of personal eulogies, and leaves us to form our estimate of men's character by their conduct. I do not now recall any laudations of Paul or Peter or the beloved John such as surviving partiality often inscribes on the tombs of the departed. But here is an encomium, uttered by the Holy Spirit, that would outshine burnished gold if it were carved on the monument of any servant of God. Brethren, how sweetly might you and I sleep in our last narrow bed if over our dust the Divine hand could write, "A good man, and full of the Holy Ghost." This description does not imply miraculous inspiration; it simply describes what is attainable by the humblest Christian here, for we are all commanded to be filled with the Spirit. In proportion as we are emptied of pride and self-seeking may we be filled to the brim with the Divine indwelling—yes, filled unto all the fullness of God.

The harvest soon becomes too great in Antioch for any one man to gather, for "much people was added unto the Lord." Please to mark this expression well. The narrative does not say that

many people joined the church, but that many people *joined Christ*. When a soul has joined itself to Jesus then union with His church is the most natural step imaginable. Barnabas finds that the gospel net is becoming so full that he requires a partner to assist him in drawing it to land. He has in his eye a new convert who is not very far away—one who is in the prime of his powerful manhood, and one who has a prodigious driving-wheel in his mental machinery. Once before¹ he had introduced this same extraordinary convert to the leaders of the church in Jerusalem. So he departs from Antioch to Tarsus to look for Saul. When Sir Humphry Davy was asked what was the greatest discovery he had ever made, he replied, "It was young Michael Faraday." To the quick eye of Barnabas was due the honor of first recognizing the fiery vigor, the intrepid courage, and the indomitable zeal of him who was yet to be the very chiefest of the apostles.

Since Saul—who had not yet received the familiar name of Paul—had left Cæsarea we have lost track of him. He seems to have returned to his native city of Tarsus in Cilicia. How long he had been residing there, or what occupation he was pursuing there, the inspired history does not

¹ Acts ix. 27.

inform us. He may have been intent upon his sacred studies in preparation for his after-work, or he may have been undergoing a portion of that discipline to which he refers in his subsequent Epistle to the Corinthians. Quite likely it is that he was not idle among his neighbors, for we are informed afterwards that there were churches in Cilicia, and he may have had a hand in planting them.

I am inclined to think that Saul was not in Tarsus when Barnabas reached there, because the Greek word translated "seek" signifies a sharp search, as though Barnabas had some trouble to find him. When he did capture the prize he "brought him unto Antioch" with the happy feeling of one who has found great spoil. At once they enter upon their work, Barnabas and Saul, in holy and loving partnership, "assembling themselves with the church" for worship and for work. Their chief business was spiritual instruction in the elementary truths of Christianity. Not with sensational claptrap or curiosity-seeking devices did they aim to attract popular attention. They simply "taught" their auditors, but taught them with such winsome skill and affectionate zeal that they had "much people" to listen to them. Literally translated, they had a "sufficient

crowd." The word implies a miscellaneous congregation of rich and poor, cultured and ignorant, from the various classes of society. No splendid sanctuary gave them shelter; no costly music baited their æsthetic appetites; no luxurious pews invited the rich while the poor were kept standing at the gates; none of the ecclesiastical pomps and pageantries of modern worship had yet intruded into the sweet, primitive simplicity of apostolic Christianity. Two anointed preachers, filled with the heavenly unction, stood up and proclaimed Christ crucified and Christ risen from the dead. If any of the assembly were troubled with difficulties, they asked questions and the two teachers answered them. Psalms and spiritual songs were sung, fervent prayers were offered, and alms were distributed to the poor. On every first day of the week those Antioch disciples gathered for an "agapé," or love feast, and with simple fragments of bread and cups filled with the fruit of the vine they commemorated the dying love of their blessed Lord. From beginning to end their Sabbath services, their week-day work, their preaching, their prayers and their social fellowship, all tasted of Christ. The aroma of Christ pervaded everything. They knew nothing of theological systems

—they knew only one divine Person; they just believed, and preached, and loved, and lived out the Lord Jesus Christ.

With the new nature came a new name. Hitherto the followers of Jesus had been known as His “disciples.” Sometimes they were sneered at as “Nazarenes” or “Galilæans,” but they always spoke of each other as “the brethren” or as “the saints” or as “the faithful in Christ Jesus.” A new word was coined at Antioch; for there, we are told, the disciples were *first called* Christians. The coinage is not their own; it was a nickname invented by their enemies and flung at them as a reproach. The Jews did not invent it, for they would not admit that the crucified Galilæan had been the Christ, the anointed Prophet of God. The word has a Roman ending, and probably came from those who used the Latin tongue. Just as the name of Puritan or of Methodist was first bestowed in ridicule and afterwards worn as a title of nobility, so the name Christian was scornfully applied to the new sect as a term of ignominy. As Farrar finely remarks, “An hybrid and insulting designation was invented in the frivolous streets of Antioch, and round it have clustered forever the deepest faith and the purest glory of mankind.” Scoffer of

Antioch, we thank thee for that word "Christian." The prophecies of the ancient seers, the light of Bethlehem's star, the precious power of Calvary's blood, the dawn of the resurrection morn, the devotion of the early martyrs, the civilizations of the best peoples of the globe, the mission schemes of all times, and the redemption of the race—are all linked with that glorious name. It is the enduring witness that our salvation stands not in a system, but in a *Person*, the ineffable and almighty Christ Jesus. Whoever would be saved must be Christ's man.

Having narrated the signal services of Barnabas and Paul at Antioch, the chapter concludes with an account of a visit made by certain prophets, or inspired teachers, from Jerusalem. They come to warn the church at Antioch that a famine is approaching. The chief object of narrating this prophecy would seem to be its beautiful illustration of Christian beneficence. A relief fund is raised by the Antioch brethren, and the rule of giving was the golden rule for all right giving to the end of time. Here it is: "Every man gave according to his ability." The measure of his purse was the measure of his charity, and nobody robbed himself of the luxury of con-

tributing. When the Antioch rule is thoroughly practiced by Christians in America there will be a speedy end of raising money for the Lord's treasury "by hook and by crook"—a system which often practices petty larceny and then varnishes it with the sacred name of charity. Promptly was the money raised and put into the hands of Barnabas and Paul; they, in turn, delivered it to the presbyters or elders of the church at Jerusalem. This is the first time that the New Testament mentions the important office of "elder"—an office which was essential in the Jewish Church, and has been and will be a permanent office in the church of Christ as long as it endures. From the name of that office comes our venerable and honored name of Presbyterians.

Having now walked round this goodly and fruit-laden tree of Antioch, let us give it one hearty shake, and the following truths will drop like ripe apples into our laps:—

1. The devil always outwits himself when he persecutes God's people. The blood of Stephen the martyr was the seed of the churches of Syria.

2. The only preaching that ever saves a sinner from hell is that which wrought such wonders at Antioch; it is simply and faithfully "preaching the Lord Jesus."

3. Spiritual success is secured only when God and man work together in partnership. If the "hand of the Lord" is withheld, the hand of the strongest man is paralyzed.

4. The only title worthy your ambition or mine is this: "He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." It is a great thing to have a church of men modeled after such a pattern as Barnabas.

5. "Cleaving unto the Lord Jesus" is the true secret of the higher life. When my weak, wicked heart is grafted, by faith, into His bleeding heart, then doth the blood of the Vine flow into the branch.

6. The only name that you or I can ever carry in through the gate of heaven will be the name of *Christian*. If we are not willing to bear it as a cross, we never can wear it as a crown.

7. The golden word that shines through the whole passage we have studied is the word *give*. The master-spirit of the Antioch church was a bountiful giver; he gave his real estate, and then gave himself. The first recorded act of that church was that "every man gave according to his ability." Never could there have been a Christian in Antioch or a Christian here had not God given His only begotten Son, and had not that Son given His life a ransom for us all.

II

BURDEN-BEARING

II

BURDEN-BEARING

“Every man shall bear his own burden.”—GALATIANS vi. 5.

“Bear ye one another’s burdens.”—GALATIANS vi. 2.

“Cast thy burden upon the Lord.”—PSALM lv. 22.

HERE is a threefold cord that is not easily broken. I trust that you will all grasp hold of it and be lifted out of your cares and complainings, out of your doubts and your despondencies. While there is an apparent contradiction between these three texts, there is not really the slightest discordance. They blend beautifully together like the bass, the tenor, and the alto in some sweet melody. God’s truth has no discords. Errors conflict with each other, but all truths run parallel like railway tracks, that might belt the globe and never come in conflict.

With this preliminary fact in mind, let us study these passages. They treat of the *bearing of burdens*. Can any topic be more thoroughly practical? For every human life—high or humble—has its loads; and much of the comfort, the

strength, and the joy of our lives depends upon the way that these loads are dealt with. Which of them ought to be carried, and which of them none of us should attempt to carry, is a question that ought to be examined. How to make our own loads the lighter, and how to relieve other people of their burdens, is another question to be carefully considered. Upon these questions a vast deal of heavenly light streams in through the triple windows now opened before us.

I. The first of the texts to be looked at is this: "Every man shall bear his own burden." We are too apt to regard burden-bearing as something menial or degrading. But this is a great mistake. God has so ordered it that no station in life is exempt from its inevitable loads. Many years ago, during the days of the "old dispensation," I was visiting a hospitable planter on the Savannah River. He took me out to see a company of his negro slaves, who were carrying bags of rice on their heads to freight a vessel which was moored at the riverside. They were carrying their burdens, and cheering their task by chanting a wild negro melody. After he returned to his mansion, the planter said to me, "It is a tremendous responsibility to be the owner of a hundred human beings." There was his burden.

Perhaps some of you merchants envy your bookkeepers or your porters who have only to carry on their tale of labor, and to receive their wages. They, in turn, may often say, "What an easy time our employer has! He performs no drudgery; he sits in his countingroom, signs checks, and then rides home to his fine house in his carriage." Yet on your busy and often overworked brain depends the continuance of their salaries. For so has God wedded capital and labor together, and what God hath joined, let no demagogues tear asunder!

Some burdens are inseparably attached to us, and deliverance from them were as impossible as to exist without eating or sleeping. Every boy at school must task himself with words of one syllable at first, and so on, with advancing years, must advance into more difficult lessons. If he shoulders up the calf he will gain each year increasing strength, until in time he can carry the full-grown bullock. Every lot in life must answer to the roll call of duty. There is no discharge in that war; and behind every horseman sits dark-browed Care. Sorrow also is no respecter of persons. It puts aching heads under royal crowns, and aching hearts on beds of down and couches of rosewood. Perhaps, during your

summer outings you may have seen some picturesque mansion reposing on its sunny lawns, and surrounded with its wealth of foliage; and you have said to yourself, "Happy is the owner of that house; I wish it were mine." Ah, my friend, the owner of that superb residence is only a man; and where man lives sin dwells and sorrow dwells likewise. We pastors find out that none of our flock build walls high enough to shut out disease, disaster, or death; and there is never a house without some "skeleton in a closet." Every heart knoweth its own bitterness. As no one can take your toothache into his face, so no one can take your heartache into his bosom.

This text has manifold applications. As no one can feel the twinge of my pain—bodily or mental—so no one can do my work but myself. You may engage a dozen assistants for a busy pastor, but all combined cannot lift off an ounce of his responsibility; the strain finally falls back upon his nerves and his conscience. The bodily infirmities that we all suffer, to a greater or less degree, are often a heavy clog. My beloved friend Spurgeon often hobbled in intense agony to that pulpit which he flooded with sunshine. Cheerful old Paul had his physical load to carry, and he exclaims, "We that are in this tabernacle

[or tent] do groan, being burdened." With what? With a sense of guilt or dread of hell? No; that load had been left where we may leave ours, at the foot of Calvary's cross. But the fleshly hut, in which Paul's imperial soul was locked up, was scarred with the lash, and full of aches and thorns in the flesh. Yet under this burden of bodily pain, and of the "care of all the churches," and of crosses that galled the shoulder, the grand old hero marched on to glory, shouting. There is not a blood-bought heir of heaven in this assembly who ought not to shout as loud as he did.

A true Christian grows stronger by his loads. Train up your boy on confectioneries, and never lay fifty pounds weight on him, and the poor, flabby little creature will be all pulp. Give him stiff tasks to do and heavy loads to carry, and he may have some chance of being yet a man. In that way God deals with His children. He knows that burdens will make them strong. So He says to each of them: "Every one shall bear his own burden. There is thy load, carry it; there is thy place, fill it; there is thy work, do it; and as thy day, so shall thy strength be." The route to heaven is not over a macadamized road with easy grades. It has many a "hill difficulty,"

where the climber goeth from running to walking, and from walking to a tough clambering on his hands and knees. Let us not murmur, nor vainly ask for "elevators" to hoist us; for one, I have lived long enough in this world to thank God for difficulties. The grapple with them sinews our graces and gives us spiritual force. In God's school some hard lessons are to be learned; and there are no "elective studies." It is very pleasant to work out problems in addition and in multiplication; but when our Master puts us into a painful problem of subtraction—when the income is cut off, or the crib is emptied, or the staff is broken—then we cry out, "O God, let this cup pass from me." It requires great grace to be able then to say, "Nevertheless, Father; not as I will, but as Thou wilt!" For the hardest lesson of all in this world is—to *let God have His way.*

The Master's command to His disciples has evermore been, "Go work in My vineyard." This is not merely for the crop to be raised there, but for the invigoration of our spiritual sinews and to utilize our powers. A work for every man, and every man to his work, is the law of honest discipleship. There is another like unto it, "Take up thy cross, and follow Me." Why?

Because we are yet in a sin-cursed world, and the word sin and the word cross are twin brothers. Where sin is there must be an attendant cross—whether it be my own sin to plague me, or that of others to try my patience or to arouse my efforts to save them. There is no house room for crosses in heaven; and simply because sin has never entered those pearly portals. Here, in this world of sharp antagonisms, the crucial test is, “Whosoever doth not take up his cross, and follow Me, cannot be My disciple.”

Now, these are ultimate facts, verified by every Christian’s experience. The Captain of our salvation has ordered that each one of us shall endure hardness as good soldiers—that every one must shoulder his own weapons and bear his own brunt in the bivouac and the battle. And all this regimen is indispensable to the growth of the soul in spiritual force, and to the development of the grandest thing this side of heaven, and that is—pure, vigorous and *Christlike character*. It is not to their credit, nor for the honor of their Master that some Christians seek to hide their own indolence or unbelief under that other injunction, “Cast thy burden upon the Lord.” Every text in this book hath its own place and its own purpose. No truth overlaps or obscures or

contradicts another. There are certain burdens that no fellow-creature can carry for us, and that our Lord and Saviour never offers to carry. His imperative command is, "Every man shall bear his own burden"; and the object of this is that he may become *strong in the Lord*.

II. After this brief study of the first text, let us now look at the second, which does not contradict, but rather confirms it. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." We have just seen how the carrying of certain loads gives us *strength*. But there are other loads which we can help our fellow-pilgrims to carry, and the object of that service is to teach us *sympathy*. Happily we have the motive for this brotherly service given in the text itself. We are thus to "fulfill the law of Christ." That law is love. Yes, Jesus Christ Himself is love. He so loved us that He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. He so loved the wandering sheep that He descended from the skies to seek for and to save the silly truant that was entangled in the thickets or foundering in the mire. And when He lays it on His shoulders—the clean bearing the unclean, the Holy bearing the unholy—He brings it back to the fold, "rejoicing." He is glad for the sake of the restored sheep, but still

more for His own sake—love has its own ecstasy of reward. You will remember how our hearts were thrilled when Mr. Sankey first sang for us that exquisite paraphrase of the parable:—

“There were ninety-and-nine that safely lay

In the shelter of the fold,

But one was out on the hills away,

Far off from the gates of gold—

Away on the mountains wild and bare,

Away from the tender Shepherd's care.

“But none of the ransomed ever knew

How deep were the waters cross'd ;

Nor how dark was the night that the Lord pass'd thro'

Ere He found His sheep that was lost.

Out in the desert He heard its cry—

Sick and helpless, and ready to die.

“But all thro' the mountains, thunder-riven,

And up from the rocky steep,

There arose a glad cry to the gate of heaven,

‘Rejoice ! I have found My sheep !’

And the angels echoed around the throne,

‘Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own !’”

Brings back His own ! redeemed by His own precious blood for the joy set before Him ! If you and I, fellow-sinners, are ever landed safe among the ringing trumpets and the sounding harps in glory, it will be entirely because that loving Shepherd has brought back His own.

As Jesus Christ came to the rescue of the perishing, so He bids us hasten to the relief of the overloaded and the recovery of the fallen. This is His law of love. Yonder, for example, is a poor wretch who is reeling down to perdition under the weight of his own folly and sin. Sharp-eyed Selfishness says: "Good enough for him; why was he such a fool as to drink?" Jesus says: "Go pull out of the fire that man for whom I have died!" That is sympathy in action. When the Good Samaritan found the bleeding Jew by the wayside, he did not insult the sufferer with the taunt, "You ought to have known better than to travel by this dangerous road alone." He takes up the burden of the wounded body, and, when he reaches the inn, he slips the shilling into the keeper's hands, and delicately whispers, "If thou spendest more, when I come back again, I will repay thee." There spake the prince of gentlemen; for true politeness is kindness of heart kindly expressed.

The law of Christian sympathy works in two directions: either it helps our fellow-creatures to get rid of their burdens entirely, or, if failing in that, it helps them to carry the load more lightly. Yonder is a poor widow with more children than she can feed and clothe. Take one of those lads

into your shop or warehouse, and let that widow's thanks sweeten your cup and soften your pillow. A youth comes to you from the country, friendless and seeking employment. Just as on a railway one inch at the switch determines whether the train shall move on its straight track or be shunted over an embankment, so a single sympathetic act of helpfulness to that youth may decide his whole future for weal or woe. The Lord makes some of His servants rich, or strong, or kind, in order to be His switch-tenders. Here are you, worshiping in a well-manned and affluent church. Yonder is a feeble church struggling for existence. Divide your forces with them, and make both churches the richer; one by what it gives, and the other by what it gets.

As I have said already, there is one sense in which sorrow can be borne only by the sufferer himself; there is another in which that sorrow can be lightened by your tender sympathy. Bear ye one another's burdens. Sometimes a small lift is very timely. A single kind word, a little oil of sympathy on a sore spot, a message of condolence when crape hangs at the doorbell, a gift in the hour of need, an approving smile, all such things do help a fellow-creature most wonderfully. It is to the reproach of us all that we do

not oftener act the Good Samaritan in little things.

Some of you may recall that beautiful incident narrated by our noble American missionary to the Orient, Miss Fidelia Fiske. She tells us that on a warm Sabbath afternoon she was seated on the earthen floor of her mission-chapel and feeling utterly exhausted. "Just then, as God would order it, a Syrian woman came and seated herself right behind me, so that I could lean on her, and she invited me to do so. I declined, but she drew me back and said, 'If you love me, lean hard.' Very refreshing was that support. Then came the Master's own voice, 'If you love me, *lean hard*'; and I leaned on Him too, for He had preached to me through that poor woman. I was rested before the service was over; then I spent an hour with the woman and, after sunset, rode six miles to my own home. I wondered that I was not weary that night, and I have rested ever since on those sweet words." They belonged to the choicest vocabulary of love. Many a mother has had the same thought as she pressed her infant to her bosom. More than one true-hearted husband, as he lifted from the couch the precious burden—which he sadly found was growing lighter every day—has whispered into eager ears,

“My darling, if you love me, lean hard.” Love likes to feel the weight of trust.

This beautiful “law of Christ” was the germinal principle from which sprang the primitive Christian Church. The power from on high which descended at Pentecost was essentially a love-power. Those unselfish men and women, who went forth from that upper room in Jerusalem, were burden-lifters in the name and in the strength of Him who had just borne the burden of human guilt in His bleeding body on the cross. The only genuine successors of the apostles have been the load-lifters. Their creed and watchword have always been, “Unto Him that loved us and loosed us from our sins by His blood; to Him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever!” Every stream of Christian sympathy that has gladdened human hearts came from this Divine fount-head in the heart of Jesus. All labors to lighten the overload of human guilt and misery and want—the enlightenment of the ignorant, the rightening of the wronged, the deliverance of the oppressed, the visitation of the sick, and comforting of the bereaved, the gospeling of the heathen and the whole magnificent enterprise of missions; all these are the precious product of this principle, “Bear ye one another’s

burdens, and *so fulfill the law of Christ.*" The most successful missionaries and ministers are those who come closest to human hearts. The secret of power with General Booth and his "Salvationists" is their personal sympathy with the wretched and the wrecked. When the members of our churches become "sons of consolation" in the broadest sense of the word—bestowing not only their dollars but their time, their presence, and their heart-beats upon the unchristianized masses, we shall have a primitive and pentecostal revival. Pulpits speak only for an hour or two each week, and then only to those who occupy the pews before them; it is only by *sermons in shoes* that the suffering and the sinning can be reached. The need of the time is not for more geniuses in the pulpit, but for more personal consecration among Christians to this "law of Christ."

III. Let us push on now to the third and last of this beautiful triplet of texts. The first one taught self-help: "Every man shall bear his own burden." The object of it is to give us spiritual *strength*. The second text teaches brotherly help: "Bear ye one another's burdens." The object of it is to inspire *sympathy*. Of these three texts the third is the Kohinoor jewel; for it leads

us up to the Divine help : " Cast thy burden upon the Lord."

This passage has suffered at the hands of some mystics, who have volatilized it into a very thin and vaporous meaning. The Hebrew word translated "burden," really signifies that which is given to us, or that which is appointed to every man to bear. We must, therefore, understand the Psalmist to say—whatever thy God lays upon thee, thou must lay it upon the Lord. He has cast thy lot for thee. Then cast thy lot upon Him.

But can this text be reconciled with the two others? Yes ; quite easily. We are commanded to bear our own burdens, and this requires the resolute performance of our own duties. God will not release us from duty ; but He will sustain us in the doing of it. The load which is laid upon us will not crush us ; for He will give us strength equal to our day. If other people wonder why and how we march along under the load without breaking down, our only answer is : " We put this load upon the strength which God put into us. His grace was sufficient to enable us to bear the burden." God's wonderful and gracious offer is to lighten our loads by putting Himself, as it were, into our souls, and

underneath the loads. This is a supernatural process; and the whole walk of faith through life is the simple but sublime reliance upon an almighty arm that is never seen but always felt. This accounts for the fact that the word "trust" is the key word of Old-Testament theology, and the word "believe" is the key word in the New Testament. They both mean substantially the same thing. And when our heavenly Father saith, "Cast thy burden upon Me," and our loving Redeemer saith, "Cast the load of thy sins upon Me," they expect us to take them at their word.

There is a universal and perpetual need for this tonic text.

On every side we meet overloaded people, and each one thinks his burden is the biggest. One is worried about his health, and another about his diminished income, and another about her sick child, and another about her children yet unconverted; and so each man or woman that has a worry of some sort goes staggering along under it. In the meantime a loving and omnipotent Father says to every one of them: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee." As if this one offer were not enough, the Holy Spirit repeats it again in the New Testament: "Casting all your *anxieties* upon Him, for He

careth for you." This is the more accurate rendering in the Revised Version; because the word "care" does not signify here wise forethought for the future, but that soul-harassing thing called "worry." The reason given for rolling our worries over upon God is very tender and touching. "He careth for you" means that He takes an interest in you—He has you on His heart! Beautiful and wonderful thought! It is the same idea which the Psalmist had in his mind when he declares that the Lord telleth the number of the stars, and yet He healeth the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds.

He is the one who says, "My child, don't carry that burden." The infinite Ruler of the universe, who is wise in counsel and wonderful in working; the God who guarded the infant Moses in his basket of rushes; who sent His messenger birds to Elijah by the brook Cherith; who quieted Daniel among the ravenous beasts and calmed Paul in the raging tempest—He it is who says to us, "Roll your anxieties over on Me, for I have you on My heart." Yet how many of us there are who hug our troubles and say to God, "No, we will not let anybody carry these troubles but ourselves." What fools we are! Just imagine a weary, foot-sore traveler tugging along with his

pack on a hot July day. A wagon comes up, and the kind-hearted owner calls out: "Friend, you look tired. Toss that pack into my wagon." But the wayfarer, eyeing him suspiciously, mutters to himself, "Perhaps he wants to steal it," or else sullenly replies, "I am obliged to you, sir, but I can carry my own luggage." The folly of such conduct is equal to that of the man who should check his trunk through to Chicago and then run into the baggage car every hour to see if his trunk is safe. We do not hesitate to trust our own valuable property to railway officials and expressmen, and we laugh at the folly of those who refuse to do it; would it not be well then for us to "check through" all our dearest interests as well as our cares? When we reach the door of our Father's house we shall find that all our treasures worth keeping are safe, and that not one of them has been lost by the way.

I cannot close this discourse without reminding you that the mightiest burden that can ever weigh down a human soul is SIN! Everything else seems light by comparison. Poverty, friendlessness, reproach, sickness, bereavement, all can be, and have been, endured cheerfully; and the valley of the death-shade has often rung with songs of triumph. But who can stand up under that

weight that has crushed myriads into hell? Who can bear through life, and on up to the judgment seat, an evil conscience and a guilty, unpardoned soul?

Here comes in the sweetest and the sublimest truth in all the realm of Divine revelation. Listen to it, all ye sin-burdened ones! If all the rest of our Bible were torn away from us, we could find enough to inspire our hope and to insure our heaven in this one glorious verse, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on HIM the iniquity of us all." Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, and with His stripes we are healed. *Jesus, the Divine Burden-bearer*, is the sublime and ineffably lovable figure that I now present before you. All the paths of the gospel lead to Calvary. Does any one of you cry out, "Mine iniquities have gone over my head, and as a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me"? Listen to that matchless voice, "Come unto me, all you who are weary and heavyladen, and I will give you rest."

Oh, I pray for some practical and lasting fruits from these triple texts. I long to behold all of you lifted by this threefold cord out of your griefs and out of your guilt. Methinks I see some

poor burdened heart pass out of yonder door
saying :—

“ I lay my griefs on Jesus,
My burdens and my cares ;
He from the load releases,
He all my sorrows shares.”

There is another whose load is the heaviest of all ; for he came hither “ condemned already ” by his conscious guilt. The Holy Spirit has opened his eyes to behold the Lamb of God who taketh away sin ; and he has opened his heart to the Saviour. He will go homeward to-day singing this new song :—

“ I’ve laid my sins on Jesus,
The spotless Lamb of God,
He bears them all, and frees us
From the accursed load.
I’ve brought my guilt to Jesus,
To wash my crimson stains
White in His blood most precious
Till not a stain remains !”

III

PIVOT BATTLES IN LIFE

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PIVOT BATTLES IN LIFE

“And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man : for the Lord fought for Israel.”—JOSHUA x. 14.

WITH these words concludes the narrative of that decisive battle which gave Canaan into the hands of the children of Israel. There were other conflicts, indeed, before this battle. There were several after it—fierce conflicts and furious. But on this battle of Gibeon the whole campaign turned as on a pivot. Victory there proved to be victory everywhere, until Israel's land of promise became Israel's land of possession.

And so the civil and martial history of the world has turned on a few decisive battles. Had they resulted differently, the whole history of mankind might have been changed. On the field of Marathon, for example, Greece was saved from the heel of Persian despotism. On the field of Arbela Alexander conquered the Oriental world. The question whether Britons or French-

men should rule France was determined when Joan of Arc, in her snow-white armor, rode her coal-black steed up the heights of Orleans. The battle of Marengo placed the iron crown on Napoleon's brow; Waterloo swept it off, and sent the desolator to the prison rock of St. Helena. Our Revolutionary War lasted through eight long weary years, and had its dark nights when the patriot father would "put none but Americans on guard"; but the whole war turned on the pivot of Saratoga. All these battles just named were decisive. They settled the fate of empires or of dynasties. Had they resulted differently the history of the world would have had a very different reading. God so ordered it, in His wise providence, that mighty results hung on the issue of those encounters. Kingdoms, systems, dynasties were balanced on the point of a sword.

Now every man is a miniature nation, and every human life has its one or more decisive battles. They are like Joshua's conflict at Gibeon. There is no day like those days, either before or after them, in all that man's existence.

It is my purpose to discuss those moral conflicts on which depends the destiny of souls for time and for eternity. I cannot, of course, in one

brief sermon review all the conflicts of soul to which each one may be exposed throughout a lifetime. But I will try to indicate the principle struggles of life—what they are, and how to make these moral battle grounds scenes of glorious victory.

And, at the outset, I would observe that every effective influential life is marked with sharp and severe struggles. There is but one way to avoid these, and that is to sacrifice living to bare existence. Such a thing is possible. I can show you human beings whose existence is as meaningless and monotonous as that of an oyster. To sleep through so many hours, to feed the body so many times a day, to walk over a certain dreary routine of uselessness, and at last to drop through into an unnoticed grave and be buried forever, makes up the sum of the only existence that some immortal beings ever accomplish. But life is quite a different matter. And the loftier, the grander the life, the more eventful is it in conflicts. All history teaches this. Every day's observation confirms it. Daniel, the conqueror of lions in the den, and of imperial brutes in the Babylonian palace; Ezra, the Jewish reformer, Paul, the peerless preacher of the cross, Augustine, Knox, Luther, Palissy the Huguenot, Bunyan,

Clarkson, Payson—were they not all men of strife and struggle? They were type-men, model men, not perfect, indeed, but earnestly pressing toward the fullness of the stature of Jesus Christ. And their entire careers turned on a few decisive encounters. Had those critical conflicts of soul resulted differently, it is not unlikely that we should never have heard these now celebrated names at all. There is an especial reason why every strong impressive life should be one of conflict. It is a necessity. For strong resolute wills must encounter opposition, and make it too, just as the impetuous locomotive meets more opposition from the air than the slow-creeping dray or the tiny child's coach. Strong-willed, intellectual, gifted men and women are more fiercely fought for than inferior people. They are the prizes. Virtue and vice contend for such precious possessions. "The Lord hath need" of such; and the devil aims to make them his splendid spoil. Every man's life-march has its conflicts; the more conspicuous and influential the life, the more memorable spots are its battlefields.

The conflict of life is threefold. That is, sin presents itself in three modes; every soul has three spiritual enemies to meet: The world, the flesh, the devil. By the "world" we mean that

whole system of self-seeking, pride, and covetousness that is so congenial to the human heart. The "flesh" typifies sensual appetites. And the devil is the author of doubt and unbelief, of soul-enmity to God. These are the "triple alliance" from the pit. Against one or all of these must every soul do battle on its way to heaven. Before these powers of darkness so well trained and so well equipped, so deadly in assault, and so flush with arrogance, every one of you young men may well call out to your will and your conscience, as Wellington called out in the critical moment behind Hougomont: "Here are the enemy! Up, guards, and at them!"

I. In offering you now some practical suggestions for these moral warfares, let me remind you that your first conflicts will probably be with sensual temptations. It is not the fault but the trial of youth that its blood is warm, its impulses are ardent, and its physical appetites clamorous for gratification. So far as these appetites are natural you are not to blame for them. The sin does not lie in possessing them, but in indulging them. The appetite for strong drink when controlled is as harmless as a caged tiger. The danger comes from uncaging the monster. While young men have sensual appetites, and while

thousands of abandoned people are incessantly inflaming those appetites by the most enticing and fascinating lures, there must be a warfare between the conscience and the passions. This is inevitable. My friend, you cannot walk our streets without running the gauntlet of ten thousand decoys to ruin. All these lighted, decorated, chandeliered, and tapestried saloons are so many fortresses of the enemy. Their danger to you lies in the temptible material in your own breast. You may fling as many burning brands as you choose into a snowbank; there is no harm done. But one spark is enough to send a powder magazine into the air. Your peril is in direct proportion to the strength of your appetites and the weakness of your moral principle. A very weak temptation will send a weak conscience to perdition. It requires more than a strong temptation to overthrow a strong-souled man of God. But no temptation is an overmatch for a soul steel clad in celestial armor and sentineled by God's protecting Spirit.

What allurements could be stronger than those which Potiphar's wanton wife brought to bear upon the youthful Joseph? For remember that he was just at an age when passion flames the fiercest and beauty is most intoxicating to the

eye. Remember that he was an underling, and completely in the power of his profligate mistress. Remember, too, that the high road to wealth and luxury lay through that mistress's guilty favor; while she could doom him to insult and imprisonment if he thwarted her salacious lust. That was the decisive battle in Joseph's career. It was his pivot moment. Defeat then would have been swift destruction. But after he had once spurned the jeweled duchess of a court, it was easy to spurn the filthy drab from the kennel. It was easy to keep his integrity in a prison when he had already kept it in a palace. If you, my friend, would make your battles with appetite as successfully decisive as Joseph did, imitate his example. Give the subtle enemy no quarter. Set your faces like a flint. Do not yield an inch if you would not be drawn a league. There is but one sure way to escape the doom that lies in the bottom of the wine cup, and that is to let the cup alone. No matter who may proffer it—even the sister of your childhood, or her who is dearer than any sister can be.

As soon touch strychnine as that intoxicating glass. There is also but one certain way to avoid the gambler's infamy and ruin—don't touch a card. Stick to this resolution and the battle is

won. Would you preserve yourself chaste (and God commands men to be pure as much as He does women or angels)? Would you keep chaste in a city whose very air is tainted with pollution? Shut your eyes and ears to every tempter. In five minutes passion may kindle far enough to consume the good resolutions of a lifetime; and when passion gets under way it is like the Russian's burning of Moscow, where a thousand places are lighted at once. The question whether you shall be a sot or a sober man? whether you shall be a companion of honest men or of gamesters? whether you shall be clean-hearted or possess an imagination that shall be but a hideous brothel? is often decided in a moment. Oh, what a moral battlefield is this great city, where on each successive night is waged a conflict more momentous than ever roared on the streets of Montebello or raged about the heights of Solferino! When the moonlight flings its silver spell over quiet streets, and leafy parks, and glittering spires; when the cheek of innocence presses its pillow, and the weary are at rest, the eye of God beholds in ten thousand hearts the most terrible combats between conscience and the tempter, between the legions of lust and the little Spartan band of virtue, temperance, and purity.

What struggles does that all-seeing eye look down upon! What victories! What defeats and incipient damnations! Where no father is by to give aid, how many a son is struck down! Where no dear mother's voice can be heard in warning or in entreaty, how many a darling child of affection is stabbed through the soul by Satan's midnight assassins! Said we not rightly that these are decisive conflicts? For in the great day of judgment it will often appear that a single hour on earth did determine the destiny of the man for heaven or hell to all eternity.

II. But there are other battles beside those with sensuality. The "world" is as dangerous an enemy as the flesh. By the "world" we mean the spirit of the world, the selfishness that cares not for God, the covetousness that worships mammon, the ambition that sacrifices every one and everything on its own selfish altar, the godlessness that knows no Bible but a ledger, no heaven but a splendid mansion or a high office, no law but policy, and fears no hell but poverty or political defeat. I need not tell you that this spirit is most destructive to religion and most offensive to God. You know all that. No man is so selfish as not to hate selfishness. The miseries pity the covetousness of other men. The world-

ling sees how the world is ruining its devotees, just as every drunkard sees that his comrades are in danger of a drunkard's grave. There is no spirit more absorbing, more insinuating, more deceptive, more soul hardening than this very spirit of worldliness in its manifold developments. You must conquer it or it will enslave you.

Whenever this subtle monopolizing spirit comes into antagonism with your conscience then you are put to the test to prove "what manner of man ye are of." In business, in public life, in social life, in your innermost religious life, will arise these decisive conflicts, often the most decisive when you least expect it. At an unlooked for moment you may be called to determine some question on the issue of which depends your peace of mind, your spiritual health, your Christian character. You will pass through ordeals which will test exactly how much you are willing to do and how much you are glad to suffer for Jesus' sake. Duty will call you one way—a thorny way. Self-interest will beckon you into the opposite path—carpeted with velvet. That is a decisive moment for you. A simple "yes" or an emphatic "no" may cost you a fortune, may cost you a troop of friends, may cost you political promotion, may cost you your character, may cost

you your soul. How many a public man has had his whole career decided by his course in some trying emergency or on some one great question of right! He is led up into the mount of temptation where some gigantic iniquity bids him bow down and worship it, and promises in return "all the world and the glory thereof." From that mount of trial he comes down a hero or a fool. The die is cast. If he has honored justice and truth, then justice and truth will honor him; if not, his bones will be left bleaching on the road to a promotion he can never reach.

That was a hard struggle for Nathaniel Ripley Cobb, of Boston, when he decided to accumulate no more than fifty thousand dollars during his life, and to give all the surplus to the treasury of the Lord. But after the noble resolution was once taken, selfishness was a conquered lust in that man's breast forever. He had come off more than conqueror. How many a minister of Christ has been charged upon and overcome by this accursed spirit of "worldly wisdom"! He was put to the decisive test, not in Nero's judgment-hall or before Agrippa's tribunal; not before a Popish inquisitor or in sight of Smithfield's fires of martyrdom. But in his quiet study, when some timid friend counseled a treacherous silence in his pulpit

on some vital question of right, his "yes" or his "no" has either called from his Master the precious benediction, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," or else the fearful anathema, "Ye were ashamed of Me and of My truth, and of thee will I be ashamed before My Father and His holy angels!" We all have our moral Marengos and our Waterloos, where we win or lose the crown of Christian character. When these decisive conflicts come on between your conscience on the one hand, and some selfish scheme or satanic iniquity on the other, then try to remember a few simple rules of moral war:—

1. Never change your position in sight of an enemy. This was a fatal policy to the allies at Austerlitz. It has cost many a disgraceful defeat in spiritual warfare.

2. Never place on guard a doubtful or a questionable principle. Your sentinel will be sure to betray you.

3. Never abandon the high ground of right for the lowlands of expediency. Before you are aware you will be swamped in the bottomless morass of ruin.

4. Get your moral armor from God's word, and "put on the whole armor." An exposed spot in character may admit the fatal weapon of the foe.

Ahab was wounded through the joints of his harness. Do not mind blows in the face. Heroes are wounded in the face, cowards in the back.

5. But whether wounded by foes or deserted by friends, never surrender. It is said that not one of the old Imperial Guard survived the wreck of Waterloo. Toward the sunset of that long bloody day, when the surviving remnant of the guards was summoned to lay down their arms, the scarred veterans of fifty victorious fights cried out: "The old guards can die, but they never learned to surrender!" The glorious Captain of our salvation could die for us, but He could not desert us. Blessed is he who is found faithful. He shall wear the crown of amaranth in the paradise of God.

III. But we are driven on to our third and last head—the conflict between faith and unbelief. This is the most momentous of all the struggles in which your souls can be involved—faith, evangelic faith on the one side and unbelief on the other. By unbelief I mean something besides ordinary skepticism. You are not skeptics. Not many young men are infidels, especially if their infancy has nestled against the heart-throb of a pious mother, or if their childhood has been led up through a Sabbath school. By "unbelief" I

refer to the heart's rejection of Jesus Christ. Here lies the real battle after all. The simple issue is, Shall Christ have possession of the soul or not? That is the conflict. Faith is believing in Christ and following after Christ. And he that believeth on the Lord Jesus shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be condemned. The ultimate conflict with every one of you will be, Shall Christ or Satan rule my heart?

My friend, you may have gained decisive victories already over sensuality, over selfishness, and over the truckling cowardice of "worldly wisdom." But the great encounter that decides the life-campaign is between Christ and Christ's enemy. What other conflict than this was in the mind of Paul when he wrote that most plaintive outcry in the seventh chapter to the Romans? Of what other battle did he sing the exultant pean in those jubilant words: "I have fought a good fight, . . . I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day"? And bringing it right home to yourself, I ask you, what was that struggle in your own bosom when you trembled under God's word, when your own nature fortified itself against the blessed assaults of redeeming love, when your

aroused conscience cried out, "Lord! what must I do to be saved?" Of all life's conflicts this, this is the decisive one. It decides the destiny of the deathless soul forever. And it can be decided aright only by giving up your soul to Jesus Christ.

Do that at once I beseech you. The Spirit of God may now be striving with you. The Saviour of sinners, with pierced hand, is holding open to you the door of hope. It is a critical moment with you,

"For there is a time we know not when,
A point we know not where,
That marks the destiny of men
To glory or despair."

Make this critical hour the hour of your soul's salvation. And when, by the grace of God, you have done that, you may say of the day of your conversion, as was said of Joshua's victory at Gibeon, "There was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man." Thanks be unto Him who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

IV
THE LITTLE COAT

IV

THE LITTLE COAT

“His mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year.”—I. SAM. ii. 19.

You may smile at this text. Well, it is but a little text, about a little garment that turned to dust many hundred years ago. We cannot always be discussing the great central and commanding themes, such as the Divine attributes, redemption, regeneration, immortality, and the judgment to come. Life is largely made up of small things, and the small things are often very great in their influence upon character and destiny. This little text about a lad's “wee” coat has a connection with some of the most vital concerns of life, and is suggestive of many important truths—especially for parents.

In a parent's eye there is no greater personage in this world than a little child. As the least of the planets floats nearest to the sun, so the baby of the household gets the central place in the home and the warm chimney corner in the heart.

What a marvel of beauty—nothing short of a miracle—is a first-born child! With what a glow of honest pride has many a young mother made for her infant treasure the tiny garment in which it was to be presented to the Lord, in the beautiful rite of baptism! And in many a home there is carefully packed away—as above all price—the little white dress in which was baptized the darling one whom Jesus took home long ago.

There is a sweet touch of nature in the passage which I have chosen to-day. Away back in those distant lands and ages there was a young wife, whom the Lord remembered and to whom He gave a son. How overflowing was her joy! (For Hannah was not like some heartless women of our day who regard children as a burden and a nuisance, and would rather risk child-murder than become mothers.) The grateful soul of Hannah broke forth in thanksgiving: "For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him. Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord."

As soon as the infant Samuel was weaned, Hannah goes up to Shiloh, the sacred city, to perform the vow which she had promised in the days of her childless affliction. With a happy

heart she makes her pilgrimage to the shrine of Jehovah—not only presenting her beloved boy to the Lord but also offering several costly sacrifices. God had remembered her sorrow and had made her weep for joy. He had given her a son, and she consecrates him to the service of the temple. He could not have been more than three or four years old when Hannah placed him under the care of Eli the high priest, and he found his home thenceforward in the dwelling place of the Most High.

Moreover, his mother made him a little coat (or tunic), and brought it to him from year to year when she came up with Elkanah to offer their annual sacrifice. What sort of a garment could the little tunic have been? Well, I cannot satisfy your curiosity; but we may well believe that so sensible a mother as Hannah did not degrade her child into a doll, to be bedecked with foolish fineries. It must have been a modest and becoming garment which the godly mother made each year for the appareling of her child. I wish that I could say as much of the apparel which thousands of Christian parents now load upon the forms of their children; as if God did not make a child beautiful enough without the aid of elaborate fineries and expensive uphol-

sterings. I tell you that this overdressing of the body strikes through into the mind and heart—poisoning the mind with affectation and with most unchildlike greed of admiration and vain-glory. How can a check ever be put upon the crop of fops and fashion-worshipers if children are trained into fopperies and fooleries from the nursery? How can a child be instructed to frugality, humility, self-denial, or any sort of spiritual-mindedness while its free young graces are smothered under the artificial trappings of pride and extravagance? I entreat you, Christian parents, that if you lend your children to the Lord, not to disfigure the sacred loan by turning an immortal being into a doll. That wise Hebrew mother made for her son such a garment as became his station; for Samuel was devoted to the service of God, and not to the “lust of the eye and the pride of life.”

Going now more deeply into the spiritual suggestions of our text, let me remind you that clothing has a figurative signification in the word of God. We are exhorted to be clothed with humility, and to keep our garments unspotted from the world. Christianity is likened to a vesture; and believers are commanded to “put on Christ,” so that they need not be found naked

or disfigured with the "filthy rags" of self-righteousness. As our dress is the part of us most visible to everybody, so should our Christ-likeness be visible at first sight to all whom we meet. This illustration of character by clothing extends even into the heavenly world; for we are told that "whosoever overcometh shall be clothed in white raiment," and the saints shall be attired in robes that have been washed to spotless purity in the blood of the atoning Lamb of God.

Nor is it a mere pulpit pun that the very word "habit" is employed to signify both the dress of the body and the moral tendency and disposition of the mind. We parents clothe our children in both senses of the word. We provide the raiment for their bodies, and, in no small degree, we provide the habits of their thought and conduct. We make for them coats that will last—which no moth can eat nor time deface—coats which they may never outgrow as long as life endures.

Mothers, the Creator puts into your hands an unclothed spirit as well as an unclothed body. You make a garment for the one; and in many a home there is hardly a rest for your busy needles through all the year. But shall the mind—the immortal spirit—be left

naked, or be compelled to pick up at random its habits of thinking and acting? This were impossible. Our children will put on our ways and our habits in spite of us. Our character streams into our children, entering through their eyes and ears and every faculty of observation. What they see us do, they will do; what they hear from us lodges in their memory, and, like seed dropped from a parent stock, will come up in their conduct, for good or evil. We are forming their habits; and, in the primary school of home, we are educating them every hour. Upon their plastic, susceptible minds we are printing constantly the impressions which come out in character. No photographic plate is so sensitive to the images which lodge upon it as are the receptive minds of our children to whatever they are seeing or hearing. The sagacious Dr. Bushnell has happily said that "every sentiment which looks into the little eyes looks back out of the eyes, and plays in miniature on the countenance. The tear that steals down a mother's cheek gathers the little face into a responsive sadness. A fright in the mother's face will frighten the child. Our irritations irritate them; our dissimulations make them tricky and deceitful."

If a boy is handled harshly, is thumped or

jerked into obedience, he will probably turn out a sulky, obstinate, and irritable creature—just what our impetuous impatience made him. If malicious gossip or scandal sour our talk at the table or fireside, our children's "teeth will be set on edge." Give your boy a dollar for the toyshop or the place of amusement, and only a dime for the Lord's contribution box, and you will teach him that self-indulgence is ten times more important than charity. If we live for the world, it is very likely that our children may die of the world. If we set our affections on things above, and seek first the kingdom of God for ourselves and for them, we may reasonably hope to win them into the upward pathway we are treading.

And thus, my fellow-parents, are we making "little coats" for the younger children, and the larger coats for the older ones, all the while. When they go away from home they will wear the habits which we put upon them. We really send ourselves to the boarding school or the college in the bearing and breeding which our sons and daughters carry thither. Our older children are wearing now the coats of character which we cut out for them ten or twenty years ago. How do we like their dress? Is it after the good Bible pattern? Mr. A. used to think it

a genteel and hospitable practice to set the decanter on his table; and his sons learned to love the wine too well. They have practiced on these home lessons until their "redness of eyes" and thickness of tongue prove their too great familiarity with the bottle. How does he like the coat they wear?

Brother B. thought that, after all, the theater was not so perilous a place as his pastor or other Puritanic people had pictured it. So instead of providing unexceptionable recreations for his children he gave them *carte blanche* for the playhouse, with all its lascivious attractions and salacious seductions. Some of them have gone too often for their purity of heart or peace of conscience. Can he now pull off the "habit" which he permitted or encouraged them to put on? Mrs. C. insisted that the assembly room was the best place to acquire gracefulness of carriage and elegance of deportment. Her daughters learned everything that the ballroom teaches—even to that style of dance that is "the last sigh of expiring modesty." As she looks now upon their gay apparel of fashion and frivolity, so different from the "ornament of a meek and quiet spirit," her motherly eyes are sometimes moistened at the sight.

Here is a father who spends his Sabbath over his cigar, his Sunday morning newspaper, and his business letters. His sons put on the coat and wear it to their soul's peril; they are not likely to lay it aside unless the grace of God shall open their eyes to the solemn fact that to lose the Sabbath is to lose the soul. In one family the prevailing topic is "money—money"; in another dress and parade; in another sporting; in another music and fine art; in another the tone of daily conversation is toward the best things worth living for; and the pattern which the parents set the children copy. How will all these "habits" of thought and conduct look when they are subjected to the test of experience and the searching light of the day of judgment? Ah, these mind-garments, which beautify and adorn, or else disfigure and deprave, are very apt to last for a lifetime; they will be worn by our offspring long after many of us have turned to dust. They will be garments of light and loveliness, or else of shame and sorrow.

Do not imagine, therefore, that the "little coat" is worthy of only slight attention. The sum of life is made up of little things. They determine character and often decide destiny. As the peasant's coarse frock and the monarch's

robe are both made up of many small threads woven together, so is the garment of character woven out of the innumerable thoughts and words and deeds of each person's daily existence. It is in the little things that Bible piety makes itself most winsome; and the mischief wrought by inconsistent Christians arises from the indulgence of petty sins that are as destructive as moths upon the garment. Dr. M^cLaren pithily says that "white ants pick a carcass clean sooner than a lion will." I fear that you and I are often great sinners in little things. The little mean-nesses of word and look, the irritations of temper, the small duplicities of speech, the "white lies" that are only whitewashed, the small affronts and petty spites, the thoughtless neglect of other people's welfare, and the paltry excuses by which we strive to excuse ourselves from painful duty—all these make up an awful aggregate of sin. A snowflake is a tiny thing, that might melt in an infant's hand. But enough of these may be heaped up by a blizzard on a railway track to stall the most powerful engine and its train. So is it the aggregate amount of inconsistent acts and neglects of duty that impair the influence of the individual Christian; they may accumulate into snow banks that block

up revivals and bring a whole church to a standstill. No sin is a trifle; no sin can be safely allowed to get headway. "Let that worm alone and it will kill your tree," was said once to a gardener in a nobleman's park. Sure enough; the gardener neglected the little borer, and the next year's yellow leaves showed the slow assassination of the tree.

On the other hand, it is the sum total of daily good deeds that make up the "beauty of holiness." The richest crops of grace spring from tiny seeds—especially when they have been watered by prayer.

Let no one despise the day of small things. The noblest Christian lives often have their origin in some faithful word spoken in love, or in the reading of a tract, or in some small occurrence, or in a single resolution to break with some besetting sin. One sentence seems to have brought the ardent Peter and the beloved John to their decision of discipleship. One sentence converted the jailer of Philippi. The outcome of those few words has been felt in the spiritual history of thousands of others since that day. Paul little knew how many souls, in all time, he was addressing when he said to the frightened jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt

be saved." In fact, nobody ever knows how much good he is doing when he does just one good thing.

A word of praise from his mother made Benjamin West a painter and president of the Royal Academy. A kind sentence or two of commendation, bestowed in a short talk in a prayer meeting, led me to enter the sacred ministry. From that incident I learned never to underrate the influence of a few words spoken at a critical moment.

A godly wife told her husband that she "trembled for him"; and that single sentence spoken in love sent him trembling to the cross. Dr. Payson, of Portland, once asked a group of young men to let him read to them a hymn; and when it was ended they were all in tears. The Divine Spirit was in that tender voice. Harlan Page, reared like his Master to the humble trade of a carpenter, became a marvelously successful winner of souls to Christ by uttering a few "words in season" with an emphasis of love that penetrated to the core.

That noble Boanerges of the western New York pulpit, Dr. Wisner, of Ithaca, said that he stopped, on a hot summer day, at a farmhouse for a glass of water. The farmer's daughter

handed him the refreshing draught, and he repaid her by a kind, tender word about Jesus as the water of life. Several years afterwards a middle-aged woman recognized him on the deck of a steamboat, and thanked him for the few plain, faithful words which led her to Christ. It is a sin and a shame that we Christians let slip so many opportunities to drop a word of truth through an open ear into an open soul. Grant that many a truth thus dropped has not sprouted; neither has every sermon preached been the means of converting a soul. But the awakening power of a discourse has often lain in a single point pressed home. It is the tip of the arrow that penetrates the "joints of the harness."

The great lesson in the saving of souls is never to "despise the day of small things," never to lose an opportunity, and never to underrate the power of a single truth spoken in love. Revivals in a church commonly start in one or two hearts. The first revival in the little church in which my own early ministry was spent began in the heart of a little girl. Her few words awakened one woman, and that woman came at once to me, and proposed special meetings; they were worth more to me than any year in a theological seminary.

I might multiply these illustrations of the greatness of the littles; for nothing is small that has God's Spirit in it and working through it. In conclusion, I would impress once more upon the hearts of all parents the prodigious importance of all those numberless words and deeds by which they weave those garments of character that shall be worn long after they are in their silent sepulchers. No office is comparable to that of parentage; no trust is so sacred as that of an immortal spirit in the plastic period of childhood. When the Creator lays a newborn babe in the arms of its parents, He says to them, "Take this child and nurse it for Me and I will give thee thy wages." The answer of gratitude and faith ought to be: O God, Thou hast put Thy noblest work into our hands. We accept the precious trust. We will shelter this young life under Thy mercy seat. We will nurse this soul in its infancy with the sincere milk of truth, that in after years it may bear strong meat, for strong service of God and righteousness. Help us to order our own lives in harmony with Thee, so that this young life may reflect Thine image in reflecting ours!

To such conscientious fidelity God offers the only wages that can satisfy the claims of love.

He pays the heart's claim in the heart's own coin. Faithful, painstaking, prayerful Hannah found her rich reward in the sight of Samuel's after-career as Israel's upright judge. Timothy's "little coat" outlasted his mother Eunice. The mother of the Wesleys was repaid for all her patient, loving discipline when her sons reared the world-wide tabernacle for Methodism. God never breaks His covenant with those who fulfill their covenants to Him.

Fathers, mothers, we are weaving the habits of our children every hour! We do it, as clothes are fashioned, stitch by stitch; and most of all by the unconscious influence of example. The estate which we can bequeath to them may be small. We may not all be able to afford them the costly education of great schools or universities. But day by day we can be patiently weaving for them that garment of godliness that, by Divine grace, shall grow brighter and fairer until they shall walk in shining apparel before the throne of God.

V

THE JOURNEY OF A DAY

V

THE JOURNEY OF A DAY

"I pray Thee, send me good speed this day."—GENESIS
xxiv. 12.

IN those early patriarchal times God and His people seemed to live very near together and to hold very close personal intercourse. Their faith was as simple as their style of living. Abraham often conversed with God as one of our children converses with father or mother, on terms of filial and yet familiar affection. Eliezer, the steward of Abraham, addresses Jehovah in the same direct, though reverent manner.

The story from which our text is taken gives us a charming picture of the pastoral life of the Orient in those early times. Abraham sends Eliezer, the "eldest servant of his house," to Mesopotamia on a search for a wife for his son Isaac. Eliezer sets off with his caravan of camels, and soon reaches the city of Nahor, near which resides Bethuel, who was a kinsman of Abraham. The caravan halts beside a well in

the vicinity of the town. With straightforward directness Eliezer offers up this prayer: "O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray Thee, *send me good speed this day*, and show kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water. And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that Thou hast appointed for Thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that Thou hast showed kindness unto my master." The speedy appearance of the beautiful Rebekah, with her pitcher upon her shoulder, attested the answer which Eliezer sought for his petition.

It is not my custom to use passages of Holy Writ as mottoes for my discourses; but I shall do so on this occasion. My theme is *The Journey of a Day*, and how, by God's blessing, to make good speed upward and heavenward through every hour. Life is frequently presented as a journey or a pilgrimage; and John Bunyan was only following the line of scriptural suggestion when he conceived the plan of his immortal allegory. The actual journey of human life is sub-

divided into several stages. Of these a day is the most visible and definite, for it is measured by the motion of our globe on its axis. A person of the average age (thirty years) sees about eleven thousand days; a veteran of four score sees about thirty thousand. In ordinary phrase we apply the word "day" to those hours of the twenty-four which are marked by sunlight. The period we call "night" is the bivouac after the march; and the hours of sleep are the blank leaves in the diary of life.

After a few hours of unconscious slumber the rosy finger of the morning touches us as the Divine Restorer touched the motionless form of Jairus' daughter, and saith to us, *Arise!* In an instant the wheels of conscious activity are set in motion, and we leap up from that temporary tomb, our bed. Was yesterday a sick day? Sleep, like a good doctor, may have made us well. Was yesterday a sad day? Sleep has kindly soothed the agitated nerves. Was it (like too many of its predecessors) a lost day? Then our merciful Father puts us on a new probation, and gives us a chance to save this newborn day for Him and for His holy purposes of our existence.

Do we lose the morning either by oversleep or indolence or aimlessness? Then we com-

monly lose the day. One hour of the morning is worth two or three at the sunsetting. The best hours for study, for invention, or for labor are the first hours after mind and body have their resurrection from the couch of slumber. Napoleon, who made time a great factor in all his successes, seized the early dawn. The master of modern fiction wrote nearly all his "Waverley" romances while his guests were sleeping. The numerous commentaries of good Albert Barnes are monuments to early rising; they attest how much a man may accomplish who gets at his work by five o'clock in the morning. To the student, the artist, the merchant, the manual laborer, the most useful hours are reached before the sun climbs to the meridian. I am well aware that a vast deal of traditional nonsense has come down to us about the "midnight lamp." But those who use the midnight lamp, for either mental toil or sensual dissipations, are very apt to burn their own lamp of life out the soonest. Make it a rule, then, that he who would begin the day aright must seize and save its earliest hours. How often do we see some poor dilatory fellow rushing in blundering haste through the whole day in vain pursuit after the time he lost in the morning!

Every day should be commenced with God and upon the knees. "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up," said the man after God's own heart. He begins the day unwisely who leaves his chamber without a secret conference with his heavenly Friend. The true Christian goes to his closet both for his panoply and his "rations" for the day's march and its inevitable conflicts. As the Oriental traveler sets out for the sultry journey by loading up his camel under the palm tree's shade, and by filling his flagons from the cool fountain that sparkles at its roots, so doth God's wayfarer draw his fresh supplies from the unexhausted spring. Morning is the golden time for devotion. The mercies of the night provoke to thankfulness. The buoyant heart, that is in love with God, makes its earliest flight—like the lark—toward the gates of heaven. Gratitude, faith, dependent trust, all prompt to early interviews with Him, who, never slumbering Himself, awaits on His throne for our morning orisons. We all remember Bunyan's beautiful description of his Pilgrim's lodging over night in the "Chamber of Peace" which looked toward the sunrising, and at daybreak he "awoke and sang." If stony Egyptian "Memnon" made music when the first

rays kindled on his flinty brow, a devout heart should not be mute when God causes the outgoings of his mornings to rejoice.

No pressure of business or household duties should crowd out prayer. An eminent Christian merchant told me that it was his rule to secure a good quiet half-hour in his chamber on his knees and over his Bible before he met his family; and then he went into his business—as Moses came down from the mount—with his face shining. Doctor Arnold, of Rugby, had a favorite morning hymn, which opens with these stirring lines:—

“Come, my soul, thou must be waking;
Now is breaking
O’er the earth another day.
Come to Him who made this splendor;
See thou render
All thy feeble powers can pay.”

Closet devotions are the fit precursor to household worship. Family religion underlies the commonwealth and the church. No Christian government, no healthy public conscience, no Bible philanthropies, no wholesome church life can exist without being rooted beneath the hearthstone and the family altar. The glory and defense of dear old Scotland are found in those

scenes of ingle-side worship which Burns has so finely pictured :—

“From scenes like these old Scotia’s grandeur springs,
That makes her loved at home, revered abroad.”

No prelude to the day is so fitting, so impressive, and so potent in its influence as the union of household hearts round the throne of grace. Family worship is a strong seam well stitched on the border of the day, to keep it from raveling out into indolence and irreligion. Wise is that Christian parent who hems every morning with the word of God and fervent prayer.

When the early devotions of the day are over, then let us shoulder up its load cheerfully. The happiness and the serenity of the whole day depend very much upon a cheerful start. The man who leaves his home with a scowl on his brow, with a snap at his children, and a tart speech to his wife, is not likely to be a very pleasant companion for anyone, or to return home at night less acid than a vinegar cruet. We never know what the day may bring forth, or when we shall leave our threshold for the last time, or hear the last “good morning.” Let us, therefore, set out on the day’s journey under the wing of God’s loving care, and committing our way unto Him.

The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. Eliezer described his happy and successful day's journey by saying at its close, "I being in the way, the *Lord led me* to the house of my master's brethren." When you and I are in the path of duty, and have sought the Divine direction, we may feel sure that the Lord always will lead us likewise.

In order to make "good speed" in your day's journey, do not go overloaded. I do not refer so much to your undertaking too many things as to your carrying too many cares. Honest work is strengthening; but worry frets and fevers us. The temptation to worry should be resisted as a temptation of the devil; to yield to it is a sin against our own peace, and a reproach upon our Christian character. The journey made by any pedestrian is simply a succession of steps. In accomplishing your day's work you have simply to take one step at a time. To take that step wisely is all that you need to think about. If I am climbing a mountain, to look down may make me dizzy; to look too far up may make me tired and discouraged. Take no anxious thought for the morrow. Sufficient for the day—yes, and for each hour in the day—is the toil or the trial thereof. There is not a child of God in this

world who is strong enough to stand the strain of to-day's duties and all the load of to-morrow's anxieties piled upon the top of them. Paul himself would have broken down if he had attempted the experiment. We have a perfect right to ask our heavenly Father for strength equal to the day; but we have no right to ask Him for one extra ounce of strength for anything beyond it. When the morrow comes, grace will come with it sufficient for its tasks or for its troubles.

“Let me be strong in word and deed
Just for to-day;
Lord! for to-morrow and its need
I must not pray.”

The journey of each day—yes, and of every day until we reach the Father's house—is a walk of faith. We are often perplexed, and in our short-sighted ignorance we cry out: “Lord, how can we know the way?” The answer comes back to us: “I will lead the blind in paths that they have not known; I will make the darkness light before them.” When Eliezer humbly asked God to guide him, he made “good speed” indeed; he was directed to the very place and to the very person that he was in quest of. His master Abraham before him had made the jour-

ney from the land of the Chaldees to the land of Canaan entirely by faith; for he "went out, not knowing whither he went." He had no maps and no itinerary; yet one thing he was sure of: he knew that God was his guide, and that he was heaven-bound. Every Christian should be a close and attentive observer of providential leadings. A conflict often arises between choosing our own way—that "jumps with our own selfish inclination"—or walking in God's way. Lot chose his own way, and it led him into Sodom. When he obeyed God's directions they led him in safety to Zoar. Jonah chose his own way, and it sent him overboard into the raging sea; then he took God's way, and it brought him to Nineveh on a mission of mercy.

Whatever perplexities may arise as to the meanings of the Divine providences, or however fallible may be our own judgments, yet of one thing we may feel perfectly sure: God has given us a guidebook for every day's journey that is both divinely inspired and perfectly infallible. "This is the Book," as Coleridge said of it, "that always finds us." There is not a difficult question in ethics on which this heaven-lighted lamp does not shed a clear light, and for every step in life it has a precept and a principle. The Bible is

emphatically a book for everyday use; and the healthy Christian runs his Christianity through all the routine of his everyday experience. Some people keep their religion, as they do their umbrellas, for stormy weather; they may think it a convenient thing to have when their physician pronounces a fatal verdict, or when death is at the door. Others reserve their piety for the Sabbath and the sanctuary, and on Monday fold it up and lay it away with their Sunday clothes. But every day of the week ought to be a "Lord's day," and carry us twenty-four hours nearer heaven. A healthy religion cannot be maintained simply by Sundays, and psalms, and sacraments; it must be fed both from the "upper springs" and the "nether springs." Brethren, let us see to it that the higher regions of our lives toward God are not more plentifully watered than those lower regions which embrace our conduct and our connection with our fellow-creatures. The lowly valleys in which we meet our families, our friends, and our business associates ought to be just as verdant and well-watered as those Sabbath elevations on which we "see no man save Jesus only."

In the journey of each day we cannot predict what lies before us. We know not what the day may bring forth—whether of joy or sorrow. This

is well; for our joys are heightened when they come as glad surprises, and to forecast our sorrows would only increase our sufferings without increasing our strength to bear them. Temptations, however, owe much of their peril and of their power to the fact that they commonly spring upon us unawares. Satan is no more likely to advertise the time and method of his assaults in advance than a burglar is to send us word that he will be trying the bolts of our front doors at one o'clock to-morrow morning. "I say unto you all, *Watch*," is the command of our Master. You may remember how, during the Civil War, the Union forces, flushed with victory and a false sense of security, were taking their morning meal very leisurely at Cedar Creek. Suddenly the Confederates pounced upon them and scattered them into a rout—which was only checked by the timely arrival of Sheridan after his famous and romantic ride from Winchester. We are all liable to have our Cedar Creeks; and the times in which we lay our armor off or relax our vigilance, and over-estimate our own spiritual strength, are the most disastrous in our life-record. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered."

There is no journey of life but has its clouded days; and there are some days in which our eyes are so blinded with tears that we find it hard to see our way or even read God's promises. Those days that have a bright sunrise followed by sudden thunderclaps and bursts of unlooked-for sorrows are the ones that test certain of our graces the most severely. Yet the law of spiritual eyesight very closely resembles the law of physical optics. When we come suddenly out of the daylight into a room even moderately darkened we can discern nothing, but the pupil of our eye gradually enlarges until unseen objects become visible. Even so the pupil of the eye of faith has the blessed faculty of enlarging in dark hours of bereavement, so that we discover that our loving Father's hand is holding the cup of trial, and by and by the gloom becomes luminous with glory. The fourteenth chapter of John never falls with such music upon our ears as when we catch its sweet strains amid the pauses of some terrific storm. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me." "I will not leave you comfortless."

What are the happiest hours we spend in every day? I will venture to say that they are those

which see us busy in doing good to others and in serving our Master. A cup of cold water costs only the trouble to get it; its refreshing draught may revive some fainting spirit. That is a bright hour in which we lift up some poor fellow-traveler and set him on his feet. A still brighter one is that in which we lead him to the Saviour. Harlan Page made it his rule never to talk to anybody for ten minutes without trying to do him or her some good. If all our hearts were more highly charged with the Divine electricity, we should flash out sparks of loving-kindness to everyone with whom we come in contact.

I very much fear that most of you see but very few days that are really full of joy in large measure, pressed down and running over; and whose fault is it but your own? One of the happiest Christians that I know is happy on a small income and in spite of some very sharp trials. The secret of happiness is not the size of one's purse, or the style of one's house, or the number of one's butterfly friends; the fountain of peace and joy is in the heart. If you would only throw open your heart's windows to the sunshine of Christ's love, it would soon scatter the chilling mists, and even turn tears into rainbows. Some professed Christians pinch and starve themselves

into walking skeletons, and then try to excuse themselves on the plea of ill-health or "constitutional" ailments. The medicines they need are from Christ's pharmacy. A large draught of Bible taken every morning, a throwing open of the heart's windows to the promises of the Master, a few words of honest prayer, a deed or two of kindness to the next person whom you meet, will do more to brighten your countenance and help your digestion than all the drugs of the doctors. If you want to get your aches and trials out of sight, hide them under your mercies.

Bear in mind, my friends, that your happiness or your misery are very much of your own making. You cannot create spiritual sunshine any more than you can create the morning star; but you can put your soul where *Christ is shining*. Begin every day with God. Keep a clean conscience and a good stock of Bible promises within reach. Keep a strong, robust faith that can draw honey out of a rock and oil out of the flinty rock. Never spend a day without trying to do somebody good; and then, keeping step with your Master, march on toward home over any road, however rough, and against any head winds that blow. It will be all sunshine when we get to heaven, and "there is no night there!"

As I close this discourse and look over this assembly I cannot but observe how a day is a type of human life. That little child nestling beside its mother is now in the rosy dawn of its existence. Yonder young men and maidens are still in the morning—under skies flushed with hope. These men of business and these mistresses of households are in the busy noontide. Many of you are far on in the afternoon; and on some of our heads the gray hairs bespeak the approaching sundown. Be the journey long or short, may God give you “good speed” heavenward, and enable every one of you to do a round day’s work for Him! Marble and granite are perishable monuments, and their inscriptions may be seldom read. *Carve your names on human hearts*; they alone are immortal! Work while the day lasts; for “the night cometh!” Let it come! If Christ come with it, we can listen calmly for the sunset gun.

“Just when Thou wilt, Oh, Master! call,
Or at the noon or evening-fall,
Or in the dark or in the light,
Just when Thou wilt; it shall be right.
Just when Thou wilt; no choice for me,
Life is a trust to use for Thee;
Death is the hushed and glorious tryst
With Thee, my King, my Saviour-Christ!”

VI
JESUS ONLY

VI

JESUS ONLY

“They saw no man, save Jesus only.”—MATTHEW xvii. 8.

THERE has been much discussion over the scene of our Lord's transfiguration; but to my mind it seems probable that it occurred upon one of the southern spurs of Mount Hermon, north of Cæsarea Philippi. The outlook from such a point would carry the eye from Lebanon, with its diadems of glittering ice, southward to the silvery mirror of Gennesareth. But it was not that vision of natural beauty that the three disciples looked at chiefly. They saw Jesus only. Two illustrious prophets, Moses and Elijah, had just made their miraculous appearance on the top of the mount. But neither of these mighty men appeared any longer to the disciples' view; “they saw no man, save *Jesus only*.” These two words are large enough to suggest many a sermon; let us gather up some of their teachings to us to-day.

I. In these words we find a clew to the power of the apostolic preaching. That majestic figure on the mount became the central figure to the eye and the heart of the apostles. One Person occupied their thoughts; one Person inspired all their most effective discourses. It was no such combination of philosopher and philanthropist as Renan has portrayed, or Theodore Parker preached; it was the omnipotent and ineffable Son of God. They saw in Him "God manifest in the flesh"; they saw in Him an infinite Redeemer, a Divine Model of Life, a constant Intercessor, a never-failing Friend. When Peter delivered his first sermon at Pentecost, and when John described his sublime visions on the isle of Patmos, they directed all eyes to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. Paul gave utterance to the heart of the whole apostolic brotherhood when he said, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." Has not this been the keynote to the best sermons of the best preachers ever since? Is not that the most powerful sermon which is the most luminous with Christ? Depend upon it, my friends, that the pulpit, the theological seminary, the Sabbath school, and the printed volume which God owns

with the richest success are those which present most prominently "no man, save Jesus only."

We open our New Testament and we discover in its earliest pages a wonderful Child. It is a childhood that savors not of this world; it has a celestial flavor about it. At the age of twelve the Lad is astonishing the rabbis in the temple by His questions and His modest, sagacious answers. He opens the secret of His life when of His wondering mother He inquires, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Over the next eighteen years there hangs a thin veil through which we rather dimly discern a guileless young man toiling at the humble, honest trade of a carpenter; the only record of it is that He "increased in favor with God and man." The greatest of our American Presidents found it to his advantage that he was cradled on the hard rocks of poverty, and was reared among the "plain people," with whom he kept in constant touch through his whole grand career. With an infinite wisdom Jesus of Nazareth chose to be born among the poor and never aimed to rise beyond the poor. When, in after years, some of the dignitaries of church or state offered Him some attentions, He put on no airs and made no sycophantic homage to them in return. He

knew that He was higher than the highest, yet loved to stoop as low as the lowliest. When He entered upon His public ministry and received the ordinance of baptism, it was preceded by no repentance of sin or regeneration by the Holy Spirit. Neither of these experiences was needful to a person who "did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth."

The three years of His marvelous ministry are all condensed into the one simple, matchless line—"He went about *doing good*." Sorrow was the appeal to which He always opened His ear; suffering was the surest passport to His kind attention; sin He infinitely abhorred, but the sinner He pitied and loved with an infinite compassion. His simple purpose was to create anew our poor sin-cursed race, and to lift that race up to God. As a teacher He had an unique originality: He spoke by authority, and not as the scribes or the *savants*. Untaught Himself in any academy or university like those of Athens, He floods the world with a knowledge as much more profound than the philosophy of Socrates or Plato as the Atlantic is deeper than the wayside pool. His telescope reaches into eternity! Look also at His works of love, which are really no tasks to Him; at His miracles of sight-restoring,

health-recovering and death-conquering, all of which came as easy to Him as the lifting of His finger and the opening of His lips! What manner of man was this, that even the winds and the sea obeyed Him? His life is power personified; it is benevolence on foot; it is holiness filling every spot He touches with the atmosphere of the celestial climes.

See, too, how, without hardening Himself against sorrow, He takes the sorrows of others into His own bosom. No little annoyances provoke Him to petty displays of passion; no stupendous agony shakes the constancy of the hand that holds the bitter cup to His own lips. As a lamb He goeth to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth. He willingly consents to die the "just for the unjust," when the latent power of His right arm might have laid Pilate and his ruffian crew in stiffened silence on the pavement of their judgment hall. He is willing to die that a dying world of sinners might live; "and when He hangs upon the cross a drooping flower of innocence," and the earth shudders with horror at the sight of such barbarities, a heathen soldier cannot refuse the involuntary confession, "Truly this was the Son of God."

Did such another being as this ever tread our old sinning and sobbing world? Does history—sacred or profane—record such a wonderful career? Search through all the annals of human kind, in all lands and ages, and you will find no man that answers to this description but ONE! As the three disciples saw Him lifted o'er the mount, His face shining as the sun and the raiment of His character white as the light, so has the world beheld Him ever since; in all the universe there has been and there is but one such personage; it is *Jesus only!*

I have come to preach this Jesus to you to-day. Before me are many immortal souls who have brought hither certain troubles and difficulties, certain sorrows and spiritual wants. They have come to inquire: Who will show me any good? who will help me? Here, for instance, is a person who is not quite satisfied with himself; nay, he is thoroughly dissatisfied. If I should bluntly tell him that he is a great sinner and wicked enough to deserve an eternal condemnation, he might resent it and throw back the retort, "I am as good as you, sir." But in his secret heart he knows that he is far from what he ought to be, and would frankly acknowledge, "I don't pretend to be a religious man." He

admits that he is not prepared to die ; and sometimes the thought of dying in his present condition sends a shiver over him. To-day he is yet in his sins, unforgiven and unconverted, with a tremendous score running up against him on God's record-book. "How shall I clear off that score against me, and make a new departure into a better life?"—the old question, you see, "What shall I do to be saved?"

If you sincerely wish to be saved, there is a way to be saved. Repentance of your sins, however sincere, is not enough. Regret for sin in the past will not atone for it, nor keep you from sin in the future. Repentance is essential, is indispensable, but it is not enough to save your soul. It would be like a man's quitting a leaky boat at sea with no better one in sight ; you may leave the swamping boat only to be swallowed up in the deep. What you need is a positive personal work wrought for you and wrought within you. There is One who can do this work, and one only. Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world,—if the sin of the world, then your sins. The atonement He made for your guilt on the cross was perfect ; He obeyed the demands of God's broken law perfectly ; He wrought out His work of redemption

perfectly, and no man need perish for want of an atonement. But in order to receive your share of the benefit of that work you are required to go directly to Jesus Christ. Your Bible is valuable to you chiefly as a guide to Jesus Christ. Prayer is availing to you mainly as a means of approaching God in Christ. If you are thirsty, a cup—whether of coarse pottery or chased silver—is of value to you only as the utensil for bringing the water to your parched lips. The cup alone and empty would be a mockery. The sincerest prayer for salvation is an empty cup, unless it become a channel through which shall flow your confession and your desires toward Christ, and pardoning grace shall flow back to you from Christ. Whoever would have his sins blotted out and a new heart created in him, must go to Jesus only. And if the means which he is employing—the Bible, the sermons, the prayers, or any other means—become his chief reliance, then they are a bane rather than a blessing. There is none who takes away sin save Jesus only. There is one way, and but one way to be saved, and the sooner you reach it the better.

If you should happen to be at the Grand Central Railway Station in New York when the Eastern express train is about starting, you would

see a certain number of people entering the cars that are labeled, "For Boston." The doors of those cars stand open; the passengers enter and dispose themselves for the journey. They take it for granted that the station master has directed them rightly; and they do not run round inquiring if those be the right cars, or if they are safe and are likely to keep to the track. They have made up their minds to go to Boston, and they have faith enough in the directors of the company and in its rolling stock to take the prescribed cars and trust their lives there. "There are a million of people in New York," you might say; "there are only a half-dozen cars provided." Very true; but there is room enough on that train for all the people of New York who desire to start for Boston at that hour and by that route. That train carries those who come to it and no others. If you shall desire to reach Boston and yet fail to come to the station, or if you fail to procure the required ticket at the station, it is not the fault of the railway company that you do not get to Boston.

Pray do not think that this illustration belittles our solemn theme. I simply aim to draw your mind's eye to the glorious truth that Jesus Christ has "opened a new and living way" to escape

from the "City of Destruction" (as Bunyan phrases it) to the city of God. Every vehicle that bears the inscription, "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ hath everlasting life," is the right one for you to take. "Is it safe?" Myriads of penitent sinners have reached heaven by that road; try it! "I am ashamed to confess that I have not the means to procure a ticket." Yes; but one is offered to you gratuitously if you will accept it on certain conditions. At infinite cost our loving Redeemer has opened this way, and has provided the conveyances. "I am the way, the truth, and the life; whosoever cometh unto ME, shall in no wise be cast out." You are to come to Him only, obey His directions, trust your immortal soul to His keeping, and render to Him your heart's service and your unending gratitude.

When Jesus Christ paid the ransom of your soul He took away its guilt and condemnation. When He provided what, without irreverence, we may call "the gospel train" and opened wide its doors, He took away all your foolish and wicked excuses. When you break away from your favorite sins and come to Him in honest contrition and offer to do His will, He will take away your wicked heart. And every furlong

that you go onward with Him, He will take away your doubts and lift off your heavy burden; and when you reach that unbridged river we call death, He will take away your fears, and land you safely on the shining shore, and of all the countless multitude you will find there, not one but will gratefully acknowledge that they were saved by *Jesus only*.

Perhaps one reason why you are not yet a Christian is that you have been mistaken as to what you ought to do, and just how to do it. Your experience may have been similar to that of the woman to whom a faithful minister once said:—

“Have you been in the habit of attending church?”

“Yes, I have been to every church in town; but the little comfort I get soon goes away again, and leaves me as bad as before.”

“Do you read the Bible at home?”

“Sir, I am always reading the Bible; sometimes I get a little comfort, but it soon leaves me as wretched as ever.”

“Have you prayed for peace?”

“Oh, sir, I am praying all the day long; sometimes I get a little peace after praying, but I soon lose it. I am a miserable woman.”

"Now, madam, when you went to church, or prayed, or read your Bible, did you rely on these means to give you comfort?"

"I think I did."

"To *whom* did you pray?"

"To *God*, sir; to whom else should I pray?"

"Now, read this verse, 'Come unto Me and I will give you rest.' Jesus said this. Have you gone to Jesus for rest?"

The lady looked amazed, and tears welled up into her eyes. Light burst in upon her heart like unto the light that flooded Mount Hermon on the transfiguration morn. Everything else that she had been looking at—church, Bible, mercy seat, and minister—all disappeared, and to her wondering, believing eyes there remained no man, save *Jesus only*. She was liberated from years of bondage on the spot. The scales fell from her eyes and the spiritual fetters from her soul. Jesus only could do that work of deliverance; but He did not do it until she looked to Him alone.

This incident reached us during the first years of my ministry. With this "open secret" in my hand, I approached the first Roman Catholic that ever attended upon my preaching. He had turned his troubled eyes for a long time to the

Holy Virgin and to sainted martyrs in the calendar. He had been often to a priest; never to a Saviour. I set before him *Jesus only*. He looked up and saw the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. "My Romish mother," said he to me, "would burn up my Bible if she knew I had one in my house." But she could not burn out the blessed Jesus from his emancipated and happy heart.

Next I took this simple revelation to a poor invalid of three score and ten. His sight was failing, and the vision of his mind was as blurred and dim as the vision of his body. I set before him, in my poor way, *Jesus only*. The old man could hardly see the little grandchild who read aloud to him. But he could see Jesus with the eye of faith. The patriarch who had hardened under seventy years of sin became a little child. The skepticism of a lifetime vanished when the Holy Spirit revealed to his searching, yearning look the Divine form of a Saviour crucified.

I never forgot these lessons learned in my ministerial boyhood. From that time to this I have found that the only sure way of bringing light and peace to anxious inquirers is to direct them away from themselves, away from ritualities and stereotyped forms, away from agencies of every

kind, away from everything save Jesus only. John the Baptist held the essence of the gospel on his tongue when he cried out, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." My anxious friend, be assured that you never will find pardon for the past and hope for the future; you never will know how to live or be prepared to die until you look to *Jesus only*.

Here is a hint, too, for desponding Christians. You are harassed with doubts. Without are fightings and within are fears. Why? Because you have tried to live on frames and feelings, and they ebb and flow like the seatide. You have rested on past experiences and not on a present Saviour. You have looked at yourself too much, and not to Him who was made to you righteousness and full redemption. Do you long for light, peace, strength, assurance, and joy? Then do your duty, and look to Jesus only.

When the godly-minded Oliphant was on his dying bed, they read to him that beautiful passage in the seventh chapter of Revelation, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." (It is the passage which poor *Burns* could never read with a dry eye.) The old man exclaimed: "Perhaps that is so. The Bible tells me that there is no weeping in heaven; but I know I shall cry

the first time I see my Saviour." He was right. And it will be so with all of us who come off more than conquerors. The first object that will enchain our eyes on entering the gates of glory will not be the jeweled walls or the shining ranks of the seraphim. It will not be the parent who loves us or the pastor who pointed out the way of life. But amid the ten thousand wonders of that wonderful world of light and joy the believer's eye, in its first enrapturing vision, will "see no man, save JESUS ONLY."

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VII

RIGHT VIEWS OF THINGS

VII

RIGHT VIEWS OF THINGS

“Thou hast well seen.”—JEREMIAH i. 12.

THERE is a right way and a wrong way of looking at almost everything. Some persons seem to have no eye for beauty; and others see every object through a distorted vision. To such persons one of Turner's fine landscapes is merely so much paint and canvas; to a man like Ruskin it is a masterpiece of golden sunlight, bathing field and forest with its splendors. Niagara is a disappointment to many on a first view; the mighty cataract gradually educates the eye to a right conception of its crumbling cliff of snow-white waters shot through with emerald.

“Thou hast well seen” were God's words to Jeremiah when He called him to be a prophet to the people of Israel. The modest young man had just said, “I cannot speak, for I am a child.” The Lord touches his mouth and inspires him with the gift of words. He then tests the accu-

racy of his vision by the question, "What seest thou?" Jeremiah does not reply, "I see a bit of wood," or "I see a staff"; his answer is, "I see a rod of an almond tree." This was just what the Lord meant that the young prophet should see. The almond was a tree of rapid growth which put forth its blossoms early in the spring; it was a type of speedy action. As Jeremiah had shown his quickness of apprehension and accuracy of discernment, God commended his answer and said unto him, "Thou hast well seen."

It is vastly important that you and I should seek for spiritual discernment; for many of our joys and many of our sorrows proceed from our method of looking at those things which most concern our peace. How differently, for example, the Lord Jesus Christ appears to different eyes. Long ago it was predicted that the Messiah would be to many as a root out of dry ground, having no form or comeliness. When they shall see Him, there is no beauty that they should desire Him; He will be despised and rejected of men. When Jesus came, therefore, to His own, they received Him not. As many as beheld Him rightly and welcomed Him, to them gave He the precious privilege to become the children of God. To all such, in every age and land, He is the

chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. Jesus Christ never changes. The difference between the thoughtless sinner and the same person after he is regenerated is that now he looks at Christ with a new eye, and has discovered Him to be the very Saviour that he needs.

Some people look at Jehovah only as a consuming fire, and are struck through with despair. Others go to the opposite extreme and see in Him only an infinite goodness and tender mercy; such are in danger of becoming blind to the sinfulness of sin, and they easily slide away into a belief in universal salvation. The man who magnifies God's mercy at the expense of His justice, and who does not believe that God will punish unrepented sin as it deserves, has not "well seen." He will discover his delusion, at his terrible cost, on the "last great day." Those wise men in the Westminster Assembly saw the Divine attributes in their right proportion when they framed that wonderfully comprehensive answer—"God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth."

I. We are all apt to make egregious mistakes when we look at our heavenly Father's provi-

dential dealings. Even some Christians are betrayed into a heathenish habit of talking about "good luck" and "bad fortune," and using other expressions that convey the idea that this life is a game of chance. Blind unbelief may be expected to err, and to scan God's work as either a riddle or a muddle. A Christian who has had his eyes opened ought to know better than to make such mistakes. Yet how prone we are to regard many of God's dealings in a wrong light and to call them by wrong names! We speak of things as afflictions which are really blessings in disguise. We congratulate people on gaining what turns out to be a terrible snare or worse than a serious loss. Quite as often we condole with them over occurrences which are about to yield to them blessings more precious than gold. The patriarch Jacob evidently thought that he was a fair subject for commiseration when he groaned out in his grief, "Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me." His dim vision could not foresee that happy evening when the returning caravan from Egypt would bring to him Simeon and Benjamin, and the thrilling announcement that the long-lost Joseph was governor over all the

realm of Pharaoh. He had not "well seen" what sort of a God he had once vowed to serve.

Let us hesitate before we condole with a brother who is under the chastisement of our loving Father in heaven. Be careful how you condole with a man who has lost his money and saved his good name, or congratulate the man who has made a million at the expense of his piety. When a Christian is toppled over from a dizzy and dangerous height, and "brought down to hard pan," he is brought down to the solid rock at the same time. In the valley of humiliation he has more of the joy of God's countenance and wears more of the herb called "heart's-ease" in his bosom than he ever did in the days of his giddy prosperity. Sickness has often brought to a man spiritual recovery; suffering has often wrought out for him an exceeding weight of glory.

I have seen people condole tenderly with a weeping mother whose child has flown away home to heaven; but they never thought of condoling with her over a living child who was a frivolous slave of fashion, or a dissipated sensualist, or a wayward son, the "heaviness of his mother." A hundred times over have I pitied more the parent of a living sorrow than the

parent of a departed joy. Spare your tears from the darlings who are safe in the arms of Jesus, and spend them over the living who are yet dead in sin and sheer impenitence. Let us learn to see things rightly, and call them by their right names. We often drape our real blessings with a pall and decorate our dangerous temptations with a garland. Let us all pray for spiritual discernment and often be putting up the petition, "Lord, open Thou our eyes." Then we may discover that this life is only a training school for a higher and a better one; then we shall see a Father's smile behind the darkest cloud; and at the end of the pilgrimage of duty it will be one of the raptures of heaven to behold the King in His beauty, and to know even as we have been known.

II. Let me, in the next place, remind you that if we possessed more spiritual discernment we would not so often torment ourselves with sinful anxieties about the future. Our loving Lord knew what was in man when He reiterated His remonstrances against borrowing trouble in advance, and when He said, "Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Worry is not only a sin against

God, it is a sin against our own peace. It sometimes amounts to a slow suicide. Honest work, however hard, seldom hurts us ; it is worry that corrodes and kills.

There is only one practical remedy for this deadly sin of anxiety, and that is to *take short views*. Faith is content to live "from hand to mouth," enjoying each blessing from God as it comes. This perverse spirit of worry runs off and gathers some anticipated troubles and throws them into the cup of mercies and turns them to vinegar. A bereaved parent sits down by the newly-made grave of a beloved child and sorrowfully says to herself, "Well, I have only one more left, and one of these days he may go off to live in a home of his own, or he may be taken away ; and *if* he dies, my house will be desolate and my heart utterly broken." Now who gave that weeping mother permission to use the word "if"? Is not her trial sore enough now, without overloading it with an imaginary trial? And if her strength breaks down it will be simply because she is not satisfied with letting God afflict her ; she tortures herself with imagined afflictions of her own. If she could but take a short view, she would see a living child yet spared to her, to be loved and enjoyed and lived for. Then, instead

of having two sorrows, she would have one great possession to set over against a great loss; her duty to the living would be not only a relief to her anguish, but the best tribute she could pay to the departed.

That is a short view which only takes in immediate duty to be done, the immediate temptation to be met, and the immediate sorrow to be carried. My friend, if you have money enough to-day for your daily wants and something for God's treasury, don't torment yourself with the idea that you or yours may yet get into an almshouse. If your children cluster around your table, enjoy them, train them, trust them to God, without racking yourself with a dread that the little ones may some time be carried off by scarlet fever, or the older ones may yet be ill-married or may fall into disgrace. Faith carries present loads and meets present assaults and feeds on present promises, and commits the future to a faithful God. Its song is:—

“Keep Thou my feet ; I do not ask to see
The distant scene ; one step's enough for me.”

We shall always take that one step more wisely and firmly and successfully if we keep our eye on that only. The man who is climb-

ing the Alps has but to follow his guide and set his foot on the right spot before him. This is the way you and I must let Christ lead, and have Him so close to us also that it will be but a short way to behold Him. Sometimes young Christians say to me, "I am afraid to make a public confession of Christ; I may not hold out." They have nothing to do with holding *out*; it is simply their duty to hold *on*. When future trials and perils come their Master will give them help for the hour if they only make sure that they *are His*. The short view they need to take is a close, clear view of their own spiritual wants, and a distinct view of Jesus as ever at hand to meet those wants. If the fishermen of Galilee had worried themselves over the hardships they were to encounter they might have been frightened out of their apostleships and their eternal crowns.

We ministers need to guard against this malignant devil of *worry*. It torments one pastor with a dread lest, if he preach certain truths boldly, he may offend his rich pew holders and drive them away. Let him take care of his conscience, and his Master will take care of him. Another is worried lest his cruse may run dry and his barrel fail. But his cruse has not yet run dry. Oh, no! it is his faith that is running low. Some

of us, at the beginning of a year's work, are tempted to overload ourselves with the anticipation of how much we have to do; we need not worry if we will only remember that during the whole year there will be *only one* working day, and that is—*to-day*. Sufficient to each day is the labor thereof.

Once more we say—let us take short views. Let us not climb the high wall till we get to it, or fight the battle till it opens, or shed tears over sorrows that may never come, or lose the joys and blessings that we have by the sinful fear that God will take them away from us. We need all our strength and all the grace God can give us for to-day's burdens and to-day's battle. Tomorrow belongs to our heavenly Father. I would not know its secrets if I could. It is far better to know whom we trust, and that He is able to keep all we commit to Him until the last great day.

“Why forecast the trials of life
With such sad and grave persistence,
And look and watch for a crowd of ills
That as yet have no existence?

“Strength for to-day is all we need,
For we never will see to-morrow;
When it comes, the morrow will be a *to-day*,
With its measure of joy or sorrow.”

III. If a right spiritual discernment tends to correct false views of God and His providence, and to repress sinful anxieties, it will also check our impatience in regard to the issue of God's wise dealings and discipline. "I never let bairns or fools see my pictures until they are done," said a Scotch artist to me, quoting a familiar proverb of his countrymen. As the artist was unwilling to have any judgment pronounced on his work until it was completed, so our heavenly Father bids us possess our souls in patience. "What I do thou knowest not *now*; but thou *shalt* know hereafter." We must wait and see. This world is but a preparatory school in which character is on the easel or under the chisel. God's hand sometimes lays on dark colors; his chisel often cuts deep. No trial of our faith is joyous, but grievous; nevertheless *afterwards* it may work out the eternal weight of glory. Now we know but "in part," and what we do discern is seen through a glass darkly. Why the most pleasant room in our dwelling is turned into a hospital—why the pillow in that little empty crib is unpressed to-day—why that income on which so many mouths depended is now reduced—why this or that staff is broken, our poor blind, aching hearts cannot understand. God keeps His

own secrets. The only answer which He vouchsafes to us now is, "All things work together *for good* to them that love Me." Impatient and rebellious as we may be, we cannot displace God's hand from the canvas; there is no help for us but to wait until the picture is completed. Some of the colors He is laying into our lives are frightfully somber; but by and by in the revealing light of the last day they may be only a background on which faith and submissive trust will stand out in hues of golden glory. It is the duty of "bairns" to sit still and practice docility.

"When my boy with eager questions,
Asking how, and where, and when,
Taxes all my store of wisdom,
Asking o'er and o'er again
Questions oft to which the answers
Give to others still the key,
I have said, to teach him patience,
'Wait, my little boy, and see.'

"And the words I taught my darling,
Taught to me a lesson sweet;
Once when all the world seemed darkness,
And the storm about me beat,
In the 'children's room' I heard him,
With a child's sweet mimicry,
To the baby brother's questions
Saying wisely, 'Wait and see.'

“Like an angel’s tender chiding
Came the darling’s words to me
Though my Father’s ways were hidden
Bidding me still wait and see.
What are we but restless children,
Ever asking what shall be.
And the Father, in His wisdom,
Gently bids us ‘wait and see.’”

I am ready to confess that it is not from the open assaults of infidelity or from the skeptical pages of the Strausses or Spencers that the severest strain has come upon our faith. It is from the mysterious permissions of Divine Providence that we are oftenest in danger of having that faith shipwrecked. We not only turn cowards in the dark, but like fools we doubt whether there ever will be a day-dawn. In such hours it is wise to bring in the lamp of that bright passage of the thirtieth Psalm: “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” The original Hebrew is far more forcible; it literally reads, “In the evening sorrow lodgeth, but at the day-dawn cometh shouting.” The “shouting” will be raised by the discovery of what was in existence all the while, and that is God’s marvelous wisdom and unfailing love. I once spent a night on the summit of Mount Righi, and the darkness was so dense that I

could not see a single yard from my window. But when the sun arose the polished mirror of Lake Lucerne spread beneath me, and the icy coronets of the Jungfrau and the Finsteraarhorn glittered in the rosy beams. They had been there all through the night waiting for the unfoldings of the day-spring from on high.

A great deal of our work in this world may be called night-work. Weary with rowing, we even get frightened by the apparition of the Master, and, like the disciples, cry out, "It is a ghost!"—until He reveals Himself in the words, "Be of good cheer; It is I; be not afraid!" The history of every discovery of new truth, of every enterprise of benevolence, of every Christian reform, and of almost every church revival is the history of long working, watching, and waiting through seasons of dark discouragement. "We have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing," was the lament of the tired, hungry, and sleepy disciples. But in the early gray of the day-break they espy the Master on the beach; the net is cast afresh, and lo! it swarms with a shoal that breaks through the meshes. So doth our Lord test His children before He blesses them. The lesson for every pastor, every missionary, every teacher, every reformer, and

every sorely-tried child of God is in these heaven-taught words, "I wait for the Lord, . . . and in His word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning."

IV. We come back, in closing, to the point whence we set out—that there is a right way, and a wrong way of looking at all things. To the eye that has spiritual discernment this world is mainly an avenue to that one which lieth beyond it. Talents, wealth, and influence are simply loans that are to be held in trust for God. Social promotion signifies a more commanding position in which to serve the Master. A Christianized eye sees in money just so much bread for the hungry, just so many Bibles for the godless, just so many lifts of the outcast and degraded—as well as innocent and refining enjoyments for one's own household. My friend, if thou findest the "image and superscription" of Christ on every dollar you earn, "thou hast well seen." To a truly regenerated soul all things become new; and we may well doubt the genuineness and the depth of that conversion which does not bring an altered estimate of everything earthly. Faith breaks the charm of this world and adds a charm to the better world.

Are there any here who desire to have their spiritual vision purged? I would commend to them the example of that blind man who came and besought Jesus to touch him; for he fancied that a simple touch of the miracle-worker would restore his sight. Jesus led him along through the streets and "out of the town"; and then, putting spittle on his closed eyes, He inquired, "Do you see anything?" The poor man replied, "I see men; for I behold them as trees, walking." The Master again lays His hands upon his eyes and bids him look up; he looks and seeth the bright earth round him and the Son of God standing at his side. Even so it may be with you, if you will permit that Divine Friend to lead you "out of town" where sin and self have tasked and troubled you, and will intrust yourself to His restoring power. He will touch the eye of your soul. Truth will become clearer. Faith will become stronger. The old darkness will pass away, and all things will become new. "Thou hast well seen" when thou dost behold Jesus Christ as the Lord of thy life, His service thy sweetest occupation, and His presence thy perpetual joy.

VIII

THE DOVE THAT FOUND REST

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THE DOVE THAT FOUND REST

“Then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.”—GENESIS viii. 9.

WE can picture to ourselves this scene. For forty days the keel of the ark has rested on the summit of Mount Ararat; but on every side stretches a melancholy waste of waters. Not an inch of dry ground is visible, nor has been for over twenty weeks. Noah wearies of his imprisonment, and, like a long voyager, is hungry for a sight of land. He can see none from his single porthole; but perhaps the birds in his floating menagerie can find some. So he sends forth a raven which flies back and forth—feeding perhaps on the floating offal, and lighting occasionally on the ark. The raven takes care of itself, but brings him no information.

Then he lets fly a dove to see if the waters are abated from off the face of the ground. But the dove finds no rest for the sole of her foot; nor is there within her reach such granifer-

ous food as she could eat. Weary with her flight and finding no tree to alight on, the poor bird comes back to her old home. Noah watches the tired little creature as she flutters back to the window of the ark. He puts forth his hand and catches the weary bird and draws her in unto him, and gives her welcome.

As we watch the pretty creature eating her seed, and then curling her head under her glossy plumage and dropping to sleep, we are set upon a meditation about that bird. It represents a wandering soul. Whose soul? *Yours*, my brother sinner? it is probably a picture of your past experience. Like that wandering bird, you have flown far and looked in many directions, but you have not found *rest*. You have tried one place after another, one pursuit after another, one pleasure after another, but none of them gave you solid peace. None of them satisfied the hunger of your immortal soul. None of them made you feel *safe* for this world or for the next. Perhaps you tried money and all it could buy, but it could not purchase peace for your disquieted spirit. Perhaps you flew up on some perch of ambition; and then found yourself as sadly off as that rich and distinguished English statesman to whom a friend wished a "Happy

New Year!" and whose melancholy reply was, "It had need to be a happier one than the last year, for I did not see a single happy day in it!" Whatever you may have tried, it furnished your soul no substantial rest. The very idea of rest implies something solid and substantial underneath you. No mind can be at rest while tortured by an uneasy conscience or by the dread of losing its most cherished treasures. What could you know of peaceful repose when one of your own household was lying at the point of death in the next room? or when the cry of "fire!" was ringing in the street beneath your window? The human soul, like the body, must have a sense of security before it can realize a perfect rest. Does this world afford you that? Can your soul be insured by it against disquietude, disappointment, disaster, and the havoc of death? Does that weary bird, your heart, ever find any rest for the sole of the foot?

Answer this question honestly, all ye who have tried hard to draw a gill of happiness out of a whole cask of sensual pleasures. Answer this, ye who have built up lofty expectations of wealth, or professional success, or social eminence, or any other of this world's attractive and inviting perches. When did a man ever get himself

snugly fixed and determine to nestle down amid his creature-comforts, that God has not routed him up again? This world is not a Christian's rest; no, nor an impenitent sinner's either. God has vetoed that. You may rear, for example, your tasteful residence, and decorate it with the most elegant products of art; you may gather round your fireside a cheerful household, who shall sing a melodious "Sweet home" to your affections; but just as surely as you let the dove of your *heart* bear its whole weight on this frail bush, the bush will break, sooner or later, and break when you least expect it! Perhaps the flames will destroy your dwelling, or bankruptcy bring it "to the hammer," or the angel of death, on its mysterious mission, may alight on the couch or the crib that contains your treasures. Mayhap domestic strifes or disappointments may embitter your cup, and you may discover that no wall can be built so high or so strong as to wall out trouble and sorrow.

Well—if the mind cannot find abiding happiness in any of the perishable things of earth, neither can your immortal spirit find rest in any mere human reliance—whether human opinion, human prayer, or human promises. Have you ever obtained an assurance of salvation on the

ground either of your best purposes or best performances? Are you willing to risk the everlasting future of your soul on either what any man has done for you or you have ever done for yourself? Pushing the probe in deeper, let me ask you in all kindness—will your present style of thinking and living satisfy conscience and satisfy God, and will it secure to you spiritual health and a peaceful death and an immortality of glory? Ah, I see you shake your head, and a shadow passes over your countenance. Then you are not at rest! You do not feel safe. You cannot bear your whole weight on any brittle spider's web. No! And God does not mean that your uneasy and sin-troubled soul shall find rest anywhere outside of that ark which redeeming love has provided. Millions upon millions have flown from one direction to another, like Noah's dove, and found that this wide world from pole to pole "had not for them a home." They have been forced to the same confession as Lord Tennyson's gifted young friend, Arthur Hallam, when he exclaimed: "Lord, I have viewed this world all over. I have tried how this thing or that will fit my spirit. I can find *nothing to rest on*; for nothing here hath any rest itself. Oh, blessed Jesus—center of light

and strength!—the fullness of all things—I come back and join myself to Thee, and to **THEE** alone!”

“ I heard the voice of Jesus say,
‘ Come unto me and rest ;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon my breast ! ’ ”

When Noah's dove could find no rest for the sole of her foot, whither did she fly? We read that she “returned unto him into the ark.” She saw nothing to alight upon anywhere else, and so she spread her weary wings toward the huge vessel on the peak of Ararat. To-day I sound in your ear the invitation of the Divine love and the Divine authority—“Return unto **ME!**” To do this you must abandon all trust in self-righteousness and all hope of self-salvation. To do this you must confess that you are a guilty wanderer—that God is right and you are wrong. You must renounce your past sins, however dear to you, and break with your old habits and your old self. The voice to you is *Return!* There must be no delay. The weary bird could bring nothing but herself; and you can bring nothing to Jesus Christ but a weak and wandering sinner. Don't bring your sins; don't bring your excuses or apologies; don't bring your

merits, for they are not worth the transportation. Bring to the compassionate Saviour yourself, just as you are, and just what sin has made you. The prodigal's rags and wretchedness were his only letter of recommendation.

Whither did the dove return? To the only refuge amid the whole wide waste of waters. There was but one. Beneath it lay a drowned world; round it spread the devouring deep! God has provided but one ark for your soul. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." In this wide world there are many systems of religion; but God has provided only one—just as He has created but a single sun to "rule the day." At that single gateway of salvation the prince must enter alongside of the peasant; the philosopher must walk in by the side of the little child. We seem to see that tired, homesick bird sailing along through the air toward the solitary ark, and when it gets there it finds only *one window*. There was a first, a second, and a third story in Noah's huge leviathan of a ship, but all the light was admitted through that single opening. Beautifully does that single window illustrate the illumination of the Holy Spirit. And most strikingly does it set forth that every soul that comes

to Jesus Christ must come into a saving union with Him through the Holy Spirit's regenerating work. This vital truth our Lord announced to Nicodemus in that wonderful conversation which contains the most comprehensive body of theology found on any page of the Bible.

There was only one window to the ark and that was open. We cannot imagine that the weary bird did so foolish a thing as to drive its head against the walls of the ark, or to alight on the roof, or to fly round the vessel. It wanted to come in, and there was only one place of entrance. My troubled friend, seeking to be saved, can you not learn from that bird just what you must do?

A certain awakened soul was once taught by a bird how to find admission into the peace that passeth understanding through Christ Jesus. The late Dr. Nicolas Murray tells us that he was preaching, on a bright spring day, in the ancient church of Elizabeth. During the service a bird flew in through the open door, and sailed up to the vaulted ceiling. There sat in the audience an intelligent lady who had been for weeks under deep conviction of sin and had found no rest for her bewildered soul. She began to watch the bewildered bird as it flew to one

closed window after another, and she kept saying to herself, "Why doesn't it see the open door?" The poor thing flew round and round till it grew weary, and then, lowering itself toward the floor, it caught a view of the open door, and was out in an instant into the sunshine. When it was gone the troubled woman said to herself: "I have been acting just like that bird. I have been trying to find peace where it could not be found. I have tried to find escape from the bondage and burden of sin through windows that were closed against me. *Christ is the door.* As that bird escaped into the light and the sunshine, just so may I." And she actually found peace that day by a simple yielding of her weary and sin-plagued heart to her Saviour.

I fear that many in this assembly have found no rest for their souls because they have been seeking it in the wrong place and by wrong methods; they have flown everywhere but to the right spot. One has tried to reform his life, but was not able to regenerate his heart; and the old diseases broke out again. Another has said, "If I read God's word and pray enough I shall find peace." Another has betaken himself to some special service of an evangelist, or has gone to converse with his pastor, or in a kind of forlorn

desperation has entered an "inquiry meeting" to find relief. None of these is God's ark! Nothing but life can produce life. Jesus declares: "I am the Way; I am the LIFE!" He that hath the Son, and he only, hath life; and the Divine Spirit leads only to the almighty and the crucified Christ. In short, oh, anxious and troubled soul—who art in danger of being misled by the devil or of being lost by delay—there is but one window into the ark, and that stands wide open! Coming to that is faith. For faith, you must remember, is not a sentiment, not an opinion; it is an *act*. It is the act of joining your weakness to Christ's strength, your unworthiness to His infinite merit, yourself to Himself. The obedience of your soul to the leading of the Holy Spirit brings you to Jesus Christ, and the infinite love puts forth the pierced hand and *draws you in*—as Noah drew that returning dove into the ark. Then comes peace, wondrous peace, such as this world can neither give nor take away. All the disquietude of this world cannot shake it. There is no condemnation to them who are *in Christ Jesus*. The soul fears no evil tidings; for the perfect love has cast out fear. Conscience no longer torments; and death no longer alarms, for Jesus has conquered death. Wondrous peace

ineffable! There is only ONE in all the universe who can bestow it, and when He does bestow it, all the powers of Hell cannot give it a single jar! It is the peace of God, and the peace with God which passeth all understanding.

"Can I do anything for you?" said an officer on the battlefield, who came across a wounded Union soldier who lay weltering in his blood. "Nothing, thank you." "Shall I bring you a little water?" "No, I thank you; I *am dying*." "Is there not something I can do; shall I not send some message to your friends?" "I will not trouble you to do that; but there is one thing for which I would be much obliged. In my knapsack you will find a Testament. Please open it to the fourteenth chapter of John, and you will find a verse that begins with the word 'peace.' Please read it to me." The officer got out the book and read: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." "Thank you, sir," said the dying man. "I have got that peace; I am going to that Saviour; I do not want anything more." His fluttering spirit, like a home-bound dove, flew heavenward, and the blessed Jesus put forth His hand and sweetly

drew him in! Although but an humble private
in the army of the Lord as he was in the army
of the land, yet he found his place among the
crowned conquerors in glory.

“Ten thousand times ten thousand
In sparkling raiment bright,
The armies of the ransomed saints
Throng up the steeps of light :
'Tis finished, all is finished,
Their fight with death and sin :
Fling open wide the golden gates,
And *let the victors in !*”

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~~AUG 31 1992~~

