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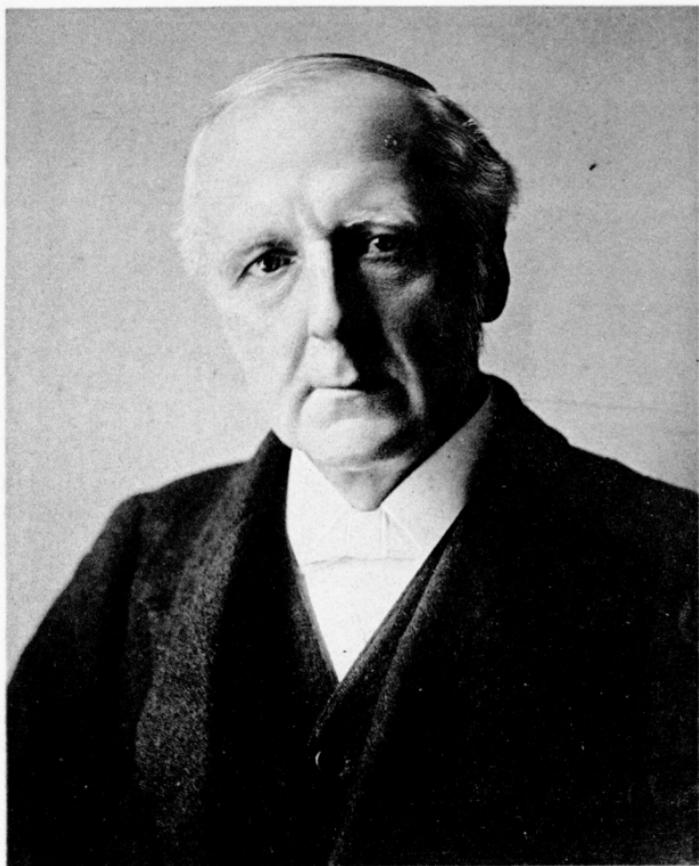
THE SOUL'S ASCENT

BY THE REV. F. B. MEYER

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THE SOUL'S ASCENT

A CONNECTED SERIES OF MISSION
ADDRESSES

BY

THE REV. F. B. MEYER, B.A.

AUTHOR OF "FRIENDLY COUNSELS," "WORK-A-DAY SERMONS,"
"TAKE HEART AGAIN," ETC.

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THESE Addresses, taken down as they were uttered, lack the perfecting and finish which attach to the written discourse; but perhaps they may have a freshness and directness which do not always emanate from the printed page.

They have passed through very careful revision, and contain, in a popular form, the essential points of my teaching.

The fact of their being delivered to various audiences, will account for one or two minor repetitions of metaphor or phrase.

F. B. MEYER.

CONTENTS

I		PAGE
A CASTAWAY		3
<i>"Lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."—1 Cor. ix. 27.</i>		
II		
"MARRED: SO HE MADE IT AGAIN"		19
<i>"He made it again."—Jeremiah xviii. 4.</i>		
III		
ARISE, GO UP TO BETHEL		35
<i>"And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there."—Genesis xxxv. 1.</i>		
IV		
GOD IS NEAR		49
<i>"One cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His Glory."—Isaiah vi. 3.</i>		
V		
THE SONG OF THE LORD BEGAN		63
<i>"When the burnt-offering began, the song of the Lord began also."—2 Chronicles xxix. 27.</i>		
VI		
THE NATURAL MAN		75
<i>"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."—1 Cor. ii. 14.</i>		

	PAGE
VII	
THE SUBSTITUTION OF THE CHRIST-LIFE FOR THE SELF-LIFE	93
<i>"Yet no longer I, but Christ . . ."—Gal. ii. 20.</i>	
VIII	
DELIVERANCE FROM THE POWER OF SIN	107
<i>"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."—Phil. ii. 12, 13.</i>	
IX	
THE TRINITY OF TEMPTATION	123
<i>"The Evil Day."—Eph. vi. 13.</i>	
X	
THE RULE OF OUR THOUGHTS	139
<i>"Quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart."—Heb. iv. 12.</i>	
XI	
TAKE! TAKE! TAKE!	153
<i>"The lame take the prey."—Isa. xxxiii. 20.</i>	
XII	
HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD	173
<i>"In that day there shall be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord."—Ezek. xiv. 20.</i>	
XIII	
THE FAIR MITRE	187
<i>"And I said, Let them set a fair mitre on his head."—Ezek. iii. 5.</i>	
XIV	
GOD'S TWO MEN	205
<i>"The Second Man is the Lord from Heaven"—1 Cor. xv. 47.</i>	

CONTENTS

ix

XV

	PAGE
REIGNING IN LIFE	221
<i>"Much more they which receive abundance of Grace shall reign in life by one, Christ Jesus."—Romans v. 17.</i>	

XVI

LIVING THE LIFE OF JESUS	229
<i>"As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me."—John vi. 57.</i>	

XVII

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THIS DISPENSATION	245
<i>"I will pour out in those days of my Spirit."—Acts ii. 18.</i>	

XVIII

THE ANOINTING WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT	263
<i>"The Anointing which ye have received of Him."—1 John ii. 27.</i>	

XIX

THE GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED	277
<i>"Faith as a grain of mustard seed."—Luke xvii. 6.</i>	

XX

HEART REST	293
<i>"Ye shall find rest unto your souls."—Matt. xi. 29.</i>	

XXI

THE SECRET OF FRUITFULNESS	311
<i>"I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee."—Genesis xvii. 6.</i>	

XXII

LIFE A POEM	321
<i>"We are His Workmanship."—Eph. ii. 10.</i>	

A CASTAWAY

“Lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”—I *Cor.* ix. 27.

I

A CASTAWAY

I INVITE your attention to a few words found in I Cor. ix. 27 : "Lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

Paul was too eager and too practical a man to dally with a bogy dread. Since then he intimates that it was his daily fear lest, after having preached to others, he might himself be a castaway, I suppose that there were but few hours in his life when this dread did not haunt him. After he had founded so many churches, written so many epistles, and exercised so wide-spread an influence, in his quiet moments he was perpetually face to face with this awful nightmare, that the day might come when he would be a castaway; and the thought drove him almost to madness. When he was travelling over the blue Ægean, when he was sitting making his tents, when he was engaged in dictating his epistles, the thought would come back and back upon his heart: "I may yet be a castaway."

Have you ever feared this? I am not sure that a

man ever reaches his highest development without something of the element of fear, and I ask you now if in your life you know something of this haunting dread? May I confess to you that it has become a great dread of my own? and if many days pass, and no one writes to tell me of help derived from my ministry, and no one comes to join our church, and no one seems to be influenced by my life or word I sit myself down and say :

“Good God, has the time come at last to me when for some reason I, too, am to be a castaway?”

(1) And reverently, humbly, but most searchingly, I ask you, my hearer, whether it may not be possible that this very moment you are already a castaway. “A castaway”—in what sense?

Is it to be supposed for a moment that the Apostle thought that when once the believer had fled to Christ he could be cast out into the outer darkness where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth? Is it possible for a limb to be torn from the mystical body of Christ, for a jewel to be snatched from out of His crown, for a sheep to be devoured from His flock? Are there any unfinished pictures in God's gallery, any incomplete statues in His workshop? Does God begin a work in the soul and leave it incomplete and unperfected? We cannot believe it.

It is said of Rowland Hill, my great predecessor at Christ Church, London, that when an old man of

eighty-four and just before he died, one Sunday night when the lights had been put out in Surrey Chapel, the verger in attendance heard him walking to and fro in the aisle, singing to himself :

“When I am to die, ‘Receive me’—I’ll cry,
For Jesus has loved me, I cannot tell why ;
But this I do find, we two are so joined,
He’ll not be in heaven and leave me behind.”

If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, if it is directed toward Christ, a union has been formed between Him and you which neither heaven nor earth nor hell nor time nor eternity can ever break.

And yet the Apostle feared he would be a cast-away. What did he mean ?

One day I was calling on a brother clergyman. He took me out into his garden to an out-house, against the side of which was resting one of the old-fashioned bicycles with a very tall wheel. I said to him :

“Do you ever ride this ?”

Said he, “No ; see how rusty it is. I have not been on it for many months. I have got something better, something that suits my purpose better,” pointing to another and a newer bicycle on the other side of the house.

I said to myself, “Then this is a castaway.”

When stylographic pens first came out, I purchased one in the hope that it would serve me per-

fectly. But I was sadly disappointed. Sometimes when I attempted to use it, it was unwilling to serve me. At other times it was profuse in inking my finger. Finally I discarded it in hopelessness and purchased another pen. The one I now hold serves me perfectly, and I have no difficulty whatever in performing by its means any writing upon which I have set my heart. But I keep the other one. It lies in the drawer of my bureau, and often when I am putting my things together to go upon some journey, I think I hear it saying to itself as it lies there :

“ Ah, he is going away without me again ! There was a time when he never left home without taking me with him ; he never wrote a letter without me ; he never composed an article but that I first knew its contents ; but for these many days and months I have been lying here unused.”

That disused stylographic pen is my conception of what Paul meant when he said he feared being a castaway.

You must know that this man lived to save men. It was the passion of his life. Send him to Philippi, and he will not be there a day before he has turned the devil out of the poor demoniac girl. Let him be put in jail, and before midnight he will have baptized his jailor. Send him to Athens, and though he is all alone, he will gather a congregation upon Mars' Hill within a week or two. Put him alongside of

Aquila and Priscilla at the bench, and he will make tents and talk to them in such good wise that they will become Christians. Stand him before his judge, and the latter will cry, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian!" Let him go to Rome, tied to a Roman sentry, and he will speak to these men, one after another, in such fashion that the whole Pre-torian camp will be infused with the love of God. His passion was to save men. I do not believe that if he were alive to-day, he would be in a street car, or a railway car, or on board a steamer, without button-holing some man and speaking to him about his soul and his Saviour. The whole passion of the man was to save some; but he feared that unless he took good care, the hour might come in his life when Christ would say :

"Thou hast served Me well, but thou shalt serve Me no more. Of late thou hast become indolent, and choked with pride, and I have not secured thy whole obedience. I am now compelled to call upon some soul more alert, more obedient than thee; and that man I will use to do the work that thou mightest have done, but which thou didst fail to accomplish."

This comes home upon us, brother ministers. I am speaking to some who in their earlier life were wondrously used of God in soul-winning, as they went from the seminary or the college, and took their first church. Sunday after Sunday the inquiry-

room was crowded. The simple villagers, from their lips, heard the Word of God, and were converted, and the communicants' roll was weekly increased. The boys of the neighbourhood were attracted, and won like jewels for Christ. Am I not speaking to women who in their first burst of love to Christ wore the signs of holy earnestness in their circles of society, so that all who came in contact with them were made to feel the power of a genuine love to God? May we not all look back to days upon days, long passed, when we were the channels through which Jesus spoke and wrought, and the Holy Ghost was poured upon men? But what has happened? We preach the same old sermons, but Christ is apparently indifferent to them. We go through the same mechanical routine, but there is no stir of life. These many days have passed, and there have been no additions to our church roll. We have won men to ourselves, but not to Christ. And so it seems as though whilst men flattered us, and whilst we had a certain complacency in their applause, heaven passed on unheeding, the souls of men were unreached, and our churches were just dying of inanition; the old passing home to God, but the young untouched, unsaved.

May not the question therefore come to us now: "Perhaps, after all, Christ has ceased to use me! Christ has no further purpose for me! I am too

clumsy, too obtuse, too disobedient, too full of myself, too much out of touch with Him! And so I am to be put on the shelf!" Like those great stones in the quarry at Baalbec—almost completely quarried, but yet the temple was finished without them! May not this question go through the audience: "Am I a castaway? I belong to Christ, and when I die I believe I will go home to Him. I know that He has saved me by His precious blood; but has He ceased to use me?"

(2) Look for a moment upon the pages of Scripture, and see how they are littered with castaways! Let us then understand why men are cast away.

I take the first case, *that of Esau*. He comes in from hunting. He is born to the birthright. The birthright includes the power of standing between God and the clan, speaking to God for men. He is famished. Yonder is the steaming mess of pottage prepared by his brother Jacob.

"Give me that red lentile pottage," he cries.

Jacob, crafty in heart, bargains: "Give me your spiritual birthright."

Is there not here some Christian, who in the past has had some steaming mess of pottage appealing to the senses? There is not one of us who has not been tempted by some temptation to sense. Aye, it may be there is many a man who is glancing back into his past life, and who knows that he has

yielded—not once or twice, but oftener—to the appeal to the senses. He has taken to drink, or indulged some other appetite, and has despised his birthright.

Have *you* never eaten and drunken, and despised your birthright? Are you quite sure that some fair and beautiful form has not come into your life and destroyed your heart's true love? Are you quite sure that there is not in you some hungry appetite that has sought unlawful satisfaction?

"Give it me. I must have it. I cannot live without it. Even though I have not quite the spiritual power that I had, give it me."

So men despise their birthright still, and they are cast away. Esau became a prince in this world, and the father of a line of dukes, and all the world flattered him and thought him a prosperous and successful man, but God wrote over him the awful epitaph:

"This man is a castaway. He did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus he despised his birthright."

I turn the page of Scripture, and come to the first king of Israel, *Saul*. A noble man in many respects, he was sent by God to fulfil His mission, but he put a reserve upon his obedience, and told Samuel with a kind of pious blarney:

"Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord."

The old prophet at that moment detected the lowing of the herd and the bleating of the flock, and said very significantly :

“Performed the commandment of the Lord! What means then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?”

I am not here to denounce specific forms of sin. If I did, the result would be that the people who were not directly attacked would put up their umbrellas and let my words drip upon some others whom they think they would fit, and they would suppose therefore that they passed muster. But I am here to bring you face to face with the eternal God, to lead your consciences before the great White Throne, and let the light of the eternal purity of God blaze like a flash-light upon them. It will be for you to determine if under the profession of obedience there are some flocks and herds that you are reserving for yourselves. It is possible when you go to a man's home, or when you even smell his breath, or when you hear him speak, to know whether or not he has given up all for God. Some unfortunate sheep starts bleating. Saul professed obedience, but kept back something for himself; and God rejected him. He lingered ten years more on the throne, but he was a castaway. A young David was already anointed to succeed him.

(3) This is very stern work.

When I pass through the Word of God and take case after case, my heart bleeds and cries out because I know not who may be here. I would speak with all tenderness and all pity and all love. I have not come to scathe anyone. I have not come to denounce. It is because I know what the horror of that pit is, and what the horror of being cast away from God's service means, that I now speak in this way. You expected that I would bring you a system of spiritual truth,—and I have such a system to present; you expected that I was going to teach you how to receive the Holy Ghost of Pentecost, so that every day might be a Pentecost,—and I have that blessed message to tell you; but I dare not come to those deep and blessed subjects until I have introduced into your heart a spirit of self-scrutiny and searching, that everyone may ask himself:

“Can it be that though I am a minister, or an officer of the church, and bear around the holy elements on Sunday at the Communion service, and give my money to philanthropic objects—can it be that in God's sight I am a castaway?”

Coming out of a meeting recently a brother minister came up to me, took me by the hand, shook it warmly, and said:

“I have enjoyed your meeting so much.”

Directly he said that I knew that I had failed.

When a man says that he has enjoyed a meeting like this, I know that I have not touched him.

You remember when Jacob got down into the Jabbok ford, how beneath those Syrian stars he wrestled with the angel, and the angel with him. Presently the angel put forth his hand and touched the sinew of his strength, and he limped. Do you think it is possible that Jacob could have limped into the camp next morning, and going to his loved Rachel, have said to her :

“O Rachel, we have had a lovely time all night. I have so enjoyed it!”

Rather he must have said to her: “I have had a night which has blasted my strength, which has left a scar upon me which I shall carry till I die. O woman, I have fought with the angel of God’s love!”

.

This may be the beginning of a new era in many a life. But we must begin at the bottom; we must begin at the root of our self-confidence. The prime cause of all failure in private life as well as in public ministry is the assertion of self. As long as men and women think it is all right with them, nothing can be done for them. It is only when there is excited within them a fear that after all things may not be quite so well as they seem, a dread that after all they may have made a mistake and been

self-deceived, it is only then that in the secret of their own chambers they begin to ask God: "Am I just what I should be?" It is then that the heart is laid open, and they may be brought to understand how a man may be almost a castaway and yet be taken back to the bosom of Christ as Peter was; for within six weeks the man who was nearly cast away became the Apostle of Pentecost.

Paul said: "Lest I should be a castaway. Therefore, though I have a perfect right to go to an idol temple, I shall not go for fear other men seeing me go may follow me, and what might be innocent to me might be death to them. Lest I should ruin any man's soul by going, I will abstain. I have a perfect right, if I choose, to take a wife; but I shall not do it. I will live a solitary life, and toil with my hands, because by being lonesome myself I may touch some other man who is lonesome too, and by working with my own hands I shall stay upon the bench beside others who will be drawn to me by sympathy. There are many things which this body of mine may have in innocence, but I shall not take them because I wish to keep my body under, lest it should master me and cause me to be a castaway."

Christ waits—the sweet, strong, pure Son of God, —His heart yearning over men and yearning to pour itself through us to save them. But many of

us have hindered Him, resisted Him, thwarted Him. One feels like asking the whole audience to fall before Him in confession, and to ask that this holy day may not pass until He has restored us to fellowship with Himself.

A friend told me once that all the water supply had become choked out of their house in Derbyshire, England. They could not obtain one drop of water from the bottom to the top of the house. They searched the cisterns, and inspected the taps and the whole machinery, and found no cause. At last they went to the junction between the main reservoir pipe and their house pipe, and there in the orifice, in the joint between the two, squatted a huge toad, which (as they were told) had probably come in as a tadpole, had fed upon the water, and had grown to this size, so that the whole water was stopped because it choked the orifice.

Your life has been dry lately ; no tear, no prayer, no fervour. You have not met Christ, you have not seen His face for many a long day, He has not used you. It must be because there is something in your heart, innocent once but injurious now. May God show you what it is! Get quiet, and prostrate yourself before God. If people want to speak to you, brush past them. If they want to detain you with small talk, leave them. Cast yourself down in some solitary place before God, and say :

“May God forgive me! May God show me the sin, show me what it is that hinders me, show me what has nearly wrecked my life. Whatever comes, may I not be a castaway, but still used by Thee through the Holy Ghost for Christ.”

It should be clearly recognised that in this series of addresses, I speak to those who have been justified through a simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was delivered up for our offences, and raised again for our justification. The ordinary positions of Evangelical Religion are accepted as the basis on which we build the structure of Christian character. The one question is, are we living up to what we profess?

"MARRED: SO HE MADE IT AGAIN"

“ He made it again.”—*Jeremiah* xviii. 4.

II

“MARRED: SO HE MADE IT AGAIN”

ONCE Pagannini, standing before a great audience, broke string after string in his violin, until only one was left. He held up his violin, and said:

“One string and Pagannini.”

Now we want one man and God, God working through a man so that the man is the channel. But before God can work by a man, he must be right, and I have to speak now on how God can make a man right, fit for service.

In the preceding address we came to despair. We stood upon the brink of the precipice and looked down into the dark, fearing that we might be castaways. Now I take for my text the words:

“He made it again” (Jeremiah xviii. 4).

What did he make again? Jeremiah was a disappointed man. He thought he could do no more to stay the people from destruction. His heart was breaking. God told him to go down to the potter's house, and there he saw the potter take a piece of clay and place it on a wheel. As he stood there to watch, the potter shaped it: it rose beneath his

hand into a fair and lovely shape. But just as it was complete, and it seemed as though nothing more was needed, it crumbled beneath his touch. Some part of it fell upon the wheel, some part upon the ground. Jeremiah thought that the potter would take another piece of clay and make that clay fulfil his plan, but instead he stooped and gathered the broken clay with his hand, picked it from the ground, and kneading it with his hand he placed it once more upon the wheel and began to mould that same clay again; and presently a vessel as fair as possible stood complete, ready to be taken to the kiln to be baked and made permanent.

Away back in your life God took you and placed you upon the wheel, and for these many years God has sought to make you fair. But I know not why, I cannot tell,—God knows,—you know,—there has come a flaw and break, and you are a piece of broken pottery. Your life is a marred life, your ideal a broken ideal, and all around there lie the littered pieces of the man or the woman that you might have been.

But now what shall you do? God put you in that place for a high purpose, but you have missed your mark. Shall God take another man and give him your wealth, another woman and give her your position? Shall God take another student and put him in your church? Shall God call another body

to perform the work your church should do? Not yet, not yet. He might take another piece of clay and make that a vessel, but instead He comes again to seek you. His hand is passing through this audience to find you, that the broken pieces of your life, your marred and spoiled ideal, may be made over again. Clergyman, merchant, lady of fashion, Christian worker, student, singer,—God’s hand is seeking for you now. The hand of God is, so to speak, laying hold upon the broken pieces of your marred and spoiled life, and if you will let Him, He will now begin to complete your nature by making it to be what He meant it to be years ago when you were cradled at the foot of the cross.

Why have you failed? You own that your life *is* a failure. You hide it by going to church, by observing the outward routine, by a hearty laugh, by a light, gay air. You live your life amongst your brethren or sisters, but no one knows that deep down in your soul you are certain that you are a failure, that you are spoiled, that you want things you do not obtain, that you long for a goodness you never realise, that you reach out for a sweetness and purity and strength that never come. You know that your life has fallen beneath God’s plan. You are ready to confess it. Why is it so? Is it because God has failed?

See that mother bending over the cradle where her first-born babe lies. See how a smile lights up

her face as she thinks she catches the plaudits which are to welcome his success in coming years. But no woman ever cherished for her babe visions half so fair as your God has for you. He hates nothing that He has made, and with an equal love He wants to do His best for each.

What then is the cause? Is it that He has made a mistake in your life? You think so. If instead of being a poor man you had been rich, if instead of being a lone woman you had had one to call you wife, and little children to clutch your dress and call you mother, if instead of being tied to the office-stool you had been a minister or missionary, you think that you would have been a better, a sweeter character. But I want you to understand that God chose for you your lot in life out of myriads that were open to Him, because just where you are you might realise your noblest possibilities. Otherwise God would have made you different from what you are. But your soul, born into His kingdom, was a matter of care and thought to Him, how best He might nurture you; and He chose your lot with its irritations, its trials, its difficulties, all the agony that eats out your nature. Though men and women do not guess it, He chose it just as it is, because in it, if you will let Him, He can realise the fairest life within your reach.

Where is the failure? Look. I think I have the

wheel before me. My foot is working the treadle. It is revolving rapidly, horizontally as you know. I have placed on it the clay. I begin to manipulate it. It rises beneath my hand till I come to one certain point where, either through some flaw in the clay, a bubble or a fault, it resists me. Leaving that point, I put my hand around again, and in some other direction endeavour to secure my purpose, and then come back to that one point, but again I meet the obstruction that thwarts me. The genius of my brain as an artist is complete ; the power of my hand to manipulate is unrivalled ; it is *the clay* that thwarts me, until presently, because I have been frustrated again and again, the work is a marred, spoiled thing.

Now is not that true of you ?

The one trouble of my life, years ago, was just this about which I am speaking now. God was dealing with me. I suppose He wanted to make me a vessel fit for His use. But there was one point in my life where I fought God as the clay fights the hand of the potter. I fought God, I will not say for how long. God help me ! the only benefit that I can get now out of those years the canker-worm has eaten, is to discover the secret in other lives why they too are standing still, and then to take them to the Christ to whom I went myself, and to encourage them to hope that He who years ago took up a spoiled and marred life and made a little

of it, will take other men and women and will find out where they have thwarted Him; and finding it out, will touch them there, and as they yield to Him they will be made again.

Now, what is the point in your life where you obstruct God? Allow me to search you.

People come to me and speak of the different points in which they have thwarted God. A man came to me one day and said that when I was in a certain convention, I asked all those who wanted to be wholly for God to stand up. He refused to stand, and for months his will rose up and said:

"Who is this man that I should stand up when he bids me?"

For months he fought this feeling, until not long ago he came to me and said:

"Come and pray! I want to confess that I have been fighting the will of God for months, and I am wretched. Help me to get peace."

I was once staying with another man, a pastor. I had said nothing about smoking,—I never do single out sins,—I had not alluded to the habit; but one day we were walking along a street that led over a river, and to my surprise as we got to the apex of the bridge he took his tobacco-pouch and pipe and threw them over, and said:

"There, I have settled that."

Then, turning to me, he said: “I know, Mr Meyer, you have said nothing about it; but for the last few months God has been asking me to set a new example to my young men, and I said: ‘Why should not I do as I like, and they as they like?’ God was searching me, and I was fighting Him; but it is all settled now, sir, it is all done now.”

A bright young girl, at the end of one of my addresses, was waiting about, and I said to her:

“Come, my child, I am quite sure that *you* have got nothing to see me about.”

“Oh,” she said, “I have, sir. I remember that three or four years ago, when I was a girl at school, one of my companions asked me to go out and get some candy for her. I got it, but I kept back half the money for myself. That sin has been working in my mind. It seems as if God keeps saying, ‘Confess, confess, restore’; but, sir, I have been fighting it for the last month or two. It looks so stupid to do a little thing like that.”

I said: “My dear child, nothing is stupid that is going to please God and put you right with His will.”

A man came to me and said: “I cannot understand it, sir, but it seems as if God is blotted out of my life. I used to be so happy.”

I said: “How is it?”

Said he: “I think it has to do with my treatment

of my brother. He served me cruelly over my father's will, and I said I would never forgive him. I am sorry I said it, but he has been going from bad to worse, has lost his wife and child, and is now on a bed of death, and I cannot go to him because I said I never would."

I said: "My friend, it is better to break a bad vow than keep it. Go."

He went, and the smile of God met him just there.

Sixteen years ago I was a minister in a Midland town in England, not at all happy, doing my work for the pay I got, but holding a good position amongst my fellows. Hudson Taylor and two young students came into my life. I watched them. They had something I had not. Those young men stood there in all their strength and joy. I said to Charles Studd:

"What is the difference between you and me? You seem so happy, and I somehow am in the trough of the wave."

He replied: "There is nothing that I have got which you may not have, Mr Meyer."

But I asked: "How am I to get it?"

"Well," he said, "have you given yourself right up to God?"

I winced. I knew that if it came to that, there was a point where I had been fighting my deepest convictions for months. I had lived away from it,

but when I came to the Lord's table and handed out the bread and wine, then it met me; or when I came to a convention or meeting of holy people, something stopped me as I remembered this. It was the one point where my will was entrenched. I thought I would do something with Christ that night which would settle it one way or the other, and I met Christ. You will forgive a man who owes everything to one night in his life if to help other men he opens his heart for a moment. I knelt in my room and gave Christ the ring of my will with the keys on it, but kept one little key back, the key of a closet in my heart, in one back story in my heart. He said to me:

“Are they all here?”

And I said: “All but one.”

“What is that?” said He.

“It is the key of a little cupboard,” said I, “in which I have got something which Thou needest not interfere with, for it is mine.”

Then, as He put the keys back into my hand, and seemed to be gliding away to the door, He said:

“My child, if you cannot trust Me with all, you do not trust Me at all.”

I cried: “Stop,” and He seemed to come back; and holding the little key in my hand, in thought I said:

“I cannot give it, but if Thou wilt take it Thou shalt have it.”

He took it, and within a month from that time He had cleared out that little cupboard of things which had been there for months. I knew He would.

May I add one word more? Three years ago I met the thing I gave up that night, and as I met it, I could not imagine myself being such a fool as nearly to have sold my birthright for that mess of pottage.

I looked up into the face of Christ and said: "Now I am Thine." It seemed as if that was the beginning of a new ministry. The Lord got me on His wheel again, and He made me again, and He has been making me again ever since. I learned that night to say "yes," and I have tried to say "yes" ever since.

Now, my friend, you say to me: "It is quite true, sir; my life is marred. But I am getting to be an old man. Do you think there is any hope for me?"

My text says: "He made it again."

Adelaide Procter says, at the end of one of her poems, that we always may be what we might have been. In a sense that is not true. You and I never can recall the past, and yet—and yet Jesus has a wonderful knack of making men again.

There was Jacob, the supplanter, for instance. He met him again at the ford of Jabbok, and he was made into Israel, a prince of God. There was Peter, and He made him again so that on the day

of Pentecost he became the means of the Holy Ghost's advent to the world. And He made again John Mark who went back before a touch of seasickness to his mother, but Paul said of him after: “Bring him, for he is profitable.” He will make you again.

Canon Wilberforce told me that he had his likeness painted by the great artist Herkomer, who told him the following story: Herkomer was born in the Black Forest, his father a simple wood-chopper. When the artist rose to name and fame in London, and built his studio at Bushey, his first thought was to have the old man come and spend the rest of his years with him. He came, and was very fond of moulding clay. All day he made things out of clay, but as the years passed he thought his hand would lose its cunning. He often went upstairs at night to his room with the sad heart of an old man who thinks his best days are gone by. Herkomer's quick eye of love detected this, and when his father was safe asleep his gifted son would come downstairs and take in hand the pieces of clay which his old father had left, with the evidences of defect and failure; and with his own wonderful touch he would make them as fair as they could be made by human hand. When the old man came down in the morning, and took up the work he had left all spoiled the night before, and held it up before the light, he would say, rubbing his hands:

"I can do it as well as ever I did."

Is not that just what God Almighty is going to do with you? You are bearing the marks of failure just because you have been resisting Him and fighting Him. But, ah! my Lord comes with those pierced hands, and says:

"Will you not yield to me? Only yield, and I will make you again."

There is a Pentecost for us all, but we must begin at the beginning. There must be the yielding.

Young girls, who have come out of beautiful homes, the children of luxury, I tell you that all the exterior beauty of your life is only a faint adumbration and shadow of the infinite sweetness and grace of the life of Pentecost. Live in the promised land, men and women, you who have been seeking in the outside, in circumstances and things and people, your bliss.

You have missed it—you always will that way. It is inside. It is in the Holy Ghost. It is in Christ. Heaven is there. It is there for all. But believe me, you cannot get it unless you take the preparatory step. Therefore you must get alone as I did sixteen years ago; you must kneel down before Christ and say:

"Christ, I give Thee myself, my will. With my will I yield to Thee. Thou art the Potter; I am the clay. Impose Thy will upon me."

And mind you, Christ will say to you: "What

about this?” and if you can look up and say: “Yes, that is Thine,” He will go forward and make you beautiful and happy. But if you refuse, you will stop there, you will be dwarfed, you will thwart Christ.

At Keswick, a little village in the Cumberland Hills, where we meet once a year to talk about these things, if you go out at ten o'clock, at eleven o'clock, at twelve o'clock, at one o'clock at night, you will see lights burning. My heart has often gone up in prayer because I know that every light may mean a Jabbok, and that at those places souls are yielding to God. At Northfield also a brother clergyman said to me last convention:

“Mr Meyer, the work has not been done in the auditorium, but it has been done in the woods at night where we have gone to settle it with God.”

Remember this. When I gave myself to God that night, the devil said:

“Don't do it! If you let God have an inch, He will want an ell. If you yield in one thing you will have to yield in everything, and there is no knowing what you may not come to.”

At first I thought there was something in it. Then I remembered my daughter, who was a little wilful then, and loved her own way. I thought to myself as I knelt:

“Supposing that she were to come and say: ‘Father, from to-night I am going to put my life

into your hand ; do with it what you will.' Would I call her mother to my side and say : ' Here is a chance to torment her. ' What would mortify her ? what colour of dress does she hate ? what companion does she detest ? what method of spending her life does she abhor ? Tell me, and I will put her through them all.' "

I knew I would not say that. I knew I would say to my wife : " Our child is going to follow our will from now. Do you know of anything that is hurting her ? "

" Yes ; so and so. "

" Does she love it much ? "

" Yes. "

" Ah ! she must give it up, but we will make it as easy for her as we can. We must take from her the things that are hurting her, but we will give her everything that will make her life one long summer day of bliss. "

God will say that to you. He only takes that one thing away because it will hurt you. But oh ! He will give, and give, and give ! You have no idea what God will do for you. Say : " I am willing. " But let me make a confession : I did not say that myself. I said : " I am not willing, O God, but I am willing to be made willing. "

God help you to make the same prayer !

ARISE, GO UP TO BETHEL

“And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there.”—*Genesis xxxv. 1.*

III

ARISE, GO UP TO BETHEL

YOU will find the verses from which I am to speak in Gen. xxxv. 1 :

“ And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there, and make thee an altar unto God. Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods from among you, and be clean.”

Bethel is not more than ten or fifteen hundred feet above the sea, a waste moorland, as we should say in our country, strewn with great boulders. The name means the House of God. How did it get that name ?

Thirty years before the words of my text were spoken, Jacob, fleeing from his father's house to avoid the anger of Esau, came there on the first night of his absence from home. You must think of him as a pilgrim exile, with his staff in hand, no escort, nothing of household gear, coming upon that moorland, making what bed he could upon the heather, and lying down to sleep, with the stars above him and the wild wind beating across the

waste. His last vision was of those stones that lay strewn around him ; and as he slept these were piled one upon the other until from his couch there arose the ladder up and down which the angels trooped, coming down to him in blessing and going up to God in prayer. There he heard the voice of God, and as the morning broke and the vision faded and the sunshine lighted up the world, he vowed that from that moment God should be his God and he His faithful servant.

I want to carry you back to days long gone by, it may be thirty years ago, when you left your father's house in some country district as a young man or girl, and entered into some great city. Do you remember your first night there, and the tiny bedroom in which you knelt to say your evening prayer, and felt so lonesome and solitary? As you remained in the attitude of devotion it seemed as though the God of your old father and mother came very near you and spoke to your heart, and you promised from that night to be His faithful servant, so that until you died He would always find you ready to do His will. I want to know whether those vows have been kept? Has not that angel vision faded from your eyes? Has not that ladder died back into the dark? Have you not forgotten, or at least evaded, your solemn covenant?

That young woman got a situation. She soon

found herself beloved by one who could make a home for her. She and he together have climbed the ladder of prosperity, and she is now at the head of a beautiful home, and the angel ladder that linked her with God has faded away. She has drifted upon the current of fashion and worldliness. She is further away from God to-night than she was that other night so long ago.

That young man has become one of your leading citizens. He is making money rapidly, but the promises have died upon his lips, and he is now further away from the God of his father than on the night he commenced his lonely pilgrimage.

I am perfectly sure that I am speaking to some Jacobs that need to have the call of God addressed to them, saying,

“ Arise, go up to Bethel! Get away to the moorland plain! Get back to where you were thirty years ago, and at the foot of God’s ladder of fellowship again covenant yourselves to Him, and dedicate your life to His service.”

From Bethel Jacob travelled forth to Padan Aram where he met Rachel. She became his beautiful wife. He had loved her at first sight, and stayed in Padan Aram, serving seven years for Leah, seven years for Rachel, and six years for his cattle and flocks. But they were like a few days for the love he had for Rachel. Years afterwards he started to

return to his father's house, with a large and wealthy following. He had difficulty in getting away from Laban, and you remember how the angels of God escorted him, though he had proved himself unfit to receive their help. This man who had seen the angel vision stooped to do things while in Laban's employ which were not worthy of a son of God. Just as you who professed so much have been doing things which would not stand the scrutiny of God's angels, and of which one day you must give account at the judgment seat.

However, God loved this man, and brought him down to Jabbok. I have been to Jabbok myself, not literally, but in spirit, for God cannot bear for us to live a low down life. Let us picture that scene!

The stars shining above, the brook rushing down to the Jordan, the trees and shrubs overhanging it! Rachel the beloved, Leah and the children, the flocks and herds had all gone forward, and Jacob was left alone. And the angel of God met him. (Genesis xxxii. 24) Too often that wonderful scene has been used as a symbol of wrestling prayer, but it is not meant to be taken only in that sense. It seems to me that it was not Jacob who wrestled with the angel, but the angel who wrestled with Jacob. It was as though God knew it was his only chance. He wanted to lift Jacob up to a new royal life, and so He actually wrestled with him as though to com-

pel him to yield to Him. Jacob was a proud man. He stood his ground and resisted the effort of the angel to humble him. He struggled. He antagonised the angel of God's love. It was only when the angel put forth his hand and touched the sinew of his thigh, which shrivelled as a cord in the flame, and the man was no longer able to resist, that he cast his arms around the angel and said :

"I yield, I yield! But I will not let thee go until thou bless me!"

The angel blessed him, and said : "What is thy name?"

He answered : "Jacob—supplanter, cheat, mean, crafty."

The angel said, "No more Jacob, but Israel! God wants you to leave all that behind and step up into a royal life."

Did you ever have that experience in your life? I had it twenty years ago, and I think many another can point back to some secret hour when God's angel came to lift him back into princeliness, and make him the servant of God. Perhaps when your wife lay at the point of death the angel came, and you vowed if God would spare her to you you would live a worthy, godly life. You remember, woman, that time when your first babe was dangerously ill. You sat at the bedside and lifted up your heart to God and said : "If Thou wilt spare my child I

will renounce my worldliness, my low living, and I will commence a true Christian life." That was your Jabbok, and you left it resolved that God and you would be forever in close and blessed fellowship.

But what happened the next day? It seems too awful to tell, because it is so true not only of Jacob but of ourselves. Esau met him, and instead of trusting God, Jacob gave him a lame excuse why he could not go with him (Genesis xxxiii. 13). As soon as Esau's back was turned the crafty Jacob travelled in the opposite direction and made for a fat valley and land of pasture where his cattle and sheep could get all they needed, whilst his sons and himself could do a big trade with the men of Shechem. We are told he pitched his tent towards Shechem, and worse than that, he bought a parcel of a field. He who had come of a pilgrim race, who ought to have trusted God and known that God would give him the whole land, became a freeholder and bought some real estate right over against Shechem, one of the worst cities of the country. For wealth and gain he threw himself and his wife and children into the closest possible contact with this city, and you will hear presently what came of it.

I always think that just here *Rachel's influence* came in. I am not going to absolve man and say that he does not care for the world, but I am quite

sure women often drive their husbands into expenditures which they cannot afford, because they say :

“ We want to give our children a chance.”

I always feel that Rachel's influence there was baleful upon Jacob's soul, and that she probably said :

“ Husband, don't you think we ought to give our children some of the polish, some of the manners of our time ? Don't you think it would be wise for them to come into contact with other people ? ”

Don't think that I am too hard on Rachel. Her own behaviour is my justification. We know that when Laban came to Jacob and said somebody had stolen his household gods Jacob knew nothing about it, but as a matter of fact, Rachel had stolen them and hidden them with their goods. Rachel no doubt knew of God, yet she had these little gods to which she gave her worship ; and I cannot but feel that her influence was affected by the idolatry she was practising.

I want to speak for a moment to women. I want to ask whether in God's sight they are using for God that holy, religious influence which should pervade the home and mould the husband and the children. I want to ask girls to begin their relations with men upon such a basis that their influence over them may always be for good. If only girls would build up sweet and noble lives and refuse to do things which God would not approve, they would

surely have an influence over their brothers and future husbands in all after time. Pledge yourself to God in all purity and chastity. Build up in good works a life so full of the jewelry of heaven that men will be compelled to seek you for your intrinsic worth. If any woman has idols—the idol of morphine, of worldliness or any other idol—in God's name put it away! Can you allow filthy novels to eat out the very core of your heart and blast the purity and virtue which are your chief graces? In the name of God, I ask you, whatever secret idols you are worshipping, that you tear them from their throne and open your heart to Jesus Christ, so that you may have no influence for evil, but every influence for good.

Rachel ought to have been Jacob's good angel. She should have said:

“Husband, don't go there! Remember the children!”

But they drifted together, and for four or five years they lived near that prosperous, idolatrous city.

And what happened next? We are told in Genesis xxxiv. that Dinah, Jacob's only daughter, went out to see the daughters of the land. Poor child! She had been put in the way of temptation, and like a gnat she began to flit around the candle flame. It may be that home was irksome, it may

be there was quarrelling there among her brothers, it may be that she lacked tenderness and sweetness from those who lived with her. So she took a step from which there was no stepping back. She lost her honour, and ultimately brought disgrace and shame upon her father's home.

Who was to blame for all that? Was not Jacob to blame for putting his children in that position?

Listen, you men who are making money! There is a tendency on the part of the Christian man, when he begins to make money, to say: "I can now live in a larger house. I can go into better society." Too often acting thus, you place your children under that influence which is to them what Shechem was to Jacob. What is the result? Your children at once begin to get worldly notions. They go into balls and dances and theatres. You expose your sons and daughters to companions who will lead them to perdition. I don't say you ought to deny your children education or anything which makes life bright and happy for them, but I do say when you have given your family a house according to your means and provided for the education and pleasure and recreation of your children, you ought to look upon the increase of your prosperity as a talent from God. You should use anything that is over and above what is necessary for you and your family for the service of God, accounting yourself His steward and entrusted with His goods. Six, seven

years passed like that, and culminated in a tragedy that compelled Jacob to be gone. Oh, that I were eloquent! Oh, that I could paint for you where you are living! Oh, that I could compare the angel-haunted ladder of Bethel with Shechem! If I could make you see that contrast, you would not need an angel voice to say to you: "Arise, go back to Bethel," but, making all haste, you would get back to the glorious heights where God meets the soul.

When God spoke to Jacob he turned to his household and all that were with him, and said:

"Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments; and let us arise and go up to Bethel."

I would touch the harp of memory, the memory of those past days when you were near God. Won't you return to Bethel, where the angels go and come? But you must be rid of idols.

I remember once going to a meeting of the Salvation Army where they had advertised an exhibition of idols. I expected to see idols from India and Africa and the South Seas, but instead of that eight young men, at the appointed time, stepped to the rear of the platform and returned, each bearing a large piece of cardboard. One card was covered with pipes and cigars and tobacco; another with sham jewellery, feathers, ribbons and things of that

sort. There were eight cards, each covered with things that had been idols to some.

A man sitting behind me pointed and said : " That was my pipe."

A woman said : " See my bow of ribbon?"

Those simple people felt that these things had become idols to them, and they had given them up.

I am not here to say that tobacco or jewelry is your idol, because if I did, a great many who are not tempted in these directions would say, " He doesn't mean me; I have no idol"; which would not be true. For a good many men the idol is money; for many women it is their beauty, or their skill in music, or perhaps their beautiful homes. You may depend upon it that unless you have gone through the purging process every one of you is tempted to have some secret throne upon which is your idol. The Greek word for " idol" means " appearance." It is something which you trust in more than God whom you cannot see. If there is anything of that sort in your life, I pray you put it away!

But you ask, " How can you put these things away?"

There is only one way. Take them as God's gift. As soon as you begin to look upon them as His loan, the fear of their hurting you passes away, if they are legitimate. Test yourself and say :

" Christ, from henceforth I treat this as Thy gift to me, to be used for Thee!"

And, my friends, be clean! Clean in your heart, clean in what you see, clean in every word you speak, clean in every act, clean in the whole body! Never allow an expression which is capable of a double meaning. Never let a thought intrude which is not just what it should be. Don't look at those unclean pictures. Don't read those unclean books.

"Change your garments!" It may be you have dressed in polluted garments. I say to you, put off the old man and put on Jesus Christ, and say:

"I am going to live henceforth as Jesus Christ would live were He in my place."

Jacob did it, and he went back to Bethel, and a wonderful thing happened. God said to him: "Your name shall no more be Jacob, but Israel." Then He added, "I am God Almighty"—as much as to say, "Jacob, you sought Shechem because you thought you would do better, and now you stand alone and wonder what is going to happen next. I am going to be with you. I am God Almighty. I will meet all demands. I will stand sponsor for you. Reckon on me. I will see you through."

Now look to Jesus! Open your heart to Him. Give Him your whole nature. Resolve henceforth that there shall not be any secrets. He will give you a new name. He will be to you God Almighty. He will make you fruitful and will multiply you. And may you and He live together in blessed fellowship until He makes up His jewels.

GOD IS NEAR

“One cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His Glory.”—*Isaiah* vi. 3.

IV

GOD IS NEAR

ONE afternoon, about four o'clock, Isaiah, who was then in early middle life, found himself one of a great crowd of worshippers slowly ascending the temple's steps. Together with them he passed the lower platform and still climbed until at last he stood on the summit, at the Beautiful Gate of the temple. Standing there, he little realised that that afternoon was to be the epochal moment of his life ; that that afternoon was to introduce an altogether new element into his life work.

Standing there upon that highest step, in the direct line of vision lay, first, the altar upon which the afternoon sacrifice was to be made ; beyond it a laver where the priests washed their feet ; and beyond that the tall cedar doors that opened upon the Holy Place, which indeed would have unfolded presently, as to Zechariah in after days when he went in to offer incense while the people stood without in prayer.

On either side stood probably two hundred and

fifty Levites, with the instruments of David in their hands, prepared to sing the psalms which were so famous, and about which their Babylonian captors in after days said :

“Sing us one of the songs of Zion.”

As Isaiah stood there wrapped in thought, those who were nearest him had no idea what was transpiring ; but he was swept away from all those sights and sounds, from the sun in mid sky, from the glistening marble of the temple, from the music of the Levite band, from all the crowds that pressed him on every side, and he beheld the sapphire throne of the King Himself. He heard the prayer or chant of the seraphim, and for a moment his whole soul was steeped in the rapture of that vision. But a moment after he was plunged in the profoundest contrition of soul as he contrasted himself with those who served God with sinless lips, and he cried :

“Woe is me ! for I am undone ; because I am a man of unclean lips.”

Now why was this ? Partly because after the golden years of Uzziah's reign, in which money and splendour were corrupting the hearts of the people, it was necessary that the leaders at least, or many like Isaiah who stood in the forefront, should be lifted to a higher level. You must understand from the previous chapters of his book how the dwellers of Zion, the men and women of Jerusalem,

and, indeed, all the people, were being corrupted by the sin, the fashion, the worldliness, and the money-making of their time, and how needful it was, therefore, that God should raise a new standard amongst them by the hand of Isaiah, who stood closest to Him.

It may be that in our country at this time, the very prosperity of our trade, the years of peace, the great increase of population, and the increase of wealth have been subtly undermining the religious life of our people, so that some of our holy customs are being broken down. Perhaps family worship is no longer maintained as it was. The children are no longer trained, as once, in the habits of godliness. The high morale of our people, derived from our noble ancestry, may have been disintegrating while we have devoted our energies in other directions than in whole-hearted devotion to God. At such times it is God's habit to call around Himself His Isaiahs, His servants, those who stand nearest to Him, the members of His church, and to lift them up to a new level of Christian living, that from that moment they maybe the pivot on which a lever may work to lift the entire nation.

As I have travelled through this great country,* in city after city I have met with crowds of your fellow-countrymen, especially your ministers, and I have been struck with the hunger which exists on

* Delivered in the United States.

every hand for deeper and intenser spiritual life. It appears to me as if God were calling upon the people of His own Church in the United States to stand up before Jesus Christ as their King, to learn from Him some deeper and mightier power than that which has been vibrating lately amongst them. Let us confidently look to Him for it.

But before you and I can become what we want to be, there must first be a humbling process. We must be laid low in the dust before God. Just in proportion as we are prepared to descend, shall we ascend. Let us get down in the dust before Jesus Christ, our Lord, and let each one of us become convicted, and cry :

“Woe is me! for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips.”

There is a threefold conviction here, of personal unworthiness, of the nearness of God, and of the one method by which the heart of man can be pacified.

I. THERE IS, FIRST, THE CONVICTION OF UNWORTHINESS :

“Woe, is me! for I am undone.”

The sixth chapter of course follows the fifth. If you read the latter you will understand how earnestly Isaiah had been pursuing his prophetic work. This man, who of all Israel seemed to be the purest and sweetest, is the man that bows the lowest and is most convinced of sin. God's children need to learn

that lesson too. He had done good work, but God saw that he could do better, and so convicted him of the comparative unworthiness of his past ministry. Thus it befell that the man by whom God had spoken through five chapters was a man who confessed to having unclean lips.

Now you may have a good record lying behind you. It may be that for five chapters of your life you have been ministering to people, to children, to the waifs and strays of your city, and you have been greatly owned. But God wants to teach you a better lesson, to make you more mightily powerful, to baptise you more with the Holy Ghost and with fire; and therefore He takes even you, true-hearted as you are, and brings you down into the place where the Holy Spirit will hold up your past life, and bid you review it until you, who have been looked up to by everyone as an example, and quoted as the most devoted and earnest of men, and idolised by many who have been moved by your eloquence—as you come beneath the light that shall fall upon you from the face of Jesus Christ, shall cry:

“I am an undone man.”

You will notice that this conviction was wrought through the vision of Jesus, and indeed that is the only vision that will really convince us of sin. We need to stand beneath the light that falls from His face. He is amongst us at this moment. He is

passing through this assembly and looking down deep into your hearts ; and as you look up into His face, do you not realise that there is a look of grief and sorrow there, because in your work there has been so much of yourself and so little of His love ? Does He not reveal to you the poverty of your motive, the lowness of your aim, your greater thought of what men might consider of you than of what He might say ? Let the light of the living Christ fall upon you now, the light of the coming Christ, the silvery light of the second advent, the light of the judgment-seat of Christ, the light of the great white throne ; and as this falls upon your heart to-day, and you see what He wants you to be and what you are, you shall say :

“ I am undone.”

There is another thought. Isaiah saw the worship of the blessed ones : “ One cried to another.”

I like to think of that. It was as if one of them cried, “ Your strains are not lifted high enough ; higher, brothers, higher ! ” And he cried across the intervening space to the seraphim opposite, and bade them rise to a higher note, till the chorus swelled and rose and broke. I have heard a bird in the spring morning cry to all the songsters of the glade till the whole woodland has rung again. Sometimes in our prayer meeting an earnest man has shaken the very gates of heaven and has stirred

the whole meeting. That is what we want. And as I tell you of a richer, fuller life, a life more abundant than many of you know, may you be convicted of the need of a new anointing, of a fresh application to the Son of God for the touch of fire. May ours be the seraph's reverence, with the veiled face, ours his modesty, with the veiled form, ours his balance of one-third obedience to two-thirds of contemplation. Then perhaps our cry may awaken similar results to his, and others shall cry, "Undone."

II. NEXT, THE CONVICTION THAT GOD IS NEAR

It is said the whole earth is full of God's glory. You and I would be prepared to admit that where the glory of God shines in the spray above Niagara, or where the morning tint is seen upon the Matterhorn and the evening glow upon the Jungfrau, or where the sun rises and sets upon the broad bosom of the Atlantic, or where the wake of the ships stirs the phosphorescence of the Mediterranean at night. But to be told that the *whole* earth is full of the glory of God, that startles us.

I know a place in London where a woman in a drunken frenzy put her child upon a hot iron bar; where a man beat to death his little crippled boy whose agonising cries were heard at night. I should not have thought that the glory of God was there. But the seraphim say the *whole* earth is full of the

glory of God. We are reminded of what Elizabeth Barrett Browning says :

“Earth’s crammed with Heaven,
And every common bush aflame with God,
But only he that sees takes off his shoes.”

One day in London I was sitting in a dark omnibus. A man came in to examine our tickets, and I thought to myself, You will never be able to tell whether they have been punctured aright. As I watched, curious to notice, he touched a little spring on his breast, and in a tiny globe of glass a beautiful glow of electric light shone out. Manifestly the man could see anywhere, because he carried the light with which he saw. So we must understand that when the heart is full of God, you will find God anywhere and everywhere, as the miner carries the candle in his cap through the dark cavity of the earth, and lights his steps.

Oh, men and women, that is what we may rely on here! It is not I that can do anything, but God, Heaven, Eternity are near. It is not my words that shall achieve the result, but the Spirit of God who is as much in this assembly as He was in the upper room upon the day of Pentecost. In the gentle movement of the trees of the forest, can you not hear the stepping of God’s feet? And can you not detect the movement of God’s Spirit at this moment upon your hearts? Does not this quiet hush, this eagerness, indicate the presence of the

skirts of the Eternal as they fall upon us? The whole earth is full of God—all time, all space—and it is because God is here, because there is as much of the Holy Ghost in this place as ever there was in the upper room on the day of Pentecost, because the forces of God are unexhausted, because the mighty river of God which is full of water is flowing through this place, that you and I are certain of blessing.

I believe that if some people had been in that very upper room itself when the Holy Ghost descended, being purblind, blinded by prejudice and passion and worldliness, they would have heard only a noise, they would have perceived no flame. If they had been with John on Patmos, they might have heard the break of the waves upon the rocks, but they never would have heard the harping of the angels. On the other hand if Peter or John were sitting where you are now, their faces would be lighted up with supernatural light, and they would say :

“Did you not see? Did you not hear? God is here. The great God has come down from the heavens to bless these people. They have asked for it. They have claimed it. God has promised, and He has come.”

“Where two or three are met, I am.” The Spirit of God is here and is working amongst us also, as He hath done in other times and places. He first

convicts us of a cold heart, of our deep need, and of our utter undoneness, and then He comes Himself and says :

“I am here.”

III. THE LAST CONVICTION IS OF THE ONE NEED OF A PENITENT SINNER.

We read that when Isaiah cried, one of the seraphim immediately went for the live coal.

Now, mark this: the angel was not told to go, but he knew just what to do. The fact is, the angels have gone so often for the live coal that whenever they hear a sinner crying that he is undone, they go for it; they do not need to be told. It is as if a druggist's boy were so in the habit of getting the same medicine for the same symptoms that when the patient comes to the door he knows just what medicine to seek, without going to the doctor to get advice.

The seraph took the live coal from off the altar, and that stood for blood and fire, the two things we want to-day. We want blood and fire.

Blood! Can you not hear the hiss of the blood of the lamb as it flows gurgling around that coal? As he takes it up with his tongs of gold and bears it to the prophet's lips, it takes the atoning blood with it. We want that first. I call upon all of you to claim that first—the blood. Nothing else will do.

"This is He that came by water and blood ; not by water only, but by water and blood." You and I need blood first. Let us then betake ourselves to our compassionate Lord, and seek from Him that forgiveness which He purchased on the cross. Do you want it? Are you quite satisfied? Do you look upon your past with perfect complacency? Is there nothing to regret? Are there no sins to put away?

It is natural to respond that you are undone. Then let us begin by opening our whole nature to Christ, and believe that His blood now cleanseth from all sin. Let us dare to believe that directly we turn to that blood, and claim the forgiveness which is based on it, the whole of our past sin is gone, blotted out, lost to view; and if we remind God about it, He will say:

"My child, you need not tell me about it. I have forgotten it. It is as though it had never been."

Next we need the fire, the live coal.

Christmas Evans tells us in his diary that one Sunday afternoon he was travelling a very lonely road to attend an appointment in a village the other side of the slope, and he was convicted of a cold heart. He says: "I tethered my horse and went to a sequestered spot, where I walked to and fro in an agony as I reviewed my life. I waited three hours before God, broken with sorrow, until there stole over me a sweet sense of His forgiving love.

I received from God a new baptism of the Holy Ghost. As the sun was westering, I went back to the road, found my horse, mounted it, and went to my appointment. On the following day I preached with such new power to a vast concourse of people gathered on the hillside, that a revival broke out that day and spread through the whole principality."

Let us close with that. Convicted of a cold heart. Convicted of a worldly life. Convicted of self-seeking and pride. Convicted of having come short of God's glory. Then forgiveness. Then the baptism of fire power.

God grant that the live coal, which has never lost its glow since the day of Pentecost, may come to every heart, to every mouth, to every life ; and that this day a fire shall begin to burn in every mission, in every Sunday school, in every church.

THE SONG OF THE LORD BEGAN

“When the burnt-offering began, the song of the Lord began also.”—2 *Chronicles* xxix. 27.

V

THE SONG OF THE LORD BEGAN

A BOUNDING joy is the prime characteristic of our holy religion—joy unspeakable and full of glory. This is as natural to true religion as the bloom on a maiden's face is to perfect health. You can't create joy, but you can make the conditions from which it springs.

If your life is joyless, it must be because of some sin. Find out, then, the reason why your harp hangs on the willow, and joy has died out of your life. Our Lord said: "These things have I spoken unto you that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John xv. 11). If your joy is not full you have not entered into the heart of our Lord's sermon about the vine and the branches.

Paul said: "The fruit of the Spirit is joy" (Gal. v. 22). Now, fruit is natural. There is no effort about fruit. Indeed the effort of the bough is to repress the fruit which presses forward into expression, so that gardeners have to prune away ex-

cessive production. If the bough is properly connected to the trunk, it bears fruit; and if you are properly related to our Lord, joy will be as natural to you as singing to a bird.

Is your religion sombre and dour? Is there no spring and elasticity about it? Do children find you out or shun you? When you enter society, do the laughter and merriment die? Are you an element of perfect gladness at a party? If not, there is something wrong in your inner life, which is choking the spring of joy.

Some years ago my friend Dr Handley Moule visited the excavations in the Forum at Rome. While there, as the rubbish was being cleared away, suddenly there gushed forth the waters of a spring that had been choked for centuries. Poor little spring! Longing to express itself and flash in the sunlight, but choked by the accumulations of the years!

So, if you are a Christian at all, there is a spring of joy in your soul which has been stopped and silenced. My first mission is to put my hand on what is wrong.

In order to help me lay hold of your conscience, turn to 2 Chron. xxix. 27, where we are told:

“When the burnt-offering began, the song of the Lord began also.”

The word "began" indicates that it had ceased. If you look into the preceding chapter you will find that for sixteen years the song of the Lord had never broken from Levite throats, had never floated through the temple courts. Those courts, intended by David to resound with the praises and worship of God, were still. In this they resembled your heart, for your heart was meant for music. If it has ceased, it is probably from the same reason.

I. THE CAUSE OF THE SILENCE.

What had happened during those sixteen years?

Turn to the twenty-eighth chapter, verses 24 and 25: "Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the Lord, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem. And in every several city of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the Lord God of his fathers."

King Ahaz was weary of the worship of God. So he put out the lights, he closed the doors, he took away the keys, he turned the Levites adrift. The sparrows made their homes, the birds of the air built their nests in the neglected courts of the temple. Neither Ahaz, nor the priests, nor the Levites frequented the holy place.

66. THE SONG OF THE LORD BEGAN

Then came a change. The burnt-offering began after sixteen years of discontinuance, and the song of the Lord broke into utterance once again. Hezekiah became king, and "in the first month of his reign he opened the doors of the house of the Lord, and repaired them. And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east street, and said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place" (vers. 3-5).

"Carry forth the filthiness," that is what must first be done. It is the call of the Apostle Paul: "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit" (2 Cor. vii. 1). I have yet to learn what the apostle quite meant by the distinction between filthiness of the *flesh* and of the *spirit*. Away back in the inner shrine of our spirit there must be filthiness.

The priests and the Levites gathered at Hezekiah's call. They "went into the inner part of the house of the Lord, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found" (verse 16).

What followed? They made a sin offering; and the guilt was put away from between God and their consciences (verse 24).

Let us apply these truths first to our churches.

You are eagerly desirous of a revival of undefiled

religion, that your hearts and homes should be full of praise to God. I call on the elders and deacons and leaders in our churches to come into the inner courts that they may be thoroughly cleansed from the filthiness that has accumulated there. Nobody brought it into the temple—it just accumulated. And the dust and filthiness of the world have accumulated in our souls, and you and I must deal with it.

Some years ago I met a grey-haired minister who told me the following story from his own life. Said he:

“I was brought up under Finney, and after my seminary course was sent to carry on a decayed work in a distant country district. There had been no revival, no stirring up of the Holy Ghost in those parts for years. I gathered some godly people in the vestry every Friday night to pray for a revival. We kept this up for fifteen months, but the heavens were as brass above us.

“When the fall came, I set apart a day for united prayer. My heart rejoiced as I saw the farmers driving in with their families, until the schoolhouse behind the chapel was filled.

“I explained that we had gathered to pray for a revival. After the opening hymns and prayers the meeting was thrown open.

“The silence of death settled upon the audience. Every one waited.

“Presently a highly respected elder rose in a front seat, and said:

“‘Pastor, I don’t think there is going to be a revival of the Holy Ghost here so long as Brother Jones and I don’t speak to each other.’

“He left his pew, walked down the aisle and found Brother Jones, and said:

“‘Brother Jones, you and I have not spoken for five years. Let’s bury the hatchet. Here’s my hand!’

“The old man returned to his pew, and sat down. A sob broke from the audience, and then there was silence again.

“Soon another elder rose, and said:

“‘Pastor, I think there will be no revival here while I say fair things to your face and mean things behind your back. I want you to forgive me.’

“We shook hands, and the audience relapsed into stillness again.”

The minister told me that he then witnessed the strangest scene of his life. For ten minutes men and women crept noiselessly about the house, squaring old scores. And God began to visit them.

The operatives in a factory near by heard what was going on in the schoolhouse, and at lunch hour they came over in such numbers that they had to be diverted into the church. The pastor preached to them the simple gospel, and within five minutes

four of the ringleaders in sin in that community were crying to God for mercy. A revival broke out that swept to and fro over the district for three years.

I told this story at Wandsworth, England, once. A few weeks later, when addressing a gathering of ministers in London, I told it again, and a brother minister rose and said that after I had preached at Wandsworth, as he was going out, a man who owed him twenty-five dollars took his hand, and said :

“Forgive my delay in settling that debt. You shall have the money to-morrow.”

We must get back to first principles. We are right with God in the exact proportion that we are right with the men and women around us. Let us test ourselves, not by what we are on Sundays at church, but by what we are to the man whom we like least. That is the true gauge.

Is there any unkind, jealous feeling between pastor and pastor? any irritation or fretting because of another's success?

Are you Christian people prepared to square up old scores? to give up things in business that you know are not perfectly consistent with Christ's commands?

If so, shake hands; write that letter; pay that money; have done with that source of irritation. Let the love of God be poured into your soul, and after that joy will come.

Let us now come to your own hearts.

From the moment He took my idol from me, He took the desire for it out of my soul, and I began to hate it. Then I yielded myself absolutely to Him, and said :

“ From this moment I want Thee to do as Thou wilt with my life.”

Have you some hidden cupboard in your soul in which you are harbouring things whose miasma is killing your joy? Face your true condition. Too often we are like those who fear their lungs are diseased, and who dread examination by the stethoscope and surgeon lest they should reveal the true condition. We can make no headway until we are clean. Are you sure there is nothing in your heart you would not like Christ to deal with? Before you can have God's best, you must let Him search your soul, and show what the unclean thing is which entered years ago and has choked your spiritual vitality ever since.

II. “ THE SONG BEGAN.”

Now notice what happened next.

Hezekiah had the altar ready. On one side were the priests with the whole burnt-offering, which signified Christ's entire consecration to God in His death, and also the entire consecration of believers to Christ in life. On the other side was the Levite choir in white vesture, and other Levites with cym-

bals and psalteries and harps. At a given signal the burnt-offering was laid on the altar. I know not whether God sent fire from heaven, or the wood was ignited with sacred fire that had somehow been kept burning all those years. But as the fire began the sweet voices of the choristers burst forth in song, and the music of the instruments was heard again.

The very heavens must have stood still to listen. Angels must have come in troops to hear the music in that familiar place after sixteen years of silence.

I found myself a few months ago in a bachelor's house. Bachelors are often taciturn, gloomy, and wrapped up in themselves; but this one lived in a beautiful house, and was one of the brightest men I ever met.

When supper was finished, I said :

“ You seem very happy ? ”

“ Yes,” he replied, “ I'll tell you my story. Years ago I was making money, and chose this solitary life so as to be free from the anxieties of wife and children. But though I had all that the world could give, I was not happy.

“ Then my brother died. He had no genius for business, and was always poor. He left a large family of children. I tried to provide for them, but finally had to import them all into this house. I thought the peace of my life had then gone out.

“ For the first week it was agony to see those children run all over the house. But then they got

hold of me, and I began to like them. I sent them to school, and have been both father and mother to them. Two of them are now married. I don't believe there is a happier man on God's earth than myself."

When the burnt-offering began, the song began. A self-centred life is a miserable life. When that man began to sacrifice himself, happiness came into his soul.

And if, to live for another is sweet, if it is lovely for a woman to live for a paralysed husband, and if there is a song forever on her lips because she is all in all to him, what must it be when you are all in all for Jesus? Wherefore I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice—not a *dead*, but a *living* sacrifice—holy, acceptable unto God; and be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may know what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

How I fought God's will! I thought it was hard, inexorable, terrible; but when a man presents himself to it, he finds it good, acceptable and perfect. The thing you hate becomes your joy. As you look into Christ's face, and say, "Rabboni—Master," Easter joy springs up in your soul.

God help you to clear away all the filthiness, and yield yourself to Him. Whether you can sing or not with the voice, the song of the Lord will begin in your soul!

THE NATURAL MAN

“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; for they are foolishness unto him : neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”—I *Cor.* ii. 14.

VI

THE NATURAL MAN

IF it were not that I believe in the Holy Ghost, I would almost shrink from speaking about the profound philosophy wherewith the Apostle Paul deals with the self-life; but I believe that God's Spirit will take my broken words and speak to each of you.

Will you turn to 1 Cor. ii. 14: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

"The natural man." The Greek is the "psychical" man, the man in whom the soul is all, and the spirit is like a dark, untenanted chamber. The temple of old was constituted thus: outer court, holy place, holy of holies. The outer court corresponds to our body, the holy place to our soul, the holy of holies, or the most holy place, to our spirit. In the regenerate man the most holy place is tenanted by the spirit of God, but in the unregenerate man it is untenanted and dark, waiting for its occupant. The natural man is the man whose spirit is empty of God.

In the fifteenth verse of the same chapter, we read: "But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man." Here we have the "spiritual" man, the man whose spirit is quick with the Spirit of God, who speaks and wills and lives beneath the impulse of the Holy Ghost Himself. Oh, that every believer became truly spiritual; the spirit (written with a small "s") infilled: the Spirit of God (written with a large "S") dominating the spirit of man.

In the third chapter of the same epistle, Paul begins: "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ."

Now the "carnal" man is a Christian, a babe in Christ. We might think that the carnal man is unregenerate, but it is not so. He is regenerate, he is in Christ, and Christ is in him; but instead of Christ being predominant, the carnal element is predominant. I believe that there are hundreds of people who are in Christ; but they are babes in Christ. Christ is in them, but He is overcrowded by the superiority of their self-life. Their self-life was once clothed in rags, it is now clothed in the externals of religion; but it is still the self-life, and in the Christian it may predominate over the Christ-life, and be the cause of unutterable darkness and sorrow.

May God help us now to reverse it, so that the

carnal element shall be crowded out, shall be crucified, and the Christ element shall become the pivot of your life!

In order that you may know what the carnal element is, let me say that that word also stands for "flesh," and that the Greek word is *sarx* (*σαρξ*). Now the Apostle uses the word "flesh," "carnal," or "sarx" in a very especial form. He does not mean the natural body, but he means the element of self. That is proved from Rom. vii. 18, where he says: "In me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing." My flesh is "me." Some men spell it with a tiny m, and some with a capital M, but whether the m is in italics or in capitals, the "me" in each person is the flesh. Spell "flesh" backward, drop the h, as we are apt to do in London, and you get s-e-l-f; "flesh" is "self," and "self" is "flesh." It is "me," and as long as "me" is first and Christ second, I am living a carnal life though I am in Christ and a saved man.

FOUR CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CARNAL LIFE.

Now the carnal life is a *babe life*. What is sweeter than a babe? So beautiful, so wee, one can take the child so close to oneself. But what is tender and beautiful in a babe for a few months is terrible at the end of twelve months, or ten years. And what is lovely in a young convert is terrible in a man of ten or twenty years of Christian life. I

have met men who use the same expressions twenty years after conversion that they did when they were cradled on Calvary ; and if you are still living in the elementary stage of experience and feeling and prayer, and do not grow, do not know God better, do not know the Bible better, do not know yourself better, do not know Christ better, you are a little babe, you are carnal.

And then the carnal man *lives on milk*. Paul said: "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able." Milk is food which has passed through the digestion of another. The babe cannot take meat, so the mother takes meat, and breaks it down, and the child takes milk. So many Christians cannot read the Bible, cannot get any good out of the Bible, it must be broken down by their minister, and they are fed with a spoon! Ministers are nurses. They have to spend their time wheeling the converts about, comforting them, putting them to sleep, waking them up and feeding them ; and if they are not fed with a spoon three or four times a week, there is no knowing what will happen. And if you are in that state that you must take spiritual truth through the digestion of another, you are a babe.

A carnal Christian is also *sectarian*. "I am of Paul, and I am of Apollos, and I of Cephas." Oh, how much we make of the fold, and how little of

the flock! How much we think of the hurdles, and how little of the sheep! One man says: "I am a Baptist"; and another: "I am a Presbyterian"; a third says: "I am a Roman Catholic"; and a fourth: "I am evangelical." Half the time we are worrying about the sect to which we belong. Directly a man begins in that course, and forgets the Church with a large C,—the Church of Christ,—he is a carnal Christian and a babe.

I would lead you one step further because I desire to make my system perfectly clear. Turn to Heb. v. 14, where we read:

"Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

Here we have a fourth characteristic of the carnal Christian: such an one is *unable to exercise his senses to discern good and evil*. When I returned to England from one of my Atlantic voyages, my nose was very sensitive; the pure ozone of the Atlantic had made me very keen to discern impurity. I went to stay with some friends in the country, and all that time I was haunted by a noisome effluvia. I said:

"What is the matter?"

"Oh," they said, "there is nothing wrong."

I said: "I am sure there is," and presently, after investigating, about a mile off we discovered a sewage-farm which infected the air. My friends

who had had no training on the Atlantic were unable to detect it. So there are men who take up a novel full of impure thought and read it without feeling hurt, though the hurt has been certainly received; men and women who listen to uncharitable talk, and do not detect its undertone; men and women who go in and out in the world and mix in its pleasure and sin, and still call themselves Christians, because they cannot discern good and evil.

Those four tests,—are they true of you? I am here as a surgeon, and must help you to anatomise yourself to know where you are. Are you growing? Are you living on the strong meat of the Bible? Are you a sectary? Have you the power to discriminate between good and evil? By these four tests you may know whether the Christ-life or the flesh-life is predominant in you.

When God began to create He gave all intelligent beings a self-hood, a power of self-determination. He gave it to angels. Demons have it, because they were angels. Men have it,—self-hood. The Creator meant the self-hood to be dependent on Himself, so that a Christian might turn to the Creator and say: "Live Thou in Thy will through me." When Jesus Christ, the perfect man, came amongst men, during all His earthly life He said nothing and willed nothing from Himself; He

lived a truly dependent life. The vegetable creation,—the flowers, the trees,—they depend on God absolutely, and that makes them so beautiful. Consider the lilies and the cedars, how they grow! And the angels who have kept their first estate live on God. God wills, thinks, acts, energises through them. Satan was once an archangel dependent on God, but something passed over him and he caught the fever of independence, and began to make himself his own pivot ; and so he began to be in hell ; because hell is the assertion of self to the exclusion of God, and heaven is the assertion of God to the exclusion of self. The devil fell, and all his crew that leaned on him, instead of on God, fell also. Then when man was made, Satan traversed the abyss, and whispered to man :

“ Be God, be independent, take your own way, do your own will.”

Man in his fall withdrew his nature from dependence upon God, and made himself a centre of his own life and activity. And this world is cursed to-day because men and women are living for self, and the flesh-life. The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is darkness and despair.

Christianity is a science, a deep science, which tries to do away with the evil or the fall into selfishness by substituting for self the Son of God, which is Christ. Is it not wonderful that Hindooism and Christianity are each of them intended to deal

with the same root of evil? But the Hindoo tries to exterminate the self-life by absorption in eternity until Nirvana sets in, whilst the Christian who also sees that the self-life is accursed eliminates it by the philosophy and the action which I am now going to describe.

SELF-WILL SHOWS ITSELF IN VARIOUS FORMS.

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like.” There you have the passion of the self-life in lust. “Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” There you have the aspirations of the self-life, trying to perfect itself. There was a school of perfection in Galatia, and they sought to perfect themselves in their own energy; and there have been schools of perfection since then which have tried to be good in the energy of the self-life. “Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.” There you have mere intel-

lectualism prying into the things of God, but not submitting to the will of God and the teaching of God. "When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea, yea, and nay, nay?" There you have the self-life planning, scheming, and arranging for itself, and the Apostle says: "I am not going to plan after the flesh."

We see then that we are always in danger of doing good things from the self pivot. That is our curse. I hear of a man who has consecrated himself to God, and I say to myself: "I will do the same." I hear of a man who has attracted crowds by some special lantern, or by some new machinery, and I say: "I too will do the same." I learn of a school which is teaching a certain line of doctrine, and because I think it will pay, and get me prestige and popularity, I adopt it. But not until I begin to notice the working of my own life, shall I have any conception how perpetually the self-life is underlying all.

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HOW TO GET RID OF THE SELF-LIFE?

I will show you. There are *three steps*: the cross, the Spirit, the contemplation of the risen Christ. May we take them now; may the Spirit of God reveal to each one this blessed secret!

First, the cross. Now understand that I hold

that on the cross Jesus Christ offered a substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. But there is a second meaning significant in the cross. Turn to Rom. viii. 3, 4: "What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin. "For sin" is substitutionary. "In the likeness of sinful flesh" is the reference of the cross to sanctification. On the cross God nailed, in the person of Christ, the likeness of our sinful flesh. I cannot explain it to you more than that; but I know this—that next to seeing Jesus as my sacrifice, nothing has revolutionised my life like seeing the effigy of my sinful self in the sinless, dying Saviour. I say to myself:

"God has nailed the likeness of my self-life to the cross. The cross is the symbol of degradation and curse. Cursed is everyone that hangs on the cross. If then God has treated the likeness of my sinful self, when borne by the sinless Christ, as worthy of His curse, how terrible in God's sight it must be for myself to hug it and embrace it and live in it!"

Oh, wondrous cross! But that is not all.

Christ and I are one. In Him I hung there. I

came to an end of myself in Christ, and kneeling at His cross I took the position of union with Him in His death, and I consigned my self-life to the cross. It was as though I took my self-life with its passions, its choices, its yearnings after perfection, its wallowing, its fickleness, its judgment of others, its uncharity,—I took it as a felon, and said :

“Thou art cursed, thou shalt die. My God nailed thee to that cross. Come, thou shalt not escape. I put thee there by my choice, by my will, by my faith. Hang there.”

After that moment—you remember in Galatians it is the aorist tense: “They that are Christ’s, crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts”—after that moment, that decisive moment in my life, I have reckoned that my self-life is on the cross, and that the death of Christ lies between me and it.

Let me make that perfectly clear. Supposing a woman has been married to a felon, a drunkard, a libertine. After years of sorrow there comes a moment of liberty when she seeks and obtains a divorce. She now enters into union with a perfectly lovely blessed man who becomes to her everything. Whenever her former husband reels along the street and seeks again to get her back into his power, she points to a moment, the moment when the divorce was granted, and she says :

“From that moment I became divorced from you. Touch me if you dare.”

If he comes reeling across the street, she only clutches closer the arm of the true man she loves, and puts him on the other side between the sot and herself. She counts from the moment of deliverance.

Now think about it, pray about it. Later I am going to publish the marriage-bans between you and Christ, and to show how Christ takes the place of self. But we must move together, my friends. You must allow me to be persistent. You will not benefit by this teaching unless you act as the result of any separate address in the direction it indicates. So kneel down before the cross of Jesus, and realise why your Christian life has been a failure. The cause of your darkness and sorrow and desertion is to be found here: you have never consigned the self-life where God consigned it. In your will, with streaming eyes, with reverent face, unite yourself with the death of Christ. Doing so, remember you will do what Jesus said Peter must do. Peter said :

“Thou art the Christ.”

“Well and good,” Christ replied. “I am going to die.”

Peter said: “Thou must not think of it. Spare Thyself.”

Ah, that is what you will hear said to you a thousand times,—spare thyself!

Jesus said: “Get thee behind me. That is the

voice of Satan : it is the spirit of the pit. If a man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."

You may say what you like about Christianity, but I undertake to affirm it has been shamefully misrepresented, both by Evangelicals and by many other classes of Christians. They have thought that Christianity depended in the objective, whereas it is subjective largely and equally. They have thought that it depended on trusting Christ to put away your sin, whereas it also consists in trusting Christ to deliver you from yourselves, who are the centre and curse of your life.

Whenever the self-life obtrudes, reckon yourself dead to it; reckon that the cross stands between you and it.

But you say : "Sir, I do not see how I am to live like that. I shall always be on pins and needles, always in agony whether this is self or not, and I do not see how I am to live."

Ah, I thought you would say that! I said that myself, and here comes the *second* point : the Holy Spirit.

"If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." And again : "The Spirit lusteth against the flesh."

It was by the Eternal Spirit that Christ offered Himself without spot to God, and it is by the Eternal Spirit that the cursed spirit of self is going

to be antagonised in your life and mine. Just as in a scarlet fever case you take carbolic acid, and the carbolic acid antagonises the germs of disease, so turning from that cross I kneel before the Holy Ghost, and say :

“Spirit of God, infill, *infill*, INFILL my entire being, deeper, deeper, deeper yet. In the depth of my nature, when I am least thinking about it, go on day by day as the antiseptic of my flesh or self-life. Antagonise it, work against it, keep it out of sight, keep it under Christ.”

The Holy Ghost will do it.

But you say: “I am so afraid that if I am always dealing with the self-life, it will hurt me. It will be like standing by a bier and seeing death disintegrate a corpse.”

This leads me to my *third* point, and I reply,—and this is the beauty of it,—that whilst the Spirit of God in the depth of your heart is antagonising the self-life, He does it by making Jesus Christ a living bright reality. He fixes your thoughts upon Jesus. You do not think about the Spirit, you hardly think about self, but you think much about your dear Lord; and all the time that you are thinking about Him, the process of disintegration and dissolution and death of self is going on within your heart.

A dear sister said to me once: “I am going to spend a whole day praying for the Holy Ghost.”

She went to a hut in a wood, and she came back to me at night and said :

"I have had a grand day, but I am slightly disappointed. I do not feel that I have more of the Holy Ghost now than I had before."

"But," I said, "is Jesus much to you?"

"Oh," she replied, "Jesus never was so sweet and precious as He is now."

"Why, my friend," I said, "that is the Holy Ghost, because He glorifies Christ, and when the Holy Ghost works most, you do not think about the Holy Ghost, but you think about your dear Lord."

O, man and woman, forgive me! It is a very broken, broken way of putting the deepest mystery in the Bible, but I can only ask that the Holy Spirit may make you know what it is to have Jesus as the centre and origin of your life. The fountain and origin hitherto has been self, has it not? O cursed self, Barabbas, Barabbas, to the cross! The world says: "Not Christ, but Barabbas, self." The Christian says: "Not Barabbas, but Christ."

May God explain this to you, for His name's sake.

It cannot be too deeply wrought into our convictions that the essence of the fall was the substitution of self-will for the Divine will on the throne of the inner nature. In Bunyan's phraseology, Lord Will-

be-will has usurped the place which should have been kept for Emmanuel on the throne of Mansoul, and there cannot be peace until this is reversed. Jesus must reign. He must give back the kingdom to God, that He may be All in all, not only in the great world, but in thy little heart and life. On your side, you must be willing, or be willing to be made willing. On His side, He will enter as the King of Glory.

THE SUBSTITUTION OF THE CHRIST-
LIFE FOR THE SELF-LIFE

“ Yet no longer I, but Christ . . .”—*Gal.* ii. 20.

VII

THE SUBSTITUTION OF THE CHRIST-LIFE FOR THE SELF-LIFE

WE have seen that the will is our main and chief impediment. We are not what we *feel*, or *think*, or *wish*, but what we *will*. In the preceding address we saw that our curse lies in making self the pivot of our life, and that the one aim of Christianity is to put Christ where man puts self. I want now to show shortly, concisely, with the power of God's Spirit, who co-operates, how this may be done, and I am going to use the Epistle of Galatians.

In Gal. v. 19 we have the works of self: "Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like." Wherever man's nature works itself out, the lust of the flesh shows itself in every casino, saloon, and house of ill-fame.

Turn to Gal. iii. 3: "Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the

flesh?" Will you be made perfect in the flesh? In the regenerate man, the church-member, there is the same principle of self-life; and though you do not find him in a den of drink or lust or infamy, the same principle which is working unrestrained and unbridled there is working in his heart also. He gives to the collection, to the subscription list, that men may see how much he gives. He seeks to please God by prayer, by the communion, by ritualistic observances. He will even try to be perfect. There is many a man who goes to Keswick and to Northfield, trying to pile up his religious life in the energy of his religious-looking self. But I repeat it: the curse of the Christian and of the world is that self is our pivot; it is because Satan made self his pivot that he became a devil. Take heaven from its centre in God, and try to centre it in self, and you transform heaven into hell. I know little or nothing about the fire, or the darkness, or the worm of hell. Hell is selfishness, and selfishness is hell. And

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE BIBLE

is to do away with self, and to make Christ all in all.

When I am dealing with a drunkard I am inclined to say to him:

"Be a man."

What a fool I am! I am trying to cast out the evil of drink by the evil of self-esteem. If I want to save a man, I must cast out the spirit of self, and

substitute the Lord Jesus Christ—Alpha, Omega, all in all.

But how? How?

This epistle to the Galatians is our battle-axe. Luther used it for justification, but it is equally potent for sanctification.

How? By the cross, and by the cross as presented in the Epistle to the Galatians.

The Apostle tells us in Gal. i. 4: "Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." He considers the cross in its aspect toward sanctification. He says: "He delivered us from this present evil world." In Romans we have the cross for justification, the putting away of sin; in Galatians for sanctification, the cross standing between me and my past, between me and the world, between me and myself. We must learn to count from that cross. That is the ground taken in Galatians.

Take Gal. ii. 20: "I have been crucified with Christ." God demands that every man and woman should unite with the cross, and (so to speak), reckon death to the self-life, the egotism, the personal element which has been so strong in each one. Not your individuality, however. Isaiah will still be Isaiah, and Malachi, Malachi; but the proud, fussy self-esteem, yourself, ego, the flesh, must be crucified. Christ denied His divine self, and you and I must deny

our fallen self. Christ's temptation was to use His divine attribute ; your temptation is that you should use your human attribute. You must put it to the cross, and believe that from this moment it shall be crucified to you and you to it. Barabbas to the cross, to the cross ! Christ, come down from the cross and live in my heart !

Gal. v. 24 : The aorist : "They that are Christ's crucified the flesh." Gal. vi. 14 : "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." The world looks at me as a felon, but I have my revenge. That by which I am crucified to the world, by that the world is crucified to me. It may say what it likes about me. I retaliate, "Take it back ; it is all true of thyself."

This wonderful epistle speaks of the cross as between me and Egypt, between me and the wilderness, between me and my past, my wanderings ; and now the cross is my Jordan by which I pass through death into the land where Joshua leads, the land that flows with milk and honey.

This epistle also treats of the Holy Spirit, because as I have said before, it is only the Holy Spirit that can make your reckoning true. You choose the cross, but the Holy Spirit as it were mortifies, makes dead, makes real. *You* reckon, *He* makes real your reckoning. And hence Gal. v. 17 : "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh :

and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye may not do the things that ye would." Gal. v. 16: "*Walk in the Spirit*"; v. 18: "*Be led of the Spirit*"; v. 25: "*Live in the Spirit.*" And whilst you walk in the Spirit, are led of the Spirit, and live in the Spirit, the Holy Spirit will go on lusting and agonising and making real to you your reckoning of death.

You have not therefore got to worry about the death side; think about the life side. Do not live looking at the corpse, but live looking to the Holy Ghost; and as you trust Him for every movement, as you breathe in the Holy Ghost moment by moment as you breathe in the air, in the depth of your heart He will draw you away from the flesh, the self, the world, the devil; and insensibly, unconsciously, certainly, He will bring you into life. And the more you live on the life side, the more, without knowing much of it, you will live on the death side; for whilst you are engrossed with the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost in the depth of your being is carrying the sentence of death deeper, deeper, deeper down, and things are being mortified of which you once had no conception.

Now listen: If you choose the cross, if you live in the Spirit, the Spirit lusts (always the present tense), "lusteth against the flesh." I do not know how your Bible reads, but some Bibles are printed thus, "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh," and "spirit" is spelt with a small s.

Take some ink and alter that. It is not "spirit" with a small s; it is "Spirit" with a capital S, the Holy Spirit. "The flesh, the self, lusts against the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit lusts against the flesh."

Now, let us look at *five texts in Galatians* on the inner life, the indwelling of Christ.

(1) Gal. i. 15, 16: "When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me." Now, "to reveal" means "to undrape." There is a statue. It is covered with a veil. It is there, but hidden. I take off the veil, and you see it. When you were regenerate, Christ came unto you: that is what regeneration means—Christ born into your spirit. But Christ came in as a veiled figure, and you who are regenerate but who have never seen the Christ as I put Him before you in the last address, you have Christ in you, but He is veiled. Now, mark. When Jesus died, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and when the soul appreciates the death of Christ as its own death to sin, the veil is rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and the Holy Spirit reveals Jesus as the substitute for the self-life.

"It pleased God to reveal His Son in me." O, my God, I thank Thee that Thou hast revealed

Thy Son as the Alpha, the pivot, the fountain, the origin of my life ! May it be so with us all !

A friend of mine was staying near Mont Blanc. He had been there for a fortnight, but had not seen the "monarch of the Alps." Nearly out of heart with waiting, he was preparing to leave. Going up to dress for dinner, he passed a window and saw that the mountain was still veiled in mist. Having dressed, he came downstairs, passing the window again. Every vestige of mist had now parted, and Mont Blanc stood revealed from base to snow-clad peak. So now there shall come upon you a breath of the Holy Ghost, before which the misconception of your life shall pass, and to you God will reveal His Son in you as the centre of your life.

Turn next to Col. i. 27 : "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles ; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

A woman sits alone. Her son ran away to sea twenty years ago. She is a widow, poor, lonely. A bronzed stranger comes.

"Can I sleep in your spare room ?"

"I have a room to let, so you can stay."

He comes in disguised, so that she cannot see him. He is there, but she knows him not. One day they sit together at dinner, and there is a gesture, and she says :

"John !"

That is the glory of the mystery when the two kiss.

“My boy!”

“My mother!”

Then after dinner he says: “Mother, you shall never lack again. Here is gold. I am going to live with you, never to go away again.”

That is the riches of the glory of the mystery of her boy in the house.

Jesus, come! Thou hast come, yet Thou art a mystery. When we come to the cross, then the mystery is gone, and there is the glory of the day; and there will be the riches of the glory of the mystery, Christ in us; and He will do for us better than ever we could have done for ourselves.

(2) Gal. i. 24: “They glorified God in me.” Some young men belonging to the Salvation Army came to old Andrew Bonar, and they said:

“Dr Bonar, we have been all night with God. Can’t you see our faces shine?”

The old man said: “Moses wist not that his face shone.”

When you have got the real article you do not need to advertise it, the public will come for it; but the man who has got what we call in England, Brummagem ware, a sham, must puff it. If you have got Christ in you, people will not glorify you, they will glorify Christ in you, and they will say:

“Teach us about Christ who has made you so fair.”

“They glorified God in me.” Dear brother ministers, when you get this, they will not glorify your sermons, they will not glorify your intellect, and they will not glorify your eloquence; but they will glorify God who shines through you as the Shekinah shone through the temple of old.

(3) Gal. ii. 8: “The same was mighty in me.” Hudson Taylor told me that on the threshold of his great life-work God came to him and said:

“My child, I am going to evangelise inland China, and if you like to walk with me I will do it through you.”

“Mighty in me.” I cannot take that Bible class, but Christ is in me, and HE can. I cannot conduct that mission, but Christ is in me, and HE can. I cannot assume these responsibilities, but hallelujah! it does not matter. A copper wire has only to convey the message, it is for the battery to send it; and you may be forever more like the wire which connects you with cities far down its course, the wire along which the Divine messages pass without fret, without anxiety, without care, a mighty, mighty force bearing them in the wire. When it is not self but Christ, it is Christ “mighty in me.”

(4) Gal. ii. 20: “Christ liveth in me.” One day when travelling by train, a young man sat opposite me in the car, reading Thomas à Kempis’ “Imitation of Christ.” I knew the book, and sat beside him and said:

"A grand book."

He said: "Yes."

Said I: "I have found something better."

"Better?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"Better for me, because I was always a poor hand at imitation. I imitated the minister with whom I settled from college, and nobody but myself and my wife ever guessed that my sermons were imitations of his. When I was a boy, my father had me taught drawing, and my master put before me something, and my copy needed to have letter-press underneath to state it was an imitation of the copy. And when I sat down to imitate Christ, no one could have guessed what I was trying to attain. But," said I, "my young friend, if my drawing-master could have infused the spirit of his skill into my brain and hand, he could have drawn through me as fair a drawing as his own; and if my great and noble friend could have only put his spirit into me, why should I not have spoken even as he? And if instead of imitating Christ far away in the glory, He will come by the Holy Ghost and dwell in me, by His grace He shall work through my poor yielded life, a life something like His own fair life." Christ liveth in me.

Many have no idea what religion is. Re-ligion, *re-ligo*, a Latin word meaning "I bind,"—it is the

binding of the heart to the Lord. No, I recall that ; it is better : " He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." O Christ, Thou art one with me, to make me one with Thee world without end !

(5) One verse more. Gal. iv. 19: " My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." You know, of course, that an egg has in it a little embryo of life, and the nutriment, the viscous fluid upon which it shall grow ; and every day the little life germ pecks into this more and more, and the chick is formed in the shell. Until now there has been a good deal more of other elements in your life than of Christ, but from now the Christ is going to grow and increase and absorb into Himself everything else, and be formed in you.

My brethren and sisters, will you forgive that I have stated the truths of Christ's holy gospel so imperfectly? How can human words tell what Christ is prepared to be? But let me entreat you to pass by a great deal of political life, and it may be (though it is not wrong), of the social life around you ; and I charge you to live and utter the deep philosophy of the indwelling Christ, and let men know what Jesus meant when He said :

" In that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in me, and I in you."

In the evolution of the Christ-germ sown within

us by the Holy Spirit, there must always be a certain amount of suffering and travail. A friend told me that the baby-bee is placed in an hexagonal cell, in which honey is stored. On this it feeds till it works its way to the outer capsule of wax with which the cell is sealed. It requires a good deal of struggle and agonising to get through, but the effort rubs off the membrane which binds its wings to its sides, and it finds itself able to fly. Once, when a moth got into the hive and fed on the wax capsules, and the bees came forth without effort, they were wingless and useless. Yes, it is always through much tribulation that we enter the kingdom!

DELIVERANCE FROM THE POWER
OF SIN

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”—*Phil.*
ii. 12, 13.

VIII

DELIVERANCE FROM THE POWER OF SIN

PHIL. ii. 12, 13: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

"Salvation." "Work out your own salvation." There is a sense in which salvation is finished. There is another sense in which it is in process. Finished by Christ when He died, and yet in process by the Holy Ghost in our heart.

Salvation is a great prize, with two termini. The first terminus is on the cross, where Jesus saved from the guilt, the penalty of sin; the second terminus is in His second Advent, when the body will be raised and married to the spirit, and salvation will be complete. But between His cross where Jesus put away guilt, and the second Advent where the body is married to the spirit,—between these two there is the process of being saved from the power and the love of sin.

In Acts ii. 47, and 1 Cor. i. 18, the Revised

Version in each case speaks of people "being saved." "The Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved." "The word of the cross is to them that are perishing, foolishness: but unto us which are being saved it is the power of God."

A man says to me: "Are you saved?"

I reply: "I *was* saved when I trusted Christ; I *shall be* saved when my body is raised; but I am *being saved* all the time." Aye, we are being saved.

Remember that *sin is a parasite*. Your little babe has got measles, scarlatina, scarlet fever; but measles, scarlatina, scarlet fever are not native to it—they are parasites; and it is possible that in a few days they will pass, and your child's skin will be clear. So sin is not necessary to human nature. Adam was created without it. Christ, a man, lived without it, and we men and women some day will have got over our mumps and measles and bronchitis, and we shall be whole. Sin is a parasite. Thank God, the day will come when I shall stand up before my God without a trace or freckle of sin. I may carry some scar that sin has left, but sin itself will be gone forever.

Next: *God comes into your heart to take your side against the parasite sin.*

A dear friend of mine told me that her boy came back from school with scarlet fever. He came home in a carriage, wrapped in blankets. As he was brought into the hall, she met him and said:

garrulous gossip, your sulkiness, your jealousy, your vainglory, your love of money, your love of sin; God knows it all. But He has come, and will never leave you for a moment. If you will let Him, He will make short work. If you resist Him, you will make the work longer. But He will never leave you, He will never give you up, and however often you fall, go back to Him again.

Suppose some mother had a boy with scarlet fever, and in the fever he got delirious, and instead of keeping in bed he kept getting out, it would be very trying, very disappointing. He would throw his recovery back, but the mother would still cling to him. She would be sorry and disappointed, and wish he had not done it; but she would love him, she could not give the boy up, she would bring him through.

O soul, thou hast thought ill of thy God! Thou hast thought because thou didst so often fall that God was tired of thee. Ah! thou knowest not that His tender mercy is infinite, and He will never let thee go, NEVER, until in heaven He kisses thy face, out of which the fever and the brand of sin have gone forever. O, my God, thou wilt kiss my soul into health!

Remember further that *His purpose is to deliver from the power of sin*. The *guilt* is gone, but the *power* remains, and He can only deliver from this gradually. Now, understand me. People ask if I

believe in progressive or instantaneous sanctification. I reply—first, I do not believe in sanctification, I believe in the Sanctifier; I do not believe in holiness, I believe in the Holy One. Not an *it*, but a *person*; not an attribute, but Christ in my heart. *Instantaneous?* Yes, in this way: that in a moment I can take up the true attitude toward Christ; but *progressive*, because stage after stage He will carry on His work within me, weaning me, saving me from the love and the power of sin, deeper, deeper, deeper down into my heart. I take up the position suddenly, but I apply the position all along my life.

Is not this true? To-day you see things to be wrong which five years ago you permitted, and five years from to-day you will see things wrong which you now permit. Evidently the work is progressive. God sheds light upon our life. It is but the twilight at first. In the twilight I can see a chair and a table and a piano and a chiffonier: that is all. But the twilight merges into morning, and in the morning light I can see smaller things: the ornaments, the pictures that are on the wall. But morning becomes noon, and now I see the dust which has gathered. I could not see that in the twilight, but I see it at noon.

So God deals with you and me. He does not turn the heart upside down, and empty it of every sin at once. First the twilight, and we put away

obvious sin ; then morning, and we put away other sins not seen before ; then eleven o'clock in the morning, and we put away deeper sins that we had missed ; until it comes toward meridian, and in the perfect light we put away more sins, the small dust we had omitted. We see deeper, deeper down, and every year a man is saved more completely from the power of known sin. So it is gradual.

I think it is perfectly absurd for a man to say that God's work of sanctification is complete. Once, when in Leicester, I was paying parochial calls, and dropped in on a washerwoman who had just got out a line of clothes. I congratulated my friend because they looked so white. So, very much encouraged by her pastor's kind words, she asked him to have a cup of tea, and we sat down. Whilst we were taking the tea, the sky clouded and there was a snow-storm ; and as I came out the white snow lay everywhere, and I said to her :

"Your washing does not look quite so clean as it did."

"Ah," she said, "the washing is right enough ; but what can stand against God Almighty's white?"

So you may think that you are clean, because you have never seen God. When you see God, your holiest day will seem to be imperfect ; you will abhor yourself and repent in dust and ashes, and you will need to say :

"Forgive me my debts as I forgive my debtors."

We may be saved from known sin—but not from temptation.

Up to the limit of our light God can keep us from known sin. I will say that again: up to the limit of our light—twilight, morning, noon—up to the limit of our light God is able to keep us from all conscious and known sin. But He will not keep us from temptation. You cannot help the devil knocking at the door, but you can help inviting him in to supper. You cannot help the foul vulture flying over your head, but you can help letting him make a nest in your hair.

When you live near God you will be most tempted of the devil. Some men seem to think they are not holy because they are tempted. I should not believe in a man's holiness if he were not tempted. When I was at school, the boys used to avoid certain orchards, because they were full of crab apples; and you might know that the apples in those orchards were sour, or the boys would have gone for them. And if you are not tempted, it shows that your heart is empty and wicked, and *not worth the devil's while* to spend his time over. When the Spirit of God descended upon Christ He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil—Spirit-filled, devil-tempted.

You ask, why does God let us be tempted? I think it is to show where we are weak; that upon the temptation, as our stepping stone, we may

reach out for some of God's help. I would not know how much I needed Christ unless the devil were constantly tempting me.

God is working in you. The compunction you feel when you sin, the yearning you have for a better life, your desire to go to a religious meeting, all are proofs that God is working in you to deliver you. Many a woman of fashion or society is, perhaps, living in the very whirl of it, and yet, poor thing, in it she really wants something better. My sister, do not be disheartened—that is God working in you! I believe you are a real child of His, but you are so weak, and you do not like to stand alone, you do what other women do, and yet you hate it all the time, and you want the better life. Understand that God is working in you; you are the workshop of God.

Work out what God works in. “*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is GOD that worketh in you.*”

You must work out what God works in, and you must do it with fear and trembling. Let me explain. Suppose a great artist is training a young student. He says to that student:

“I am coming into your studio to help you tomorrow from nine till twelve.”

It is a wonderful thing that this illustrious artist should spend three hours with that obscure student; and the man fears. He does not fear the teacher,

but he fears lest he will miss a minute of the teacher's help. He trembles, not because he dreads the teacher, but because he is a miser to use up every hint, every suggestion, every touch. O! he trembles lest he should lose anything. So, dear soul, listen. The great God has come into your life to live there, and He says to you :

“I am going to save you from the power of sin.”

How careful you ought to be! When God speaks, obey. When God gives a hint, instantly act upon it. Be very fearful lest by any word or act of yours you spoil and thwart and put back God's work in your life. Work out with fear and trembling.

God in you will work to will, and then God in you will work to do what He wills. First, God works to will. He does not work to make you feel, because feeling ends in smoke so often. God does not work in you to think, because you think and think again. But God works in you to *will*. That is, there rises up in your heart a *desire* which becomes at last a *purpose* to be free. No one knows it, no one guesses it; but in your soul there rises up the will.

God is always definite. The devil confounds us by bringing a number of points before us, but when God deals with us He deals with one point at a time. He takes one sin, one failure, one incumbrance or weight. When you are at the communion table, when you are alone, when you are

reading your Bible, this one thing comes up. God works away there. Now meet Him there, and He will work in you to will against it. That is the first thing. That was so with me.

About seventeen years ago, when God began to work with me, there was a thing in my life no one knew; but in my silent hour God worked in me to will that it should cease. I was so weak I could not put it away. But God worked *to do* as well as to *will*.

Blessed be God, the willing and the doing are from Him, and by faith you look to Him to do for you what you cannot do for yourself.

I have found God works thus. He leads me to see a thing to be wrong, and then I put my will against it. Whenever afterwards it comes towards me, God's Spirit says:

"It is coming. Hide, hide in the cleft of the Rock."

It is like a chick,—a hawk,—the mother; I run—I hide—the devil finds me in Christ. And if I fall through not trusting Him to keep me, He works in me to be sorry, and I am sorry; and then He works in me to confess.

Some years ago, one Sunday morning, on coming down to my church, I found that the verger had done a very foolish thing, for vergers (though they live in the church) are not immaculate. I lost my temper. I was going to preach within a quarter

of an hour. As a result of losing my temper, I was as far out of fellowship with God as a man may get. My officers were all coming in to pray with me before I entered the pulpit. I did not know what to do. I knew I had fallen. I knew I dared not preach God's gospel until I was right with man, because one cannot be more right with God than with his brother man; one's position as a man is the gauge and indicator of one's position before God. I thought they would all think that I was crazy, but I rang the bell, called the verger in and said to him:

"You did an uncommonly unwise thing just now—I cannot take that back: but that did not exonerate me for losing my temper. Forgive me."

The man looked more startled than pleased, but that did not matter. I had done what was right, and my soul shot into the blue of God's heaven again. God worked in me to confess.

A man loses his temper with his wife at breakfast. He goes down town. All the morning he wishes that he had not done it, and the Spirit of God in him says:

"Tell her when you get home that you are sorry."

No, we men are very tough material, and instead he says:

"I will buy her a basket of strawberries."

He comes with his little peace-offering. She, poor dear, understands it. She has lived long enough to know that he is only mortal, and she takes the offering as an apology. But he would have been a manlier and a happier and a more Christlike man if he had said :

“Wife, I am a minister, I am an elder, I am a good man really, but I was away from God, and the devil tripped me up. Forgive me, sweetheart, forgive me.”

That would be the best way. And when God works in you to confess, confess! Confess to man, to woman, to child, to servant, to Him ; and His blood will wash you whiter than snow.

How long does it take between confession and forgiveness? When I was a boy at school and talked to the boy next to me, they sent me down to the bottom of the class, and it took me a month to work up. When you do wrong and confess it, God does not put you down and leave you to work up for a whole month, but on the spot, immediately, He forgives you and restores your soul, and puts you back where you were before you fell.

Only, dear soul, abide in Jesus. Let the Holy Ghost in you keep you abiding in Jesus, so that when Satan comes to knock at your door, Jesus will go and open it, and as soon as the devil sees the face of Christ looking through the door, he will

turn tail like a whipped cur. Let Jesus live in your heart. Do you live in Jesus? When the devil comes, do not meet him yourself, but let Jesus meet him, and you stand behind Him. The negro said: "When the devil comes to me, I always introduces him to his betters." Put Jesus between you and the devil. Live in Christ. God will work in you. He will make you hate sin. He will make you loathe what you loved. He will deliver you deeper, ever deeper in your life, from the power and the love of sin. It may be a long process before the work is done, but He will keep you from known sin, and save you ever deeper down in your heart.

Oh, Thou who art able to keep us from stumbling and to present us faultless before Thy glory with exceeding joy, to Thee Emmanuel, Christ, Son of God, lover of my soul, I yield my life, my soul, my all!

Some may read these pages, who have lost all heart, they have fallen so often. Their life is one long series of falling and starting afresh—of being overcome and being restored. Well might they cry out with the Apostle: "Who shall deliver?" But let them take heart. The Lord Jesus is waiting for them to hand over the conflict to Him. As long as they think that they can prevail, they may try. But just so soon as they confess their help-

lessness, and cast themselves on Him in absolute despair, He will become their all-sufficient Saviour and Keeper. He will not forfeit His precious name, which means, that He will save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.

THE TRINITY OF TEMPTATION

“The Evil Day.”—*Eph.* vi. 13.

IX

THE TRINITY OF TEMPTATION

WHEN the Lord Jesus Christ received the filling of the Holy Spirit at His baptism, He was immediately led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. The person who has been powerfully drawn toward God by the Holy Spirit will be, like the sweep of the pendulum, almost immediately exposed to strong temptation.

It is almost necessary, I think, in order to root the tree deeper in the soil. When I was a boy my schoolmates would go often to a neighbouring orchard when the fruit was ripe. You could always tell when the fruit was ripe, because the boys made for it. As long as the fruit of your life is immature and sour, the devil will not trouble you much; but just so soon as your fruit is ready, you may expect all the devils of hell to try to steal it. It may be considered rather an honour to have thieves break into your house, because it shows that you have a repute for having money—thieves never break into a poor man's house. And if the devil comes about your house, it shows that you are becoming better

off than you used to be. Count it all joy, therefore, when you are tempted.

Now in dealing with temptation we must remember that a man may be tempted either of God (and we generally use the word "tried" when we speak of this) or he may be tempted of Satan. In Heb. xi. 17, we are told that God did "tempt" or "try" Abraham. God tries us that we may rise; Satan tries us that we may fall. God puts an occasion in our way to be a stepping stone up; Satan puts an occasion in our way to be a stumbling block, and cause us to fall.

I am not now speaking about God's side in trial, but about temptation to failure.

I will take as my basic text a passage, which, if you understand, you will have the key to the mystery of the New Testament. It is found in Ephesians, the second chapter. In the first ten verses you have the seed plot of the main teachings of the Apostle Paul.

He begins with our terrible state in sin through our connection with our first parent, Adam; for everyone is connected with Adam in his sin. He says: "You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." Then he speaks of the trinity of evil.

I. THERE ARE THREE TRINITIES IN THE WORLD.

The trinity in unity above us, the Father, Son,

and Spirit—one God ; the trinity within us, spirit, soul and body—one man ; and the trinity beneath us, the world, the flesh and the devil.

In Eph. ii. 2, 3, you will find : “In time past ye walked according to the course of this world”—there is the world ; “according to the prince of the power of the air”—there is the devil ; and “in the lusts of our flesh”—there you have the flesh. These three are present in every temptation that comes to man.

What is the world? In 1 John ii. 26 we are told what is in the world : “The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.” These were the lines along which Christ’s three temptations came. These the apostle shows are *in* the world, but he does not give a definition of the world.

The world really is the appearance or semblance of things, a mirage! The Hindoo philosophers call it *maia*—that which attracts, the glamour, the dream, that entices and puzzles the soul, promising much, but always disappointing. Are you not conscious when you are tempted that there is always a sort of bait held out to you of something you are to get, some pleasure or joy? As a matter of fact, you never get lasting pleasure when you do yield to the temptation. It is simply a mirage.

Just as the child blows soap bubbles, which are radiant with a thousand hues, but which, when touched, sink into drops of soapy water : so the

worldly spirit is always grasping after the semblance of things, grasping at the unreal.

As for the flesh, there is no better definition than that given in Romans vii. 18, where the apostle says :

“In me, that is, in my flesh.”

“Flesh” is “me-ism, egotism.

What is the centre letter of the word “sin”? “I”; and the centre of egotism is “I.” The fall was the putting “I” as the centre of life, and redemption is putting man back to the centre of love, which is “not I.” God will finish the work in your soul, when you live, yet not you, but Christ lives in you. When I was in Germany recently, they gave me a beautiful card on which two words were printed—“Ich” (I), and “Er” (He); and the “I” was crossed out by a stroke, leaving only “He.” Myself crossed out, Christ the only pivot or centre of my life.

I believe God will never be satisfied until we have been lifted clean off the “I” pivot and placed upon the “Not I” pivot, until we no longer live for ourselves, but for Jesus Christ, who died for us. The temptation of Satan is to get us to live on the self-pivot, and in order to do that he holds before us the mirage of pleasure which will be ours if only we will make the self-life our objective.

And now a word about the devil.

The nearer you live to Christ, the more certain you are there is a personal devil. Those who say

he is not a real person, not only go in the face of the New Testament, but show they do not know the reality of Jesus Christ. In London, when a gang of thieves wants to get into a house with the most impunity, they advertise that they have left that section. So if the devil can get anyone to believe in his non-existence he is much more likely to achieve his designs. The devil does not trouble about those who are not specially spiritual. It is those who stand nearest to Christ who are most assailed. If you are a straggler on the edge of the battle you are likely enough to come off with a whole skin. The devil is evidently a real person, because Jesus said: "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me." Mark also 2 Cor. xi. 3: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ"; and John xii. 31: "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out"; and Rev. xx. 2: "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years."

Of course, I do not think that the devil has the attributes of God. He does not trouble much about you and me, but reserves himself for Christ, Luther, Spurgeon, and men who are worth his steel; any little demon is strong enough to upset you and me. If you say that the devil tempts

everybody you make him omnipresent and omniscient, which are attributes of God alone.

Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against the hosts of spirits of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephesians vi. 12, revised version). I believe that behind every brothel and saloon there is a demon, that over the darkness of every dark continent, like China or Africa, and any stronghold of evil, there are myriads of demons who have beneath them principalities and powers. Compare Daniel x.

In one sentence our Saviour gave the history of Satan. He said: "He was a murderer from the beginning, and stood not in truth" (John viii. 44).

There you have his origin. Probably he was an archangel, and having been created in the truth, he did not remain in it, but, as Jude says, lost his first estate. Before Satan fell, long before this world assumed its present shape, in the period between the first and second verses of Genesis i., he was the vicegerent of God. Jesus Christ recognised that when He spoke of Satan as the prince of this world. When he was an unfallen archangel, I believe God made him the prince, perhaps of the sun and its attendant worlds. When he fell he dragged down with him other angels and this world, which has been groaning ever since. "For the creature was

made subject to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation should be delivered" (Romans viii. 20, 21). I believe that cyclones, devastating tidal waves, and a great deal that is so puzzling in the present world are the result of the reaction of that original fall of Satan, its vicegerent and prince.

Why should Satan tempt man to fall? What was the reason for the fall on Satan's side?

In Genesis i. 26, "God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let him have dominion." As soon as Satan heard that, it seems as though he thought to himself:

"Have dominion! Man have dominion! It shall never be. I am lord here, fallen though I am. These are my palaces, my court, and man shall never rule over this world!"

So he laid his plan to make man subject to himself, and the whole gist of the fall is that Satan should rule, should take from the brow of man the crown that the Creator put there.

In the third chapter of Genesis you get the story of the fall. There was the tree which was pleasant to the eyes, and a thing to be desired to make man wise. In that you have the *world*—the appearance, the semblance, the beautiful mirage. Man wants to be wise, to be as God. Next there was the *devil* speaking through the serpent. And you have the *flesh* in what Eve saw, in the 6th verse: "The

woman saw that the tree was good for food." The world, the flesh, and the devil! In that moment Eve fell, Satan again became supreme. The threatened intrusion upon his dominion was brought to an end by man becoming his subject.

II. THE TEMPTATION OF OUR LORD.

When I was young I never could understand why Milton made *Paradise Regained* turn upon the temptation of Christ. It always seemed to me that I should have made the regaining of Paradise turn upon Calvary. But he could not have done otherwise. When Satan had made man his subject, God's plan seemed thwarted; but God, in the person of His Son, became man and encountered Satan, not in the exercise of His Deity, but "He emptied Himself." He temporarily laid aside the use and exercise of those divine attributes, by which He could stamp Satan under His foot, and entered the arena as a man.

When the holy, blessed Christ met Satan in the wilderness, the first temptation was repeated, only the conditions were worse. It was not in a garden, but in a wilderness. Adam was tempted in his innocence; Christ as the scion of a biassed race. Again there was the question of food—not a tree with its luscious fruit, but stones of the desert and the hunger in our Saviour's body. Satan said to Eve:

"You have all you want to eat. Now take that fruit to make you wise."

But the tempter knew Christ had hunger, not for a luxury, but a necessity, and he said :

"You have power. Use it. Feed yourself."

"No," said Christ, "if I did I should have an existence independent of God. I depend upon my Father, and when my Father sees I want food He will send it."

The moment Christ said that, He undid, as far as He was concerned, the coil which the devil had woven around Adam and our race.

Christ was also tempted by the world. There was the mirage, the semblance of the nations of the world, in a moment of time, and Satan said :

"See how fair the empire is. You need not die, you need not bear the cross. All this is mine, and I can give it to you. Only worship me."

Christ knew that if He worshipped him the semblance of the empire of the world would have fallen to dust. It would not have been His. The devil had lied. Christ could not rule men unless He died for them. So Christ withstood the temptation of the world, and said :

"No, Satan, I will not take it at that price, but I will get it nevertheless. I will not have it as your gift, but my Father's ; not by conquering, but by dying a death of shame."

There are two mountains in our Saviour's life, the

mount of temptation and the mount of ascension. On the mount of temptation Christ saw the kingdoms of the world, and the devil said: "I will give Thee these if Thou wilt worship me." But the Lord refused and went down that mountain poor, lonely, to suffering and to death; but at last through the cross and the grave He came out on the other side more than a conqueror, and said: "All power is given to Me in heaven and upon earth. Go and preach." He refused the devil's crown and got God's crown; and one day we shall hear the anthem float over the redeemed world, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ."

III. THE SUCCOUR FOR TEMPTED SOULS.

But it would not help us if Jesus had done this for Himself only. We must remember that on the cross Jesus Christ became the representative man, and again He met the world, the flesh, and the devil in the hour of His weakness.

If He could overcome them then, what can He not do now He is strong in resurrection glory? He said distinctly in John xiv. 30: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me"; and again, "I have overcome the world." When our Saviour died He put His foot on the devil; He bruised the serpent's head. When He rose as the representative man He was raised above the power of

the devil, and got back the dominion that God gave Adam, and Adam lost. We see not yet all things put under man, but we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour (Hebrews ii. 8, 9). In the ascended Lord, man rose above the devil and resumed the honour and glory, the power and authority, with which God had endowed him in the first moments of his creation. When Satan saw that God was lifting our race, in the person of a perfect man, to sit in glory he knew that his work was in vain, and that in spite of everything God's purpose would stand, that man should have dominion and power.

Now, here are two men. On the one hand there is the first Adam. By the first birth you and I were born of him, and are all children of a fallen man. The devil knows that, and as long as you are living in the old Adam he feels free to do as he will with us, because he has already subdued the father, and he knows he can subdue the child. By the second birth we are born into the second Adam, the royal Christ, and stand in Him, and He has made us kings and priests. The pity is that men do not use their royalty!

This is one of the most wonderful subjects that a man can present to his fellows,—the intention of God to give men royalty ; the jealousy of the devil in trying to stop it. God refusing to have His plans frustrated, coming down as though the God-man

should fight a battle with His right hand tied behind Him, and saying to Satan, "I will come down and overcome you with my left hand, without the use of my deity." In the wilderness He overcame him. All through His life in His weakness He met the devil and overcame him. On the cross He met him once more. Satan said to Him:

"Spare Thyself."

But the Lord answered: "Never. I refuse to do as you tell Me. I am going to do the Father's will, and if My Father leads me to bear the sin of the world, I will bear it, though it bring midnight on My soul. I will do My Father's will."

When we believe thus, and take our stand in the risen Lord, Satan is powerless.

In Switzerland one season, two travellers went to explore an extremely difficult part of the Alps. They took three guides. When they reached a steep cliff of ice they roped themselves together, first a guide, then a traveller, then a guide, then a traveller, and then a guide, and they began to climb up the cliff. As the first guide crawled up he cut in the ice little rests for the feet of those who followed, and the whole five of them crept carefully and anxiously up the side of the cliff.

When they were midway, the last man lost his footing. As he swayed to and fro he dislodged the man above him. He tried to regain his footing, and could not, and pulled the third, and the third

the fourth, and four of them were swinging slowly to and fro over the precipice.

When the first guide perceived what was happening, he drove his ice-axe with all his might into the cliff above him, and held to it. As he stood firm, the man beneath had time to get his footing, and the man beneath, until the whole were saved because the first man stood.

Jesus Christ has bound us to Him, but some of us have lost our footing; we cannot keep the notch. But if we are linked to Christ by faith, we shall keep our standing, in spite of temptations, and Christ will bring Satan under our feet.

A gentleman who witnessed the following, and vouched for it to me, told this incident. An artizan, living in Manchester, had a little dog which displeased him, and he resolved to throw it into the lion's den at the Zoological Gardens. He did so, but instead of the large beast harming the little frightened terrier, which wagged its tail and crept up to his side, he allowed it to share his den, and even his meals. With majesty he put up with his little friend's sportiveness and impertinence. All the city heard of this strange friendship, and flocked to see the lion and terrier in the same cage. Presently the owner repented himself, and went to reclaim his dog. First he tried and then the keeper—but each in vain. The keeper absolutely refused to enter the

136 THE TRINITY OF TEMPTATION

cage, being deterred by the ominous growls of the lion's anger, saying to the crestfallen owner: "If you want your dog, you must get him out for yourself." Remember that the only safety from the lion of the pit is to get as close as possible to the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

THE RULE OF OUR THOUGHTS

“Quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.”—*Heb. iv. 12.*

X

THE RULE OF OUR THOUGHTS

I HAVE explained that you might expect to be tempted to the end of your life, that the nearer you live to God, the more you will be tempted. The presence of temptation in your life is not a proof of deterioration, but the contrary, for the more you know of God on the one hand the more you will know of Satan's temptation on the other hand.

If you desire to be kept from yielding to temptation, you must be very careful of your thoughts, and it is about the necessity of guarding your thoughts that I am going to speak now.

KEEP THY HEART CLEAN.

First, let us look at Prov. iv. 23, where the wise man says: "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life," or as the revised version puts it: "Keep thy heart above all things that thou keepest."

You keep your wealth, you keep your home, you keep your health, you keep your character, but above all these things keep your heart. Why? Because out of it are the issues of life.

When Bunyan depicted the character of Ignorance, he made him say :

“I think my heart is as good as anybody’s heart, and as for my thoughts, I take no notice of them.”

He shows at once that he does not know himself, and that he is exposed to every temptation that crosses his path. If you have never before noticed your thoughts you will find before I am done that the first suggestion of wrong comes through the doorway of the mind.

Turn again to Prov. xxiii. 7 and read: “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.”

The thoughts lay down the tram lines upon which presently the tram car makes its way. Just as the tram car will pass up and down the rails in a great city, so does the act follow along the track of the thought.

I know there are men who say, “I must not do that act, but I may indulge the thought of doing it.” There are those who dare not act impurely, but during the hours of darkness they allow their thoughts to wander where they will, and such men and women think they have escaped wrong; but let them understand that those thoughts are all noted by God, and they will have to account for them at the day of judgment. Let them also know that the thoughts they have entertained in their hearts will find an issue, and there will be some act in their life, perhaps ten years hence, as a result of these

unholy thoughts. Sometimes it seems rather terrible that a life should be blasted by one act, and you may be disposed to pity the man and say that it is hard for him to be judged and crippled for the rest of his life by the passionate act of a single moment. But remember that an act is never alone. It really sums up trains of unholy thought in which the man has been indulging, and therefore you do not judge him for the one act, but for the process of which it is the result. The tree was eaten through before it crashed to the ground in the storm.

THE WICKEDNESS OF MAN.

The Word of God tells us in Gen. vi. 5: "God saw that the wickedness of man was very great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Away back in the days of Noah the trouble God had with man was in his thoughts. The whole trend of the Bible is to get our thinking right.

As a contrast to that verse in Genesis, I quote Phil. iv. 8: "Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, think on these things."

Up to the doorway of your heart are always coming hundreds and thousands of thoughts, and you must be careful to reject the evil ones and let into your soul only those that are of good report. If these are the tenants of the inner life, you need

have no fear about your character. I am prepared to say that if you think right, you need not take much care about your life.

Butler in his *Analogy* says there are three steps in the formation of character—act, habit, character. The act makes the habit, the habit or the bundle of habits form the character. Thackeray amplified this saying thus: "Sow a thought, reap an act; sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap character; sow character, reap destiny."

I illustrated this not long ago to an audience of children by showing a thread, and attached to it a piece of twine, then a rope, then a chain, and padlock. I tied the thread around a boy, and he broke it easily. But I gradually wound the twine and rope and chain about him to show the power of habit. The thread was the thought leading to the act, the rope was the habit, the chain was character, ending in the padlock of destiny.

Our Lord announces the same truth in Mark vii. 21: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts." Then He names some of the sins — adultery, fornication, murder, thefts, covetousness. They all begin in the evil thoughts. In Eph. ii. 3 we are told: "Among whom also we all had our conversation in time past in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." The Greek says "the desires of the flesh and the thoughts." I want you to notice that,

“*fulfilling* the desires of the flesh and the thoughts.” Desire is not in itself wrong. The affections and propensities of our nature are not wrong in themselves. God gave these to us to pull along the chariots of our lives. He put within us all manner of appetites and propensities which are His own beautiful gifts. The wrong comes in in two ways: if we desire too much of the right thing, and if we desire gratification in a wrong way. Whenever desire oversteps the bounds, or seeks gratification in a wrong way, it becomes lust.

You cannot help the bad thoughts coming. As one of the Puritans said: “You cannot help the birds flying over your head, but you can keep them from building their nests in your hair.” Some are suggested to us by heredity. Then the papers and books we read, the pictures which are exhibited in store windows and in art galleries, the conversations we overhear,—all around us there are many things exciting and appealing to us, and we are having unholy desires constantly presented to our mind. But we must not *fulfil* them. We may have the temptations to lust presented to us, but there is a vast difference between that and having the lust gratified. The evil thought may come to your door and knock, and you may keep your door locked. You sin when you open your heart and let the thought in and gloat over it. Then desire becomes lust.

In James i. 14, 15, we read: “Every man is

tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed. For when the lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Let me illustrate by the use of botany. You know that flowers have their sex, and the bees gathering honey in one flower carry the pollen to another, and the result is flower and fruit. Precisely in the same way the heart of man is always open, and bees of all kinds seem to bring the pollen of unholy thoughts; when these are sown in the desires of our nature, there is at once the result of which St James speaks. As soon as you allow the evil thought to mingle with your nature, it bringeth forth the act of sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

I am not speaking now of the sinful state which we have inherited from Adam, but of the act of sin. Lust, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth this child of sin, and its grandchild, which is death. There you have the parent, child and grandchild.

Now we may say that bad thoughts fly about like microbes. Our system of surgery has been entirely transformed in Great Britain by the recent discovery of the influence of microbes. We are now taught that the air is filled with microbes. The surgeons always keep their instruments in a solution of carbolic acid, so that when an instrument makes an incision in the flesh it will not carry microbes with it. This is to prevent suppuration,

which is only the multiplication of microbes in an open wound.

What microbes are to the body, bad thoughts are to the soul. As you have to use antiseptics to check microbes, so you must live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, who is the antiseptic to bad thoughts. These thoughts come from Satan. "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Cor. ii. 11). The Greek is, "We are not ignorant of his thoughts." Satan is always starting evil thoughts.

To use a simile that anybody can understand, the soul is like a castle with a great gateway. Many people leave the gateway of their soul open, so that every vagrant, truant, evil thought may come pouring in and do as it likes. At the gateway of your soul there are many thoughts apparently innocent, but really great traitors. If you keep your gateway unguarded, unsentinelled, these thoughts pour in and out, backwards and forwards, and presently blow up your whole soul with passion.

Therefore, in dealing with our thoughts, two things are necessary: First, discernment; and second, keeping power.

We read in Isaiah xxviii. 5, 6: "In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate." The Lord of hosts shall be two things: first, a spirit of judg-

ment, and secondly, strength. Are not these what we need ?

First, we need to be able to sift out bad thoughts from good thoughts ; to know the traitor, however well he is dressed, and keep him out.

We need discernment. Why ? Because "the god of this world hath blinded the minds," that is, the thoughts, "of them that believe not," that is, the unregenerate (2 Cor. iv. 4). Man is blind. He sits at the gateway of his soul, hearing the tread of many feet, but unable to discern the bad from the good ; blind, so that all thoughts are much the same, and he lets them all in, to his own undoing.

Next, we find the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through ignorance (Eph. iv. 18). It is twilight to the soul, and even though the man tries to see he cannot, because in the dim twilight bad thoughts and good thoughts come in alike, and he does not distinguish one from the other. I lived years of my life ignorant of the true nature of my thoughts, because I was blind and lived in twilight. Those who live near to God are keen to detect these thoughts.

The men of Israel once asked their fleeing foes to say "Shibboleth," and they said "Sibboleth" (Judges xii. 6). They could not say "sh," and Israel caught them and slew the traitors. We need some test like that at the heart gate to catch the evil thoughts. If a thought cannot pronounce the name of Christ

aright, cast it out. Question it, "Canst thou say Jesus?"

"He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man," or, as the revised version has it, "he who is spiritual *discerneth* all things" (1 Cor. ii. 15). I suppose one mark of the spiritual man is his quickness in discerning. For my part, I used not to see sin until it was against my face, but now I can see it coming two or three fields away. You get keener and subtler to discern. It is a mistake to wait until your enemy is face to face. Pray to be quick to discern.

In Heb. v. 14 is a verse that has helped me much: "Even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

By reason of use you get keener. I go with the savage through the wilds, and notice that he looks at that bent twig, at that grass brushed down across the path. He starts and says:

"A man has been along here."

I don't see any trace, I can't find any footmark; but in that snapped twig, in the impression on that grass, the savage, by reason of use, has had his senses exercised to discern where man has gone.

Now, most of us never use our spiritual sense. God has given us a nose to smell with, eyes to see with, hands to feel with, a tongue to taste with. We are made in three parts—body, soul and spirit. The soul has senses equivalent to those of the body,

and the spirit behind that has a third set of senses which an unregenerate man has not commenced to use. But if you are a spiritual man you will use these spiritual senses to discriminate the thoughts as they come to your heart. "By reason of use" you will have your senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

If you live in the midst of bad people, bad books and bad things, you lose your power of detecting bad thoughts when they come teeming about you like microbes. But if every day you spend an hour on God's mountains or upon the broad sea of the Bible, and get some of God's ozone into you, you will be able to detect things which are wrong, which other people, even Christians, pass without seeing as wrong.

You have heard me speak about bad pictures in stores or art galleries, bad novels and certain sorts of talk, and I can imagine a professed Christian lady saying as she passes out :

"Well, I call that being too particular. Why is it that he lays such stress upon the matter?"

She thinks I am drawing too fine a line.

Possibly that lady has lived in the midst of tittle-tattle and small talk, until her senses have become perfectly vitiated, so that she has lost the power of discernment. But I dare not touch these things, because I am learning to know when evil is in the air, and by the grace of God my senses are becoming quicker to discern good and evil.

Second, we need keeping power. Suppose we see the importance of learning to discriminate between bad and good thoughts. But we find that sometimes for a whole day there will be knocking at the door of our heart, the gateway of our soul, bad thoughts which we know to be bad. They gather into a perfect crowd. We somehow do not seem to have the power to keep them out, and they force in, though we hate them and loathe them, and would do almost anything to be quit of them; they presently lead us to commit an act of sin. Many a good man understands that.

At this point let us turn to 1 Peter iv. 19, where the apostle says: "Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God," because they are true to God's will, "commit the keeping of their soul to Him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

"Commit." That is the Greek word used by Christ on the cross when He said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Just as Jesus commended His spirit to His Father, so do you, when you leave your room in the morning, commit the keeping of the gateway of your soul to Him.

"As to a faithful Creator." Why call Him Creator here? Why not Redeemer, or Saviour? Because He made you; and is not the God who made you able to keep you? Is He who made you what you are, going to allow you unaided to drift

before evil? He is a faithful Creator! He created you, and He is faithful to keep you, and He knows how to do it. The man who made the lock can unlock it. Reckon on His faithfulness.

THE PEACE OF GOD.

I close with two texts that are like binary stars. Col. iii. 15, "Let the peace of God rule," and the word means *arbitrate*. Leave it for the peace of God to say what you will or will not do. Group with that Phil. iv. 7, "The peace of God shall keep." The word there is *sentinel*. So that you have the peace of God ruling and sentinelling, keeping, governing. Think of the peace of God, armed like an angel of light, marching to and fro outside your heart, just keeping it!

I was talking one day to some people about emptying their hearts, and I illustrated by a glass of water. I can empty it either by pouring the water upon the floor, or by filling the glass with quicksilver, which is heavier than water, and by its weight will force the water out. The glass is just as empty of water when it is filled with quicksilver as if I simply poured the water out. It is impossible to empty your heart by turning out the sin, but you may empty it by filling it with Jesus. Ask then the Holy Spirit to prepossess and preoccupy you with the presence of Jesus, that the devil may have no foothold.

TAKE! TAKE! TAKE!

“The lame take the prey.”—*Isa.* xxxiii. 20.

XI

TAKE! TAKE! TAKE!

GOD waits to bless us, and to give us the very same power to-day as they had in the upper room on the day of Pentecost, but we must learn how to *take* that power. I want to speak, therefore, from the word you shall find in Isaiah xxxiii., beginning with the 20th verse:

“The lame take the prey.” If lame people can take it, anybody can.

What a remarkable expression! It first struck me in Charles Wesley’s noble hymn, perhaps the finest hymn in our mother-tongue, which begins:

“Come, O, thou traveller unknown,
Whom still I hold, but cannot see!
My company before is gone,
And I am left alone with thee.
With thee all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.

“In vain thou strugglest to get free;
I never will unloose my hold.
Art Thou the man that died for me?
The secret of Thy love unfold.
Wrestling, I will not let thee go
Till I Thy name, Thy nature know.”

The last stanza is as follows :

“Lame as I am, I take the prey ;
Sin, fear and death with ease o’ercome ;
I shout for joy, pursue my way,
And like a bounding hart fly home.
Through all eternity to prove
Thy nature and Thy name is love.”

“Lame as I am, I take the prey.” Now it is not like that in ordinary life. Usually when people are lame they miss, they do not take. If a man is lame in arithmetic, and cannot add up a column of figures correctly ; if he is lame in his memory, and cannot recall names and faces ; if he cannot distinguish between two sorts of fabrics ; if he be lame in body or mind, he gets pushed aside in the rush of other men as they press past him and take what is to be had, while he comes in second or third best. But God says lame people come off best with Him. There is therefore good hope for you and me. All through the Bible lame men, like Mephibosheth, come off well.

I saw something like this once in a farm-house. A basket of apples came in. The large family of children began to help themselves to its contents as soon as it appeared, all but one little lad with a pale face, Jimmy, who stood against the wall, leaning on his crutch. The mother, a bustling woman, came in, saw what the children were doing, and said

“Now, children, put all those apples back, every one of them.”

The children obeyed. Then she said:

“Now, Jimmy, you go and take your pick, my boy.”

And Jimmy came on his crutches into the midst of his brothers and sisters, and helped himself to the juiciest of all those apples. I saw then that under the protecting care of the mother's love, as well as under God's love, the lame take the prey.

I remember also how poor Thomas was lame in his faith, and lingered just a week behind the other disciples; but Jesus came all the way from heaven on purpose to show him His hands and His side. Lame Thomas took the prey that day.

There are people who have always been lame. Whenever there was a blessing to be had, they missed it. Whenever the pool of Bethesda was stirred, they got there only in time to see another go forth healed. Whenever there was a revival, some friend of theirs got the blessing, but they lost it.

I want to show you now that those who have been the lamest of the lame may take God's best. We often labour under the impression that God's best gifts are placed so high on the shelf that only those who have become mature and good can reach them, when the fact is that He puts His best gifts on the lowest shelf against the ground, so that we have to bend our stiff backs to get down to them. To-day God's very best gifts are waiting to be taken. My

heart beats high within me because we may appropriate things which kings and prophets heard but did not see, but which are within the reach of the lamest to-day.

But perhaps I ought to explain how Isaiah came to say such a thing, because we never should take the Word of God out of its connection to suit our purpose.

When it was being written, Sennacherib, with two hundred thousand of the fiercest soldiers that ever drew sword, was crossing the frontier of Palestine, and making his way to the doomed city of Jerusalem. To use his own words, he thought he would be able to rifle its treasures as easily as a boy might steal eggs from a nest in spring.

You can almost hear in the earlier verses of the 33rd chapter of Isaiah the scream of the cypress trees and the sigh of the cedars of Lebanon as they were felled to fill crevasses and make a roadway for the troops. The inhabitants left their homesteads, their vineyards, and their olive-yards, and fled for refuge to the larger towns, whilst all who lived in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem crowded into that city. I suppose it would ordinarily hold about twenty thousand people, but at this time probably twice that number were crowded within the walls. Asses and camels were stabled in the streets, household goods were piled up in the courts, and all the steep

houses were filled from top to bottom with fugitives. Provisions began to run short, and there was not water enough for the supply of their needs.

Everybody waited with anxiety the moment when Sennacherib with his two hundred thousand soldiers should arrive. Hezekiah tried to stop him coming ; he sent a bribe to stay him ; but Sennacherib took the gold, ridiculed the king, and still marched on.

One day, when the people woke up and looked out over the walls, they saw the brown tents of Sennacherib's army encompassing them on every side. They could hear the bugle-call, and see the scarlet coats of the Assyrian soldiers. Then men looked at their wives, and vowed they would take their lives with their own hands, rather than let them fall into the hands of those soldiers ; and the women looked upon their little babes, and determined to slay with their own hands rather than to see them tossed from spear-point to spear-point to amuse those barbarous invaders. It was an awful condition.

When English soldiers were shut in at Lucknow, with thousands of mutinous Sepoys surrounding them, they knew that England was sending re-enforcements by every steamship. But Jerusalem had no such hope. She knew that if she fell, the people of Egypt and the land of Moab would be only too glad. Her condition seemed hopeless. The one

man who kept a level head was Isaiah, and Isaiah said :

“The Lord is responsible. The Lord is our judge. The Lord is our lawgiver. The Lord is our King. He will save us. He will save us so effectively that though the people of Jerusalem seem as powerless as a lame man, yet shall they get the spoils of yonder tents, so that what seems to be hopeless in our condition to-day is the very best thing that ever happened. We shall acquire the riches of Sennacherib’s soldiers. The lame shall take the prey.”

Before we can take the prey, however, we must be quite sure that we have run up the royal standard and taken Jesus Christ to be Saviour, King, Judge, and Lawgiver.

I press that upon you, because I know that in my own life—God forgive me!—it was many, many years after my conversion, and several years after I had entered the ministry, before I took Christ to be my Judge, Lawgiver, and King. It was a very memorable night in my life when I knelt before Christ and gave myself definitely to Him, and committed the keys of my heart and life to His hands. Then I knew I was His, and that He was mine; and though I had no joy, no emotion, no ecstasy, I had a blessed feeling in my heart that I had but one Lord, one will, one purpose in all my life and for all coming time—that Jesus was my Judge in doubtful

things, my Lawgiver for the remainder of my life, my *King*, my King, my KING, for whom henceforth my life was to be spent.

Have you come to that? If you have never done it before, kneel down alone, and say :

“Jesus Christ, thou hast been my Saviour from hell for many years, but now I yield to Thee everything I have. Thou shalt be King. Thy will shall be supreme. No longer shall I do that which is right in mine own eyes.”

God help you to begin now! When you have come to that, you will understand how exquisitely God saved His people, who had no King but Him.

Let me tell the story of their deliverance dramatically, so that you will be more likely to remember it.

We will imagine an occasion when a group of Hezekiah's chief captains were engaged in discussing matters in the royal palace.

One says: “We saw faces of the enemy appear over the wall, and if we had not been there in the nick of time, they would have broken in; but my men hurled them back, with their ladders after them.”

“Oh, yes,” says another; “but they had a battering ram where we were, and I thought they would have made a breach through the wall.”

“Yes,” says a third man, “and they were sapping

and mining the walls where I was ; we were only just able to stop them.”

Says a fourth, sagely, “ Yes, but, I tell you where the mistake was. Our city should not have been built up here on these hills, where we can have no river around us. Thebes has got the Nile, Babylon the Euphrates ; but Jerusalem is perched on these hills, with no river to intercept the advance of an enemy or supply our crowded population with water. If ever we get through this siege—I doubt if we ever shall—I shall advise Hezekiah to pitch the city down by Jericho, where we shall at least have a Jordan between us and the foe.”

At that moment Isaiah came on the little group and said to the last speaker : “ What was that you were saying ? ”

“ I was expressing my opinion, sir, that it is a great pity that we haven't a river to separate us from the foe.”

“ A river ! A river ! Never let me hear you talk like that again ! A river ! We want no river. The glorious Lord is a place of broad rivers and streams. Everything that a river can be to a city, the glorious Lord is to us. If you could see what I see, you would have a vision of our glorious Lord all around the walls of our city, between us and the foe. I tell you that Jerusalem is well encompassed, environed with the presence of the eternal God, the glorious Lord. Here is His place of broad rivers and

streams, and you shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, safe and still."

That is it—safe and still! Jesus Christ will be as helpful to you and me. Let me show you how. There are so many of us, like Jerusalem, without a river. Let me picture one case.

Very likely there is a woman here in middle life. Years ago when she was a girl of eighteen, her mother on her dying bed said :

"My daughter, I charge you to take no husband or home until you have seen your younger brothers and sisters settled in life."

She promised she would not. She waited until her lover could wait no more, and saw the boys and girls grow up and secure homes for themselves. Presently the father died. But she has neither husband nor child. Often when she sits in the church and looks around, she sees women who were girls at school with her, who played with her in girlish sports, sitting with their husbands and children. Her heart sinks, and turns sick. Ah! she has no river of human love and comfort and blessedness. But I tell her:—

"The glorious Lord will be to you, my sister, a place of broad rivers and streams. Everything that human love can be to a lonely woman's soul, the glorious Lord will be to you."

Or take the case of some young man whose father died when he was young. He has had no

advantages. He has had to work for his widowed mother and the family, and misses sadly the education which is within the reach of so many favoured youths. He feels, oh! so unfit for much of the world's work. What can he do? Well, he has not got the river, but he must learn that he has God, the glorious Lord.

The same holds true of the church. Some ministers may say:—

“My church is a very poor one. The neighbourhood is only half settled. It is hard for me to maintain my home life without beggary, and my preaching without books.”

Ah, friends, if you would only learn what I am talking about, that it is almost a good thing to be without the advantages that others have, because you can obtain from God a hundred-fold more! It is the weak whose strength God increases. It is those that have no might or wisdom to whom God gives wisdom and righteousness and strength. It is in men like Paul, the weakest of the weak, that He perfects His grace.

Neither men nor women nor circumstances are enough for the soul. Without all these, if you have God, you may be satisfied. Is not the wild flower satisfied when its roots can reach the Mississippi? Is not the humming-bird satisfied when it has all the myriad rays of the sun? Is not the little child satisfied when it has all the mother's love and mind

and soul? Has it not a quiet habitation? Is it not safe? Yes, my friend, in the absence of all else, the glorious Lord is enough.

Many people put their circumstances always in the innermost circle, next their heart, and they put God outside, and look at Him through their wants and circumstances. It is like looking at the sun through a fog.

There are other people who put God next them, and their circumstances on the hills with Sennacherib. To those who have learned to live trusting in God, their habitations are quiet and safe. Put God between you and everything. Weary, storm-tossed heart, put Jesus between you and the crest of the wave.

The envelope is useful to protect the letter it contains from being soiled or damaged. So when a man lives inside God he is protected, because enveloped. God is his environment, his wall of fire his river and stream.

They tell me that the regalia of a certain city in Europe are kept, not like that in the Tower of London, with iron bars all around, but on what appears to be an unprotected table. Yet I pity the man who should try to take one jewel from that crown, because a stream of electricity is always being poured around the table, so strong that if a man dared to touch it with his hand he would draw it back benumbed.

That is the way to live. God is in you and around you. Live in a constant consciousness of the presence of God.

Thus it befell Jerusalem. The glorious Lord was all around, above, within and without ; and the result was that one day

“The Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed on the face of the foe as he passed,”

and the tents of the Assyrians were filled with the dead. Then they threw open the gates, and the people of Jerusalem streamed out, crossed the Kedron valley to the other side, and helped themselves to the spoils. Poor, lame Jerusalem was enriched by the prey.

If there were any lame men inside the city, I think I hear them say: “We may as well have our share.” And on their crutches I see them limping down the valley, slowly climbing the further slope, going from tent to tent, taking what they would.

Do you know what it is to get spoil out of temptation, to gain out of sorrow, to be enriched by Sennacherib? Do you dread sorrow, temptation, trouble? Oh that you knew what it is to be more than conquerors ; not simply to be safe from Sennacherib, but to get spoil out of his attacks !

I will show you how to do this. When Satan comes to you to tempt you to impurity, turn to

Jesus and take anew of His purity. When he tempts you to irritability of temper, turn to Jesus and take a new armful of His patience. When he tempts you to be cowardly and weak, turn to Jesus and take a new heartful of His courage. As your weakness throws you more upon the help of Jesus Christ and you lean harder upon Him, you turn what the devil meant to be a stumbling-block into a stepping-stone. Oh ! life is glorious when you live like that. The loneliness is gone, solitude is gone, the fear of failure is gone, the constant dread of being overcome by temptation is gone ; and you have the sense of everything being beneath your feet because you are in the glorious Lord, and realize that Jesus Christ himself is offering you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Oh glorious riverlessness, that I may know His protection ! Oh blessed poverty, that reveals to me His wealth ! Oh desirable loneliness, that teaches me the friendship of the Brother Christ ! Oh infirmity, and want, and sorrow, we hail you all ! Had it not been for sin abounding, we never should have known that His grace abounds over all. The glorious Lord is a place of broad rivers and streams.

If that be so, we are all come to the position in which we can learn to take. I suppose almost the most important distinction a man can learn to make is that between praying for a thing and taking it.

The lame *take* the spoil. It is not said that they pray for it.

Some one may perhaps say: "Well, I am glad I dropped in to hear you. I hope I shall get some good from your brief stay in our city. I got some help to-night."

I might ask: "In what way did you get help to-night?"

"In this way: I think that henceforth I shall pray more than I have ever prayed."

I must certainly reply: "My friend, it is not a matter of *praying* more, it is that you should *take* more."

There is a whole world of difference between the prayer that supplicates and the faith that receives. There are a great many things in life for which we may claim an answer because they are according to God's will. You do not need to pray to God to do as He has said, but to take what He offers. "The lame *take* the prey." Let us all learn this lesson. Let us know that life is full of God, that there is as much of God here as in the Pentecostal chamber. But it is of no use for us to know this unless we have learned to take. "The lame *take* the prey."

I left my home in Hampstead, and went to live in a suite of chambers near my church in London. At first I much missed my own house on the breezy Hampstead hill, but finally I came to see how many modern conveniences had been adapted to the suite

of chambers, and so became more and more content. There is electric light, gas fire, a supply of hot water, and so on—all very convenient. But I have sometimes thought that if I had taken a servant who had been brought up in one of our country-houses in England, where they light the farm-house fire at four or five o'clock in the morning with chips and wood and match, and trim the oil-lamp for light, if I put her in that flat of mine, and said: "You will find here everything you want; fire, light, and hot water; I shall be in again in three or four hours." I might come in at eleven o'clock and find her sitting there in the middle of the room in total darkness, sobbing out:—

"This is the most miserable place I was ever in."

"What is the matter? There is light, there is fire, there is water. Can't you be happy?"

"It is dark and cold and wretched."

Immediately I turn that switch, that key, that tap, and the place is full of light and heat, and the hot water is flowing.

What is the difference between her and me? It is that I know how to use, how to appropriate, how to take, and she does not.

Now that is the whole difference between some of God's children and others. God is the same to-day as at Pentecost. Christ is the same here as in heaven. There is the same blessed power for the religious life. Some have learned the blessed art of

taking it, but others only pray for it. If I can get you, not to *pray* for it, but to begin to *take* it, you will instantly step into a new experience.

There was as much electricity in the days of Alfred as there is to-day; the only difference is that Edison has taught us how to get the electricity out of cloud and air, sunbeam and earth, and how to yoke it to our chariot. Edison knows how to take, and has taught the lesson to the world.

Oh, I wish I could teach you how to take the Divine electricity into your lives to-day! It is not by *praying* for it, it is by *taking* it.

Now consider the daily life. You get up in the morning, and when you are living like this you forecast the day. You say: "I am going to have breakfast with people that I dread, and I am so afraid I may lose my temper. Lord, I take grace for the breakfast hour. At ten o'clock I have to meet two or three men to discuss a very difficult problem. Lord, I claim and take wisdom for ten o'clock. At twelve o'clock I may be thrown into society, and greatly tempted to exaggerate, or to backbite, or to libel other people's character. Lord, for twelve o'clock I take the spirit of perfect love." And so you forecast the whole day, and take things from God; moreover you believe that you have what you take. Then you count on God. You do not keep on praying, but you rise from your knees, saying, "I thank Thee, Father. Give me also what

Thou seest I need," and you go along your way reckoning on God.

A man said to me, "If you pray like that, don't you pray very short?"

I replied, "Perhaps it does make one more short and businesslike in the supplication part of prayer, but there is so much to thank for, so many answers received, that it more than makes up for what is lost in direct supplication."

You may be weak, sinful, full of failure. You may be at the end of yourself, but you are very near God. Lame Mephibosheth sat at the King's table. And the poor, paralysed man at the Beautiful Gate of the temple was made perfectly whole.

Now, lame soul, *take*. What do you want from Jesus? Take Him to be that. Take the glorious Lord to be what you want most. Go home, and as you walk along say:—

"Yes, yes, I do take Jesus, my glorious Lord, to be to me a place of broad rivers for protection, and streams to supply my thirst and irrigate my plot. Then I shall have a habitation quiet from anxiety, quiet from restlessness, quiet from fear. The stakes will never be taken down. Sennacherib will never get inside. My heart will lie on the very heart of God, satisfied and safe."

A friend of mine was endeavouring to explain the difference between praying and taking to a lady,

who asked him to take afternoon tea with her. She couldn't understand the distinction, and so he held the mirror before her, thus :—

“Will you take cream and sugar?” she enquired.

“Thank you.”

She prepared the tea, and held the cup toward him, but he appeared not to see it, and three times over said, with increasing urgency, “Madam, I pray you, give me some tea.”

“Excuse me,” was the reply, “it is here; will you not take it?”

And he said, “Madam, that is what the Lord Jesus has been saying to you for the last ten years. You keep entreating Him to give you what He is all the time offering, *but you must take.*”

HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD

“In that day there shall be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord.”—*Zech.* xiv. 20.

XII

HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD

HOLINESS stands for three things. First, *separation from sin and common use*, as the one day among the days of the week, as the one mountain amidst the mountains of the world, and as the child Samuel amidst the boys and girls of his age—separate from sin and common use.

Second, it means to be *separated unto the service of God*. That which is kept from sin is reserved for God's most holy use, and that which is taken from common service is reserved utterly and absolutely for Him. Just as you would not permit the chalice and platten which are used for the communion service to be employed for the common meals of your own home, so that which is holy is reserved and set apart for sacred use.

Third, while holiness means separation from and separation to, it also implies *Godlikeness*, because that which is reserved for God's use takes on something of God's nature. Just as the silver plate at the Lord's table reflects the light of the face of him who bears it, so that which is used by God

tends to become like God. Never forget that holiness is not an *attainment*, but an *attitude*. It is the opening of the heart to the balmy air and sunlight of God's nature, which, entering in, fill the spirit of man or woman.

THE HIGH PRIEST'S FRONTLET.

In Exodus xxviii. 36, the high priest stands before you vested in his full white robes, with breastplate of gold. On the frontlet of his forehead, the legend HOLINESS TO THE LORD is inscribed, so that wherever he goes to and fro, he bears upon his brow that sacred text.

Suppose I should turn from him, and speaking to you say that I desire from this moment, until you meet Christ in glory, that you should bear that frontlet upon your brow and have that holy legend inscribed upon you, it might be you would shrink back and say:—

“No, no, I will never be a hypocrite. I do trust in Christ and desire to be like Him. But I dare not arrogate to myself that sacred frontlet, that holy legend. I am not HOLINESS TO THE LORD.”

Then, my friend, you are putting away from you the privilege of this dispensation, of which Zechariah says that in this age there shall be so much Holy Spirit given to the men and women who believe in Christ that HOLINESS TO THE LORD shall be engraved upon their heads, and that the common

vessels in their homes shall have the same legend upon them, and be as holy as the vessels in the Lord's house:—

“In that day there shall be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar” (Zechariah xiv. 20).

I remember so well spending some winter days in the city of Boston. I shall never forget the blue sky and the crisp white snow, the absence of the rumbling of wheels, and everywhere the sweet music of the sleigh bells. The bells of all our life, the dinner bell, the rising bell, the bell summoning us to our daily work, the telephone bell asking us to hold conversation with another—all the bells ringing in our lives are to have these words inscribed, so that our whole life shall have this as its keynote.

What I am going to say can be very well noted under three words—abolition, inclusion and elevation.

I. ABOLITION.—I think Zechariah meant that in the age of the Holy Ghost in which we are living, there should be the abolition of the line between secular and sacred. So many people draw a line between these two. They say “business is business, and religion is religion,” “a place for everything, and everything in its place.” They live in two houses. Over their homes perhaps may be the

words HOLINESS TO THE LORD, but they spend most of their time away from their homes, and they would hesitate to write those words over their pleasure resorts and places of business. Some people put on their religion and put it off with their Sunday clothes. They wear it with difficulty. Oh, this terrible, terrible habit of Christian people in drawing such straight lines of demarcation, living in water-tight compartments so that one is wholly religious and the other wholly secular.

That cannot be right because of three things:

First, *Christianity is not a creed, not a formula, not a ritual, but a life.*

If it is a life begun by the Holy Spirit, a real life, the germ of the Christ life planted in our spirits and to rise up in the majesty of Christ's likeness, you cannot divorce that life from ordinary existence. A flower's life must always express itself in its fragrance and hue. A bird's life must always express itself through its song, its nest building and its care for its young. An artist must always look at things artistically. And if a man is truly enjoying the life of God in his soul, that life must rise up in every word he speaks, in every look of his eyes, in every movement of his nature. I do not say that he will always be talking about God, but the divine life will express itself in his laughter and in every movement of his life.

Then, secondly, we must remember that *Chris-*

tianity is the recognition of Christ's kingship. That is, the true Christian is the absolute property of Jesus Christ.

I shall never forget when I saw a slave for the first time. It was in a street of Tangiers, Morocco. My companion pointed to a woman advancing toward us. She was barefooted, but laden with heavy gold ornaments. He said :

"That's a slave."

For the first time I was face to face with one who had no property in her own nature, but whose every quality was owned by her master. She was absolutely his, everything about her and every faculty she possessed. I looked up to the sky and said :

"Oh, God, I thank Thee that if she is a slave, I am one also."

My friend, have you ever looked into Christ's face, and said, "Whose I am, and whom I serve ! My Master, Jesus ! Everything I have and everything I may acquire are all my Master's." If so, you cannot give Him part of your life and keep back the rest. Your whole life must be under the mastership of the sweetest Master and King.

Third, *Christianity is a testimony to the world, the confession of the mastership of the Lord.*

The world seldom comes into our churches. If it does not, therefore, see you living on Christian

principles in your business and pleasure and daily life, your testimony to the world is at an end. Therefore, for the world's sake, I protest against this division of the secular from the sacred. I ask that wherever we are, always and everywhere, we shall bear upon our faces and upon our bodies, upon all our pleasures and business, upon all the bells that ring in our lives, these words: "Sacred to Jesus"; that is, set apart for our blessed Master and Lord.

II. INCLUSION.—If that is true of you I want you to take a step further, that is a most important one, and that is expressed by the word "Inclusion."

Horses were forbidden the ancient Jew. A horse is no more harmful than a mule. God made it a most useful animal, but because of its association with pride and show and war, God tabooed it for the Jews. But after centuries had passed and the people had been purified, elevated and taught, God said:

"There is no reason why you should not have your horses now, but engrave upon their bells the words HOLINESS TO THE LORD."

The ancient hermit said he could have no wife nor child. No woman's hand might be laid on his sick brow with gentle caress. No children's voices might ring in his home. He must dedicate himself to God,

and deny himself the comforts of home. He put away horses.

Then came the Puritans, who said, "We must have no work of art in the home, nothing that will excite or amuse." No horses, no horses.

A young man once told me that since he had become consecrated he had given up manly games and his violin. If you cannot continue in such things because of evil associations, then give them up, not because they are wrong in themselves, but because of the associations. But if you can go into them and elevate your companions, if you can make them pay the price of your companionship — no swearing, no dirty talk, no gambling, do you not think it is a greater thing to join them, and as a grain of salt, as a beam of light, lift the whole of their conversation? Is not that what Zechariah meant when he said:

"You may have your horses, but see to it that you engrave upon their bells, HOLINESS TO THE LORD."

A young girl who wishes to consecrate her life to God, thinks she must give up her piano. But suppose she can use it to keep a brother at home at nights instead of wandering off to his evil companions, isn't that a higher use to put it to than to give it up absolutely?

Keep the horses if you can, but write upon them HOLINESS TO THE LORD.

But someone says, "Stop, sir. Don't you think you are introducing a bad principle? Don't you think a man might argue on your principle and say that he is going to the dance, or the billiard hall, or theatre, and lift them up for Christ?"

In answer to that I would advise you to take these two texts as the guiding stars of your life :

1 Cor. vi. 12: "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any."

Then 1 Cor. x. 23: "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's good."

The first principle is this: "I will not be brought under the power of any." Doesn't that touch your cigar? I am not now denouncing smoking, but are there not men listening to me who are absolutely under the power of the pipe? They cannot lay it down and pick it up as they please. They are really under its mastery. It is the same with the use of morphine and the like. And whenever you cannot lay a thing of that kind aside, are you not under its power?

The other principle is equally true. "I will never do a thing which will hurt another." That comes home, young man, to your treatment of

women. Always make it easy for a girl to do right, never make it hard for her.

As to the theatre, doesn't that law come in there, too? You cannot go there without making the theatre possible for others. Even though you and I might go without harm, we are making it possible for others to go who have not so much principle as we have. Then, too, we always must think of the actors and actresses. I dare not make sweeping charges, but statements have been made to me, which I can verify, which make me know that the theatre is specially perilous to those whose profession it is.

You say: "What about the dance?"

I do not think you can write HOLINESS TO THE LORD over the waltz. If girls only knew the thoughts which fill many men's hearts when they dance, I do not believe that pure girls would expose themselves to the close embrace of the waltz. It is only because they do not think, and have not had a high standard put before them. If you are a true child of God and have "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" written upon you, you will be very careful, first, how you dress, and then how you dispose of your body. Anyhow, you ought first ask the Holy Spirit how you may treat His temple.

But I come back to this. Everything which is right, human and holy may be given unto God. I

try to make it a rule of my life to pass no day in which I do not see one beautiful thing, read one beautiful thought, hear one sweet strain of music. I try to cultivate my love for beautiful things, and I think I can do that for Jesus.

III. ELEVATION.—Let me close with a word about elevation.

It is not a levelling-down policy, but a levelling up. It is not that the high priest should take off his holy plate and think no more of his Temple service than of harnessing his horse for a ride, but that he should mount his horse with the same sense of God as he bore with him into the Holy Place.

We need to strike the keynote, as a leader of music would if there were no organ, and everything will be accorded to that key. So Sunday strikes the keynote for the week, and your prayer time in the morning strikes the keynote for the day.

But you ask, "How am I to get thus?"

Look upon your life as a calling of God. There are three "callings" in First Corinthians. In 1 Cor. i. 1, called to be an apostle; in i. 2, called to be saints; in vii. 20, called to be business men. A call to business life is as great a calling as to be a minister, only go to your life day by day for Jesus.

In Revelation we are told that no one could buy or sell that had not the mark of the beast on the hand or forehead (Rev. xiii. 16, 17). We are also told that the name of the Lamb shall be in the foreheads of His servants (Rev. xxii. 4). Every one has the mark of the beast upon the forehead, or the mark of Christ. We cannot see it, but the angels can; and on every brow in this audience there is inscribed in letters of light or letters of darkness, the words HOLINESS TO THE LORD or the mark of the beast.

Let your life from this time forth be wholly for Jesus. He will not take anything from you that is for your good, but He will accept your whole being, and from this moment until you die it shall be your joy to live absolutely for Christ.

There are too many among us, who, finding the ideal of Christ so high that they cannot attain to it, seek to depress and minimize its authority and sublimity. They lower, or attempt to, the standard of Christ to the low level of their life. Nay, lift your life to Christ's level, and dare not depress Christ's level to your life.

Let us ever stand in the Holy of Holies of God's Presence, and sing with Tersteegen—

His Priest am I, before Him day and night
 Within His Holy Place.
 And death, and life, and all things dark and bright
 I spread before His Face.

Rejoicing with His joy ; yet ever still,
For silence is my song ;
My work to bend beneath His blessed will
All day, and all night long,
In ever holding with Him converse sweet,
Yet speechless, for my gladness is complete.

THE FAIR MITRE

“And I said, Let them set a fair mitre on his head.”—*Zech.* iii. 5.

XIII

THE FAIR MITRE

I WANT to talk to you to-day about the fair mitre. When these words were written, Israel had just come back from captivity, and the whole land was under the process of reconstruction. The people had come back to find their city a mass of blackened ruins; the walls were down, their houses in desolation, and the holy and beautiful house where they had worshipped God in the days of the past was a heap of ashes. They commenced to reconstruct. The walls sprang up under their deft touch; their houses were rebuilt; the altar was re-erected; and the temple rose again upon its site.

But one sad thought came upon all the people: of what use was it to have the holy and beautiful temple, if the priesthood were not fit to exercise their office? They were notoriously unfit. Malachi tells us, what Zechariah confirms, that the priests were greedy, avaricious, and corrupt in life, totally unworthy to come into the most holy place, or stand before God.

Whilst they constructed the temple, they needed to reconstruct the priesthood, and in the chapter which we have read, we have the account of the reconstruction of the priesthood. Step by step the filthy garments are taken away, the white robe or surplice is donned, and the priest stands again erect before God, complete, with the exception of the white fillet or mitre. And Zachariah was so anxious about it that he cried out, in the anxiety of his soul, "Let them set a fair mitre upon his head."

"So they set a fair mitre upon his head."

If Zachariah was so eager for it, how much more Zachariah's Lord! And when they were so eager in the Old Testament, how much more eager ought we to be in the New, if, as I hope to show you in a moment, the white fair mitre represents the filling, the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

I ought to explain for a moment that I am not straining a point in applying this chapter to ourselves, because, though we do not believe in any order of priesthood, we believe that Jesus Christ has constituted every believer a priest unto God. The power that loosed thee from thy sins, believer, at the same moment constituted thee a priest. (Rev. i. 6.) We need no human priests, because Jesus Christ has assumed the office of High Priest. And just as the stars retire before the coming sunlight swimming into invisibility in the glowing dawn, so

do all human priests recede when Jesus steps to the front as our High Priest. At the same time each believer, man or woman, is a priest. We are called upon to offer spiritual sacrifices, to offer ourselves, to offer our money, our time, our gifts, our position and power, so that every day we stand between God and man. We come into God's presence to speak for man, and we come out of God's presence to speak to man for God.

Are you exercising your office? Have you been to that altar lately? Have you offered yourself, spirit, soul, and body, to Christ? Have you recently used the laver to wash your feet? Do you know the daily cleansing which keeps the heart clean? Have you entered into the holy place to offer the incense of intercessory prayer? Have you kindled your daily profession, as the priests kindled the branched candle-stick? Do you know what it is to eat the shew-bread which is the priest's alone, the body of Christ? Do you ever enter into the most holy place, and stand there with the blood in your hand, worshipping?

Ah! believer, it is long since you have exercised your priestly office! You must confess that you have not gone to that priestly work, because there was a consciousness of unfitness.

That unfitness must be dealt with. God will not put the fair mitre upon a body clothed with filthy garments. God is not going to give the holy influ-

ence of Pentecost to men and women who are living unclean and inconsistent lives. There must be a putting away of the sins of the flesh, the putting away of everything which is inconsistent with the light of God ; and only so, step by step, can you come up to the point where the fair mitre will be put on your brow.

These are the steps I want you to take with me : to consider the filthy garments ; the need of fair, rich apparel ; the fact that much of your life has been wasted like a brand half burned through ; and then the fact that Satan resists you. We must deal with these four things for a moment. I want to bend my strength upon that fair mitre.

I.—*There must be the removal of the filthy garments.*

I am not sure that Joshua saw how filthy they were until he came near the angel. The light from the angel's face fell on his garments and revealed their stains. The garment always stands for habit or dress. We are dealing now with our daily habits.

It is remarkable how people change their dress when the sun begins to shine in March and April. We wear shabby things in the winter. We say it does not matter much what we wear ; who sees ? the light is so obscure. But as the spring breaks we put off the shabby dress and put on the spring attire. So it is when we stand beneath the light that streams from the Sun of Righteousness ; we

see a great many shabby things in our lives, and God calls upon us to drop them without discussion or delay.

We do not grow out of them, but we drop them. We do not gradually recede from them, but we put them off. It is remarkable that in Peter's Epistle, Colossians, and Ephesians, the apostles tell us to *put off* suddenly the habit of sin. You will not grow out of your anger, you must put it off. You will not grow out of your envy and jealousy, you must put them off. You will not grow out of your impurity, you must put it off. As when a prisoner comes forth to freedom he puts off the prison clothes, so you must not wait to grow out of evil things, but must put them off by a distinct and instantaneous act of your will.

I trust that, by the grace and Spirit of God, you will take step by step with me as I proceed. I am not trying merely to explain a thing to you. I am giving you an opportunity of taking up a position; and I want you to ask, in the light of God's Spirit, if there is any habit of thought or life, or any habitual indulgence in which you are condemned, which always arises before you at a holy time, such as the Lord's Supper, in private prayer, or in the chamber of sickness; and if at this minute any such thing is revealed to you, I bid you *put it off*.

Have you ever studied the life of the evergreen? All through the dark winter it retains its dead, dull

leaves; they are better than nothing. But just so soon as the new shoot of spring comes, it presses off the old leaves, and they drop away to be replaced by the new.

So in your heart to-day there is a shoot of new Christ-life, which is pressing against the old leaves, the old habits, the old methods of life. Let them drop off! Shed these old leaves just now! Go out of this place leaving the grave clothes behind you. Do you think that Martha and Mary expected Lazarus to grow out of his grave clothes? They would have been greatly astonished if he had tried to do so. Supposing he had said: "I shall drop them presently, you will excuse me now," would they not have shrank even from the brother whom they devotedly loved?

II. Having put off the filthy garments, have you donned *the rich apparel*? There must be a positive, as well as a negative. You must *put on* the Lord Jesus. Indeed you put off best when you put on.

You remember the story of St Augustine. After he was converted and had a little faith, he tells us that an evil woman, with whom he had sinned before his conversion, still clung to him, and made him stumble and fall. He was trying to live for God, with the new robes on, and yet to retain some of the grave clothes too. This brought him into great agony.

One afternoon he was with his friend Alypius in the garden at Tagaste, when a voice seemed to say to him :

“ *Tolle et lege*, take and read.”

He thought that meant that he was to take up the new Testament and read it, and as he took it in his hands it opened at the closing verse of Romans xiii. :

“ Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” It struck him as God’s message—“ put ye on the Lord Jesus”—and he went across to his friend, pointed to the text, and told him he was deeply moved, and they went and told his mother, Monica. The result was that he put on the perfect chastity of Christ, became saint and Bishop of Hippo. The evil habit dropped off him, and everybody recognised the Christ in St Augustine.

III. Whilst Joshua stood there, *Satan was resisting him.*

Directly you get a great blessing, the devil is sure to tempt you and to resist you.

When I was a boy, my schoolfellows never broke into an orchard when the apples were sour, but always when they were ripe and juicy ; and you might know that a certain orchard contained good fruit by the raids the boys made on it. Whenever you are acrid and sour, and haven’t much sun in

you, the devil will not worry you ; there is nothing in you worth his attack. But just as soon as you have been in the summering of Christ's love and got ripe, you will suffer being tempted day and night ; there will be something worth the stealing.

The nearer you get to Christ the more you will have to do with temptation. The closer you get into the heart of the fight the more the devil will torment you. People are sometimes heard to say, "I think I must be going back in Christian life, I am so tempted." But the virulence of the temptation means, not that you are declining into sin, but that you are advancing in holiness ; that the devil is afraid of you ; that as he cannot get at Christ directly, he desires to wound Christ by hurting you.

Think how Satan accuses believers ! When they sing he says, "Christ, dost Thou hear those people sing ? Is that all the love they have ? See how they express it with such icy songs !" When they kneel in prayer, may he not often truly say, "Look at those professing Christians ! Is that the best prayer they can offer, with their wandering and wayward thoughts ?" And do you not think he says of many a preacher, "Is that Thy chosen messenger ? Canst Thou not find one purer in motive and fitter in heart and life than him ?"

But whatever the devil says against believers is a greater argument with Christ for helping them. He takes everything the devil says and turns it into a

reason for doing more for them than ever. The devil says:

"That man is only a piece of smoking brand, nearly burnt through. He is an old man now who has wasted his life. He may as well be cast back into the fire. There is so little sound wood left."

But Christ replies: "Though there is only a square inch of sound wood, it is the more necessary that I should make the most of what is left."

Satan says again: "Look at that man! He is a broken reed. He has been trampled under foot until he is out of shape. He is not worth Thy care, Son of God. Let him drift away down stream."

But Christ replies: "I know he is a piece of broken reed; but that is the more reason why I should take him, and with my creative hand make a flute or organ pipe from which to get sweet music in the great orchestra of my church."

The devil says: "Look at that woman, as fitful as a piece of smoking flax! Look at the spark as it goes and comes, and comes and goes again! Blow on it! Trample it out! It is not worth Thine attention."

But Christ replies: "Because her life is so fitful is why I take that spark and breathe on it until it becomes a flame."

Everything Satan says against you is an argument

why Christ should love you the more. Having gone to a physician for a sick friend, as you walk along with the physician you tell him how ill your friend is, and enumerate his sad symptoms; everything you tell the physician about the illness of your friend is only another argument why he should hurry to the sufferer's side. Let your life be the most woe-begone, the most tempted, the fullest of failure of any person in His church—you are the one that will probably get more help from God than any one besides.

I saw something like this once. There was a blacksmith, one blow of whose hand would fell the strongest antagonist in his neighbourhood—a strong, broad-shouldered, glorious man. He came home where his little child was ill. She held out her trembling, thin hands to him, and dragged down his big head to her low level as she lay on the cot. Then I saw that what strength cannot do, weakness can; what the strongest man in the neighbourhood could not do, the little child did; she could bring her father to the dust. So your weakness must drag Christ down to your very uttermost need. The weak man can do anything he likes with Christ, who came to seek and save that which was lost.

It is the sheep away on the wild that brings the shepherd in search; it is the lost piece of money that leads the woman to sweep the house; it is the prodigal that gets the fatted calf.

Suppose I have been writing letters all the morning, and my desk is covered with envelopes and papers. Amongst the mail there came in a five dollar bill. At lunch time I called the servant and said :

“Take these down and put them in the open kitchen fire ; I do not want anybody to read them ; destroy the papers.”

She takes them away in a basket, descends the kitchen stairs, toward the open fire. When she has gone I begin to look about for that bill, but cannot find it anywhere. I suddenly fear that I must have included it among those letters, and hasten toward the kitchen calling to the servant :

“Have you put those letters on the fire ?”

“I have just done so, sir.”

I rush to the fire, and there I see that bill just shrivelling beneath the tongue of flame. I snatch it out. It is burning rapidly. I blow out the flame. I have got only a little charred heap in my hand.

Someone says to me :

“You may as well put that back. It is not worth your keeping.”

I say : “I know better. There is the number of the bill, and if I take that to the bank I can get a new bill for it. That piece of charred bill is worth keeping. It will lead to the replacing of the whole.”

You have wasted your life. You have been living

in worldly society—card-playing, fashion, billiard table, saloons. There is not much left of you. But Christ is careful of what is left, and He will give you new life for the lost one. He will restore to you the years destroyed by the canker-worm, and the palmer-worm; and give beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning.

“The Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?” The Lord quotes His choice, which was of God against all Satan’s insinuations and attacks.

Yes, God chose you to be a fair and beautiful image of Christ; but you have sadly thwarted and disappointed Him. His choice is not altered. He loves you still, and as a shepherd He follows yet. Though your life is eaten through as with fire, He *can* give you new life, and He *will*.

IV. *Now Zechariah broke in:* “Finish it! Put a fair mitre on his head.”

I remember quite well one Sunday night at the Metropolitan Tabernacle when Mr Spurgeon had spoken with more than his usual fire, a man away up in the gallery shouted, in the middle of the most impressive passage, “Hallelujah!” Everybody started.

Mr Spurgeon looked up and said, “Dear brother, your heart is very full, but you must keep it in. We are not accustomed to that sort of thing here.”

It seems to me that Zechariah's heart was so very full he could not keep it in. He had been watching all the time the transformation of the high priest, and everything was there except the mitre, so he broke in and said: "I pray, let them finish the work. Put the fair mitre on his head." And the Lord stooped over Joshua and did as Zechariah suggested.

I think you have put off sin, and put on Christ. We have now come to the crown of all; and nothing remains but to say: "Let them put a fair mitre upon our heads; let us receive the filling and anointing of Pentecost."

About that blessing, Andrew Murray says there are seven steps:

1. *There is such a blessing to be had.* There is a distinct work of the Spirit over and above that of regeneration. It was given at Pentecost, and is for ever in the Church.

2. *It is for me.* There is no doubt about that, because Peter said in his sermon, "The promise is to you, Jews, and to your children"—Jews again—"to all that are afar off"—Gentiles—"even as many as the Lord our God shall call." If God has called you, the promise is for you, though up to now you have not gone for it. You are like a man whose father has left him a legacy, but either he does not know of it, or does not go for it. Yet it awaits you

3. *I haven't got it.* In dealing with the unregenerate, you must convince them they are out of Christ before they will step into Him. In dealing with yourselves, you must be convinced that you are outside the blessing before you will step into it. Have you received the anointing of the Holy Spirit? If you have no assurance of forgiveness; if Jesus is not a living, bright reality; if you have not power in service; if you have no enjoyment in the word of God and in prayer, you certainly have not the blessed anointing of the Spirit, as a fair mitre.

4. *I am very hungry for it.* God is not going to give His best gifts to those who do not much care whether they have them or not. "I am very hungry for it"; have you got to that? Can you say, "I want my mitre badly"?

5. *I am prepared to give up anything that clashes with it.* The price is a renunciation of whatever is inconsistent with the gift of Pentecost.

6. *I do now yield myself to God that I may receive it.* Have we all reached this?

7. *By faith I do now receive it.*

Those are the seven steps: there is such a blessing; it is for me; I haven't got it; I am very hungry for it; I am prepared to give up anything that clashes with it; I yield myself to God now; by faith I take it, and I reckon I receive it as I go along. I have known people who have reckoned for

a week or a month, and then the joy has come, and there has been a new consciousness of power.

We need to pray for one another, and especially for our ministers, that God would give the fair mitre of the Holy Spirit to crown His work in sanctification. Nothing less than this should content us for ourselves, or others. And if this is given, God will also add that if we keep in His ways and do His will, He will allow us to keep His courts, and give us a place of access among those who stand before Him, as His immediate circle and court.

Let them set a fair mitre on his head and mine, that these results may accrue to us also.

There is an especial sweetness in the thought that God will give us a place of access among the courtiers that stand around His throne, and that we who are so far off by our original nature, may be made nigh, so very nigh to God.

“So near, so very near to God,
Nearer I cannot be,
For in the person of His Son
I am as near as He.

“So dear, so very dear to God,
Dearer I cannot be,
The love, wherewith He loves His Son,
Such is His love to me.”

We need not wait for the long future to unveil to us the privileges of the Eternal Life. Our Eternity

began at the Cross, and we already stand before the throne, clothed in white robes, and with palms in our hands. Already we know something of the presence chamber, the unclouded light, the undwinding joy.

GOD'S TWO MEN

“The Second Man is the Lord from Heaven.”—1 *Cor.* xv. 47.

XIV

GOD'S TWO MEN

IN the sight of God there are two men. "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a life-giving Spirit. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven." 1 Cor. xv. 45, 47.

I want to speak now about these two men.

The first man. God took the red clay and moulded a man in His own image. See! that man is taking his nature out of the hand of God, so that instead of God being its centre, he becomes his own centre as he eats of the forbidden fruit. Next, he is expelled, and in his expulsion from Paradise the whole race passes out. A legend states that as he and Eve passed out, Eve plucked a flower to take with her, but it withered as she passed the gate. At that moment you and I and all our race passed out of Paradise. Three things followed: the bead-drop of sweat upon the brow; the pang of travail for the woman; and death. The sweat of toil for man, pain through which all the children of life are born, and the earth seamed with graves. Finally Adam begets a son in his own image; that is, every

child born outside the gate of Paradise has a bias to keep outside, no bias to go back. And just as in England, when a man plays bowls upon the sward, each bowl leaving the hand has a bias to turn off the straight, so every one of us is born with a bias off the right. By our first birth we all inherit a lost Paradise, sweat, travail, death, and bias to evil.

Now the second man. I see Him first driven by the gust of temptation as He too stands before the threshold of life. The first Adam was tempted by a tree, the second Adam was tempted by bread. Just as the first Adam made self and passion his rule, the second Adam made the will of God his rule and said: "If God says I'm not to eat, I'll not eat. Man shall not live by bread only, but by the Word of God." So Milton was perfectly right when he made "Paradise Regained" turn upon Christ's victory over temptation.

Behold that second man. The bead-drop stands upon His brow also, for He sits by the well at Sychar, tired. The pang of travail is in His heart, too, for He bears the infirmity of man, and by His travail a new earth and a new heaven are born. He also tastes death, He dies. So that there is nothing in our lot as man, except the bias to sin, that He does not know.

Look on yonder cross! The second man is dying. In yonder grave He lies, but from that grave He breaks and is the first man to rise. You remind me

of Lazarus. But he did not enter into resurrection ; he was simply a prisoner on parole, who went back to death again. But this Man in death and through death passed into resurrection ; and if you want to know what you and your dear ones will some day be, study the risen Christ. He spoke, and Mary recognised His voice ; and our dear ones will speak to us one day, and we shall recognise their voices. He spoke about the things which had happened on the other side of His death ; and our dear ones will talk with us some day about the scenes of Bethany and Nazareth and Galilee where they and we walked oft together.

But mark the risen Man. He passes to the ascension mountain. I never can understand why the Church has made so little of the resurrection and ascension, the ascension pre-eminently. On the ascension mountain He says farewell. In the early morning He had left the city. I suppose the disciples followed Him ; they saw Him, but nobody else. The people who met them going through the street saw disciples, but they did not see the risen Saviour who preceded them. They came together to the ascension mountain, and He blessed them, and began to ascend, and a cloud, like a chariot sent from His Father's home to fetch Him back, received Him.

Ephesians i. 21 tells us what happened on the other side of the cloud. We are told that "princi-

palities, and powers, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come"—all waited there to contest our Saviour's path. Ephesians vi. 12 shows that these principalities and powers were not bright angels, but demons from hell: "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." All hell was there that morning, sworn to stop Christ from going back. Why? If Christ had been content to go back as *God*, the devil would have been too sensible to stop Him, for God must go back to God. But Christ took man in Him. He was *man*, the glorified, risen, ascending man, the second Adam; and all hell tried to stop Christ taking the man to the throne of God. He may go as God, but He must not go as the representative man; or else, just as in the first man the race came out of Paradise, so, in the second man, all who believe in Him will re-enter Paradise. Therefore the devil must stop it if he can. But you might as well try to stop a cork rising by piling sea-water on it, as try to stop Christ's rising by piling demons on Him. He went through them, and passed into the heavens; and for the first time—and it is so wonderful!—for the first time in the history of the universe the creature was taken into union with the eternal God at the very throne of God Himself.

Now, friends, understand that your nature as a man is the regnant nature, the ruling nature in the universe. In the world I suppose the Anglo-Saxon race is the supreme race, and in the universe our human nature is supreme.

O wonderful nature which we possess, and which is worn by the Son of Man, so that dying Stephen said :

“I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”

I stop for a moment, and I call upon everyone to lift his heart and say : “Worthy art Thou, O Son of Man, who art also Son of God!” Crowns, crowns, crowns for the exalted second man!

Now remember, by the first birth we are all in the first man, and by the second birth we may all be in the second man. You are born by nature into Adam the first, you are born by grace into Adam the second. “As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.”

Thank God, you may be born again as you sit listening to my voice! Look at my hand. That hand has two sides, the one toward the ceiling, the other toward this floor; two sides of the same hand. That hand shall stand for the act by which we become united with Christ. That act has two sides. Angels in heaven call it “being born again”; men

on earth call it "trusting Jesus." If you trust Jesus you are born again, and if you are born again you will trust Jesus, and you cannot tell which comes first, any more than you can tell which spoke of the wheel begins to move first. They all move together.

Now, soul, listen. In the past you have been a gay and frivolous woman, or you have been a money-loving man. You have lived a butterfly life, and you have come to hear me, you hardly know why. Someone asked you, and you thought you might pass an hour or two. I tell you that if you will unite yourself with Jesus Christ who died for us, if you will lift your heart to Him now and say: "Jesus, I come to Thee, and trust Thee as my Saviour," you may not have tears or emotion or a paroxysm, or feel at all, but you do it in cold blood, you do it by an act of your will, you choose Christ. The moment you do that, the Holy Spirit of God binds you in a living union with Christ, and the germ of a new life is put into your soul. You are *born again!* It will begin to work. It may take years before it works out; but it will begin to work instantaneously, and you will belong to the aristocracy of the universe, Jesus Christ and the new humanity.

Now we must go a step further. It is one of the most wonderful things in the Bible to discover what is known as the aorist tense, the Greek aorist, the

definite past act. Now that aorist is used in Eph. ii. 5, 6, where the Apostle says, as in Colossians, that we were quickened with Christ, were raised with Christ, ascended with Christ, and are seated at the right hand of God.

Now follow me. God knew all those who would believe in Jesus and become united with Him, and Jesus stood for all of them. When He was on the cross, all who were to believe, who shall believe, His one true church—all were on the cross in Him, and in Christ we paid the penalty of our sins. It is impossible for me to go to hell, because God saw to it that my sin was dealt with when I died in Christ. I paid my debt when I died nearly nineteen hundred years ago in God's purpose in Christ. Then when He lay in the grave, and women and men bore Him there and put Him to what appeared to be His last sleep, you and I and all the church lay in the grave too.

My brother, if you go back and live a worldly life, you have to go back through the grave to it, because the grave lies between the body of Christ, of which you are a part, and the world that cast Him out. The world cast Him out, and when they cast Him out they cast us out also, and we were buried in Christ by the world that hates the church.

But just as Eve was taken out of Adam as he slept, the Church was taken out of Christ in His sleep, and when He rose we streamed out a great procession from the grave. And on Easter morning

I celebrate not only the resurrection of Christ but my own, for I too was raised in Him.

Oh! it was a good thing when, as I crossed the Atlantic, we got through the storm. It was such a storm that I could hardly stand to preach to the people in the saloon, the ship was rocking so; but after a while we got through the disturbance, and left the storm behind us. And in Christ, when He died, the ark of God carried you and me through the storm of death into clear water, and above us is the blue sky of God's love.

On ascension day I celebrate my ascension also, and in God's purpose all of us who believe are seated in Christ, and we must live day by day as those who in God's purpose have passed into the heavenly life.

You tell me that when I die my eternity will begin. No such thing. My eternity began when I was born in Christ. Eternal life is in my heart to-day, and the only difference that will come to me when I pass through what men call death, but which to me is not death—it is only the shadow of death, for I died in Christ, and I can never pass again through the agony of death, but I will pass through the shadow of death, and no one was ever hurt by a shadow yet, although they may have been a little fearful—the only difference that will come to me is that I shall get rid, for a time at least, of a rather crazy body, which will have to wait until my spirit

rejoins it in perfect beauty. But God will never love me more than He does to-day, and I shall never be nearer God than I am to-day, and already I hunger no more, nor thirst any more, neither does the sun smite me nor any heat, because already the Lamb is leading me day by day to living fountains of waters, and God is wiping all tears from my eyes. Eternity is begun.

Now let us see just how this works out.

First, as to your position before God. Your position is IN CHRIST. You are standing to-day in Christ. Never forget to distinguish between your standing and your experience. Your *standing* is in Christ, your *experience* is in your emotion. John Bunyan says that our emotion is like our spending money, the money we have in our pocket: it is sometimes more, but generally less; but our standing in our Forerunner is like the money we have in the bank, which is not affected by our daily expenses. I am sometimes happy, sometimes worn, over-tired, inclined to be nervous; but I never mind, because it does not matter to me whether I pass through the dark and the valley of sorrow and any transient depression. My position is unaffected because it is settled in my Forerunner, my Priest, my Saviour, my Head, in whom I stand before God. Oh, blessed be God for that! Do not look, therefore, for evidence in your emotions,

but look for your title-deeds in Christ the Fore-runner.

Next, look at your victory. In Christ you are above the devil. Now mark: The devil was made to be God's vicegerent. He fell. In his stead God made man to have dominion over the earth, and the devil swore that man should never be superior to him. He thought he could get man down under his feet, so he breathed hell into man, and man fell into selfishness, which is hell; and the devil laughed:

“Ha, ha, I am supreme!”

Moses went under, Job went under, David went under, all men went under the devil. But Christ came, a man, and the devil fell beneath Him thrice; three galling throws in the wilderness. All through Christ's life He cast the legions out. The devil came to Him on the cross, and Christ broke his head. The devil came to Him in the ascension, and Christ trod upon him. And in Christ our Head, our humanity, our manhood, our new race trod the devil under, and in spite of all that the devil could do, the second Man, the Lord from heaven, took the superior position, and you and I took it too in Him. When, therefore, the devil comes to us, let us remind him that he is inferior to Christ. The devil-nature is inferior to the Christ-nature, and if you have got the Christ-nature in you, the devil is inferior to you.

I was once trying to explain this to a man. Said I to him :

"To what part of the body of Christ do you belong?"

He said : " I don't know."

"Well," said I, "do you belong to the eye in His mystical body?"

"No," said he, "I don't weep enough."

"Do you belong to His mouth?"

"No, I don't speak enough."

"Do you belong to His heart?"

"No," said he, "I don't love enough."

"Do you belong to His hand?"

"No, sir, I don't do enough."

I said : "Man alive, if you are a Christian, you are in some part of the body of Christ. Where are you?"

"Well," he said, "I may be in His feet."

"Well, if you are in His feet, that will serve my purpose, for it is written, He will put all enemies under His feet."

And so it is proved beyond doubt and forever more that the man who has got Christ in him is devil-proof. The devil cannot touch him if he abides in Christ.

Now, the only way in which the devil can get the better of you is to strew some crumbs to get you from under the wing of Christ. As long as you stay there the devil cannot touch you. So he puts some

little morsels of worldly pleasure, and evil imagination, and lust, and passion, and he says: "Come along, come along, come along!" and when you come out, he has you. But if you keep in Christ he cannot touch you. Abide in Christ and let Christ abide in you, and the devil has no power.

One thing more, Possession. Eph. iv. 8: "Wherefore he saith. When He ascended up on high He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." Acts ii. 33: "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear."

When the Son of Man entered the presence of the Father as our forerunner and representative, Peter tells us (the Greek word bears the meaning), that He asked the Father for the Holy Spirit. As the second person in the Holy Trinity, Jesus was one with the Father and the Holy Spirit before all time, but when He became man He put out of use the attributes of His deity for the time being. At any moment He might have used them, and indeed the devil tried to induce Him to do so, but He refused, and was content to live the human life in the power of God received into his human nature. When He went up to God it was still as the ascended, glorified, representative man; and as such He came to His Father and said, so to speak :

“Father, I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. And now I come to Thee, and behind Me there are millions of spirits that are following on the way that I have made for them, millions who are to believe in Me, to become united with Me by faith, and who soon will come to be with Me where I am, I ask nothing for Myself, it is enough for Me to be with Thee again ; but I ask for them that Thou wouldest give to Me as their representative, the fulness of the Holy Ghost, that what I have had I may be able to communicate to them.”

So He received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost ; not as God, because as such He was one with the Holy Ghost, but as man, as the representative man, that He might be able to communicate Him to men.

Perhaps you reply : I cannot believe, I cannot accept, my heart is so fainting, my life so imperfect, my hands so weak, it is impossible for me to grasp and appropriate these wonderful possibilities, I cannot lay hold. But the Lord will lay hold of you.

One day, in Professor Blackie's class, in Edinburgh, a student held his book, from which he was construing, in his left hand. But the Professor bade him hold it in his right, and when the student showed no sign of obeying, he thundered at him, requiring him to make the change at once.

“Please, Professor,” was the answer, “I have no right hand.”

Instantly the teacher's whole mien was altered, and he went across the class-room, apologising to the young man, and assuring him of his sympathy.

If you cannot lay hold, be laid hold of. If you cannot give, ask the Lord Jesus to take. If you cannot apprehend, be apprehended.

REIGNING IN LIFE .

“Much more they which receive abundance of grace shall reign in life by one, Christ Jesus.”—*Romans* v. 17.

XV

REIGNING IN LIFE

HOW significant, how exhilarating are these words! Not the life when we have passed the gate of pearl, but the life that is now; not our life when we stand on the brow of the transfiguration mount, but the life at home, or in the daily walks and commonplaces of existence. It is possible that there is a life to be lived in the common round and the daily task, so royal, so radiant, so blessed, that those who live it may be said to *reign* in life.

In a meeting of comparatively obscure people in New York, I heard a washerwoman say that ever since the power of God had come into her life, washing to her was what playing on the piano was to young ladies. I don't know what notion she had of piano-playing, but she looked very happy.

Do you reign in your life? When you speak of reigning in life you have a conception at once of *victory*. Is your life one of victory? Do you put your foot down on passion, or are you beneath its heel? Do you know what it is to live day after day free from known sin, delivered from the power of

the adversary, and able by the help of God to tread upon the high places? There are a good many people who *exist*. Do you *live*? Have you the abundant life of Christ, the life that is more than victorious?

When we speak of reigning in life, we think also of *a grace in life*. You may do what is right, but you do it grudgingly or with difficulty; the wheels creak a good deal; there is a jar. Nobody coming into your home could point out any breach of the ten commandments, and yet somehow there is a want of ease and joy and blessedness. Someone put an advertisement in one of our papers the other day, "Wanted, a Christian companion, but she must be cheerful." As if Christian companions were not generally cheerful people. What is your life in this respect? Is there a consciousness with those who surround you in your daily life that religion is a bright and blessed and beautiful thing? Do you commend it, and so reign?

Then I think we associate the idea of *bounty* with those that reign. You expect the king to be able to throw largess to his subjects. Are you able to give away much of your religion, or are you so occupied in keeping the little spark aglow that you have none to spare for others?

If you are not living a royal life it is very necessary to find out the reason, and I want to help you to find it if I may.

1. It may be, first, because *you do not realise that the abundance of God's grace is for you.*

You may have an idea that there is some favouritism with God, that some people are born happy, and that their religious life must be different from that of others because their temperament and disposition are so happy.

There is no favouritism with God. Just as the spring flowers, the sunshine, and the pure air are for all, as free to the beggar as to the sovereign, so God's abundant grace is for every man and woman, and there is nothing that anyone has ever had which you may not have if you will. The same stream is passing your door, but you do not utilise the power to drive your water wheel. The same electricity is in the air, but you haven't learned to make it flash your messages or do the work of your home. The same grace that made a Luther, a Knox, a Latimer, a Ridley Havergal or a Spurgeon, is for you to-day, and if you are living a low-down life, beaten and thwarted and dashed down and constantly compelled to admit shortcomings and failure, understand it is not because there is any favouritism on God's part, because all the Holy Ghost's power and everything which is stored in Jesus Christ is waiting to make you a saint, and to lift you to the level which you pine for in your best moments. All the power of the Almighty is waiting to help you; the same abundant grace is waiting for us all.

2. If we admit this, the reason why we do not reign in life may be because we do not distinguish between *praying* and *taking*.

There is a profound difference between entreating for a thing and appropriating it. You may admit that God's abundant grace is near you through Jesus Christ, and yet you may not quite see the necessity of learning how to take. Some people are always telegraphing along Heaven's wireless telegraphy, message after message, word after word asking God to send a cargo of blessing to them, but they are not at the wharf-side to unload the vessel when it comes. How many of God's richest blessings for which you have been praying for years have come right close to you, but you do not know how to lay hold of and use them.

Mark, "They that *receive* abundance of grace shall reign." The emphasis is not on grace, not on abundance, but on *receiving* it. The whole grace of God may be round your life to-day, but if you have not learned to take it in, it won't help you.

All that God has is within your reach, but you must learn to take it. If a man hears that he has suddenly come into a fortune, and that money is waiting for him in the bank, he goes there by the first train, but he doesn't ask for it as if it were to be made a present to him. He goes in and says, "This is my name. You have money standing in that name, and I have come to claim it."

There are many things in prayer that we cannot be certain of because we have no definite promise to stand upon, but there are also many things in the Book which are waiting for us to come for them, and God says, "If you will come and take them you may have them." You have only to go to God, and, supposing you are in a right condition (it may be that you are not), you may open your entire nature to God, and believe that as you claim, God gives. "He that asketh, receiveth." If you want Christ to be your purity, Christ to be your power, Christ to be your salvation, kneel before Him; breathe in what God has promised to bestow; and reckon that as you open your nature to take, God Almighty gives. You have no emotion, no rush of feeling, no consciousness of reception, but you leave your closet and go forth to your daily life, you descend into the midst of turmoil and temptation, but all the time you are reckoning that what you dared humbly and reverently to claim in the name of Jesus, God Almighty gave.

The devil says, "You have nothing."

You say, "I have."

"You don't feel it?"

'I don't.'

"You haven't it then."

"Yes, I have, because 'he that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and I reckon on God that it is so whether I feel it or not.'"

3. But suppose that this yet doesn't quite touch your case. It may be that *your hands are not empty*.

You need to have the empty hand if you would be filled. You cannot take because your hands are full of evil, or of the world.

God is going to turn His search-light upon things in your life that you have hidden from your dearest. Are you not conscious that if certain sins were mentioned, a certain sin, you would wince? You are living in the indulgence of some evil habit; you are living for the world or the flesh; you have some secrets in your life that keep cropping up in your holiest moments. There may be a man or a woman living somewhere with whom you have vowed you would never speak again. There is a record somewhere that has never been cleared up. God Almighty cannot save you unless you are willing that He should deal with that; you must be judged as those who do not want to be ashamed at last, but would hear the Master's blessed "Well done" when they meet Him. You must stand before the judgment seat of Christ. You must be prepared to let God sweep out of your life that which is hindering you from accepting His best gifts.

Oh, I pray that we may bury once and forever, as in the grave of Christ, the shackles which have fettered us, the sins which have bound us, and may find the new life of Christ with its abundant grace which shall enable us to reign in life.

LIVING THE LIFE OF JESUS

“As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me.”—*John* vi. 57.

XVI

LIVING THE LIFE OF JESUS

AN eastern prince was accustomed to retire for an hour every morning to a certain chamber in his palace, which was carefully reserved from every common eye, and in which he said that he found the secret of his life. When the room was entered, it was discovered that it was furnished like a shepherd's hut, for his forefathers were shepherds. There, with the most simple surroundings, he had been accustomed quietly to meditate upon his past, his present, and his future.

I want to conduct you into Christ's inner chamber in which His spirit dwelt, and the door of which He has left open for us, that we also may enter and dwell there. I desire to give you what seems to me the one secret of our Saviour's life, that it may likewise become the one secret of yours and mine. From the words of our text we may infer that what the Father was to Jesus, Jesus is willing to be to you and to me. Everything that Jesus said of His relationship to the Father, we may say of our relationship to Jesus. The Gospel of

John is peculiarly the book of our Saviour's inner life, and the book of our own inner life, because in the place of the Father we may substitute the Saviour's name. Thus we may read the words of our text, "As the living Saviour hath sent me, so I live by the Saviour." If you take that Gospel according to John and substitute Christ for the Father, and hang on Christ as Christ hung on God, you will hardly ever need a book of private devotion other than that which is furnished by the golden book of the inner life, yielded in St John's gospel.

I. The first truth to which I wish to call your attention is this: *Our Saviour might have lived an independent life.*

He was the Holy One before He stooped to us and laid aside the use of the attributes of His Godhead. During His human life He might at any moment have availed Himself of His divine attributes, and might have lived His human life in the power of them. Whenever He was hungry, instead of waiting for Peter or others to provide, He might have used His creative power to transform the very stones into loaves of bread. Had He so chosen, He might have planned His own life, and from the transfiguration mountain have stepped into paradise. He might have spoken His own words and have poured forth upon men such a flood of eloquence as would have shone on the pages of

literature with dazzling brilliancy. He might have done His work by His own power, working His miracles merely to increase His own reputation. He might have sought His own glory as the supreme end of His life, so displaying His power and glory that His divinity should be apparent to all.

II. Our Lord Jesus might have lived an independent life, and second, *Satan was always urging Him to do it.*

Straight from the river Jordan Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. You who have been baptised for service are almost certain to be led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted, just because God desires to do a mighty work in your soul. The oak, which is to live for a hundred years, must be rooted and moored to stand the storm, and God, wanting you to become a strong, sturdy oak, will most certainly lead you into temptation. Temptation is not sin if the temptation is resisted. The effect of being tempted is to root us more in Christ.

The first thing the devil said to Jesus was, "Thou art the Son of God. God has just owned thee as such, as the second person of the holy Trinity. Thou hast all power. Now use that power for Thyself, and make these stones bread."

That was the crucial point in our Lord's life, and He said, "No: I am going to be a dependent human

being. Inasmuch as those whom I have come to save depend upon my Father and upon me, I will learn what it is to depend by faith absolutely upon my Father. If my Father does not feed me, I will die of hunger. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God, and I am going to wait for my Father to speak."

When our Lord said that, He at once definitely refused to live the independent life which would have been possible, and elected to live a life of constant dependence upon the Father.

III. Again, look at our Lord's life. In His birth God the Father gave Him life. It was not His own life; He could not do as He liked with it, and after He had lived it for thirty-three years the Father asked again for that life. And Jesus in dying said, "Father receive My life." It might have seemed that from the moment when He descended into the grave there was no longer any life for Him, but through the Cross He came into a richer life than ever. He gave up the natural to get the eternal; He gave up the life of the flesh to receive the life of the Spirit; He gave up the life that could die, that He might receive the resurrection life of power to impart. Jesus Christ held His life in trust,—God gave it, God maintained it, God required it, and all the time the Son said to the Father, "I live by Thee." God was as much the breath of Christ's

life as the air is of our natural life. It was as if His natural life kept saying to God, "May I live another hour?" and the Father said, "Live." Every minute the attitude of Christ was taking, taking, taking life from the Father. So we should live; always drawing from Christ, the fountain of life; always receiving from God life for our life. We must live because of Jesus.

So in the *plan* of our Lord's life. Sometimes He said to His disciples, "Let us go across the lake and rest." He might have chosen to pursue that plan of rest, but when the people hurried around the lake and asked to be taught and fed, in their intrusion on His quiet He saw the Father's plan. Once when He was going to Jairus' home, a woman who had an issue of blood stopped Him, I know not for how long, and in the touch of her finger He saw the intrusion of the Father's plan for the day, and He stopped His own plan to follow it. In that wonderful fifth chapter of John, He says, "The Son can originate nothing—the Son can do nothing from Himself—but what He sees the Father doing." When He was in Joseph's shop, as a young boy of twelve or fourteen, and saw Joseph making yokes for the oxen, He studied how Joseph made them, and fashioned the yoke on which He was working like it—always copying Joseph. Then afterward when He came to live among men, He was always watching for the development of the Father's plan,

and the things which God did in the unseen and eternal world, Jesus did in His earthly life. So this plan was the plan of God.

Jesus also depended on the Father for *His words*. In one of the most beautiful translations of the Revised Version in the fiftieth chapter of Isaiah we are told that God the Father came every morning to the Son and awakened Him, whispering into His ear the words which He was to say during the day, so that as Jesus went forth to teach the people day by day He did not speak His own words, but the words which the Father gave Him. On the mountain of Beatitudes, when He finished one paragraph, I suppose that He would look up and say, "What next?" And that wonderful farewell discourse recorded in John consisted of the words of the Father received by Jesus as He spoke them.

Then as to *His miracles*. In that wonderful fourteenth chapter of John, Jesus says, "The words that I say unto you, I speak not from myself, but the Father abiding in Me, doeth His works." We might almost say that we do not know Jesus, because He was so completely dependent upon the Father that His words were the Father's, His works were the Father's, His life was the Father's, and in Jesus we do not see Jesus but we see the Father mirrored in His words and works and life.

So also about *His will*. He had a will of His own, because He said, "Not My will." We do not

understand the mystery of His nature but we remember that He said, "Not My will but Thine be done."

We know, too, that He sought *the Father's glory*. He said, "I have glorified Thee on earth. It matters little what men say or think of Me, I at least have given them a new thought about Thyself. I have glorified Thee on the earth"; and He promised to answer our prayers, "that the Father might be glorified in the Son." Now He is there in the glory waiting to find a prayer that we have uttered that He can answer to glorify His Father; He at once answers that kind of a prayer, because He is so set on this purpose. In that last prayer He also said, "I would like to be glorified, My Father; give Me glory that the Son may glorify Thee." It was as if Jesus Christ was only ambitious to be well thought of in order that He might make God the Father the better considered.

IV. If our blessed Lord chose this life of dependence out of all possible lives that He might have lived, *does it not seem wisest, most blessed, most Christlike, for you and me to give up living the independent life* in the flesh and to begin from this moment to depend upon Christ as Christ depended upon God?

If Jesus Christ held His life moment by moment in the balance at God's dictation, should not we

receive the help and expend our life as Jesus wills? If Jesus Christ allowed His plan always to give way to God's plan, do you not see that instead of scheming, planning, and striving to get our own way so much, we ought always to be looking out for God's plan and to yield submissively before it? If Jesus Christ gave up His words for the words which the Father put into His lips, do we not greatly mistake in trying to elaborate our sentences and beautify them, instead of day by day waiting to receive the words our Saviour gives us? If you would depend day by day on the Master for the power of His life, opening all your being, and preferring the power imparted to any power of your own, I need not say how your life would at once become divine.

Let us receive from our glorified Lord that life-power with which He is invested, that He may glorify and ennoble our daily existence. Let us so dress, so adorn our houses, so spend our time, so earn money, that men may think better of our Lord. We should not expend one hour for any other purpose than that our life might be glorifying Jesus Christ for being, or doing, or suffering, or giving,—the four departments of Christ's life.

Do you not see the beauty of having such a life that you might yield it back into the ocean from whence it came? Do you not see this great prerogative of your manhood given to you that you

may give it back again? We have been so foolish in the past that we have thought that whatever gifts have been intrusted to us, must be clung to or lost; forgetting it is only those who give away what they have, who really keep and get the best. We have clung to our money, forgetting that by giving it away we shall get something better. We have clung to sermons with their eloquence, their chastity of expression, not realizing that just as soon as we give away the human power we get the divine power. We are so afraid of giving away what was only given to us as a trust, that we fail to get what God plans to bestow. I hear my Saviour singing as He goes down into the grave: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in death, nor suffer thy holy one to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life. In thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand are pleasures forevermore." And so He goes down into the valley of death singing, and we know that in death He finds something better than He left.

V. *The Saviour's method may be ours.*

There are two possible methods. Our Lord might always have been crucifying, as it were, His human nature; but He chose the second method and the better one—that of living a life of perfect communion with God by the Holy Ghost. "I love the Father." "That the world may know that I love the Father." Do you think that there was any

difficulty, any agony except once in the supreme act of all when He was called upon to contemplate the possibility of losing the Father's smile? As the thought of being forsaken by the Father came over His soul, a dark eclipse, He said: "Save me from that"; but soon He said, "Not My will even in this, but Thine be done." Jesus loved the Father, and there is no difficulty in giving up the self-life when you are in love with the living Christ. The thing for us to do therefore is, not to dwell on the crucifixion, on the giving-up side, but to allow our whole nature to be drawn to the living Christ—not death, but life. Moreover, seek that abounding life which makes it so easy to say No to self. Make the living Jesus the reality of your whole life. Go about saying: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

How can Jesus become to me what the Father was to Jesus?

First: *We must be quiet; we must wait.*

In all music there are rests and sometimes whole bars of rests; so there must be in every life the sitting down quietly and allowing God by the Spirit to make Jesus dwell in us. Jesus often went up on the mountains with the thought of God the Father filling His nature, and there must be times in our life when we give an opportunity for Christ to assert Himself and impress Himself absorbingly on the vision.

Then second: *Be sure to make Jesus the first of everything.*

Remember the first words in our Bible,—“In the beginning God.” The story of every day ought to be commenced with the words, In the beginning Jesus. He must be the Alpha, the first, the beginning. If, before you rush into a new enterprise, my brother, you would sit quietly down and be sure Jesus Christ is first, it would save you from landing in many a quagmire. Make Jesus first of every plan, every act, every sermon, everything that can be begun, continued, and ended in Him.

Third: *Make the glory of Jesus your aim.*

You may not *feel* it to be your aim, but *choose* it to be your aim. Always remember this great principle of the Christian's life, that when you cannot feel a thing, you must choose it by act of your will, and then ask God to create in you the emotion which you have chosen to be the motive of your action. Let the glory of Jesus be your aim in every service; let His glory be the thought that animates you in making money, in your housekeeping, in your mission work. Wives often send in requests for prayer for the conversion of their husbands, but frequently they desire it not for the glory of Christ, but that the husband may no longer bring misery and disaster into the life of the wife. We must put the glory of Christ even before the conversion of men.

Then fourth: *Meet God's will in every circumstance.*

I should like to draw a circle, the circle of God's

will, and then step into it, and keep in it all my life ; then whatever came to me must come through the encircling will of God. If Joseph's brethren put him in the pit, it is not they who sent him into Egypt, but God. If Judas brings the cup, Jesus says, "The cup which My Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" When I am living in the will of God, my enemy may shoot an arrow against me ; by the time it reaches me it may glance aside if God wills, but if He wishes it to strike me, by the time it reaches me it has become God's will for me.

Then lastly, *reckon on God.*

Some people are constantly worrying about their faith. I have given up worrying about my faith because I think of God's faithfulness. Begin to count God faithful. It is of no use worrying whether I have strength enough to believe a note of hand ; the question is, whether the man who signed that check is worthy of trust. Reckon on Christ's faithfulness toward you.

Go over these steps again : Be still. Make Christ first in everything. Live absolutely for Him. Receive from Him all your words to speak, and works to do, all the power of your life ; when in any emergency or need receive from Him, who sent the demand, the power to meet it. Reckon absolutely upon Christ. Meet His will in every circumstance. That is the way that Jesus lived toward His Father ; live so toward Jesus.

You may ask me how it was that in the human nature of Christ He so absolutely yielded Himself to the Father. The answer comes from one of the most marvellous books in the Bible, the Epistle of the Hebrews: "Who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without a spot to God." I believe that that is what the baptism of Christ meant. At the moment of His baptism, Jesus did the very thing to His holy, independent life that you and I have been called to do to our natural, sinful, and debased life. The baptism of Jesus Christ, as I understand it, was His saying by symbol and metaphor, "I come to do thy will, O my God; thy law is within my heart." Then on Him there came the blessed Holy Ghost, and it was in the power of the Spirit that He perpetually yielded Himself to God.

If you and I are to live toward Christ as Christ lived toward the Father, we must be baptized into the same Holy Ghost. Whatever your station or occupation may be, you may start to live that life right now, but you may lose the power to live it within twenty-four hours. The only power by which Jesus Christ can help your life is through the infilling of the Holy Ghost. Shall we not have done forever with the independent life and be able to say as never before, "The living Saviour hath sent me and He lives in me"? Then you will hear Him responding, "Because I live, ye shall live also." "I give eternal Life."

Everywhere around us the world teems with life. Turn your microscope on a single drop of water. Lie down amid the grass on a summer's day. Sit in the woodlands, till the birds forget you are there. Everywhere there is life of the most abundant and prolific variety. Why should our nerves be so scant of the life which resides in the Lord, not for our bodies only, or minds, but for our spirits? Let us never rest till we have all that redeemed sinners can have on this side of Heaven.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THIS
DISPENSATION

“ I will pour out in those days of my Spirit.”—*Acts* ii. 18.

XVII

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THIS DISPENSATION

GOD made the world in ages. There was the age of creation ; the age that culminated in the deluge ; the age of Israel ; and we are living in the age which commenced on the day of Pentecost, and will close with the second advent of our Lord.

Just as Jesus was born on a definite day which we celebrate as Christmas day, and came into new relations with the world which will never be dissolved, so also on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came into new relations with men.

Just as we date the chronology of the world from the advent of our Lord, so we should date the history of the church from the advent of the Holy Spirit.

Indeed, there is a precise parallel, which you will see in a moment. Our Lord was in the world before His birth, but at His birth He took a human body. The Holy Spirit was in the world before the day of Pentecost, but at Pentecost He took on a body. He is now tenanting that body, which is composed of all

believers in every age and every clime. As Jesus Christ was literally in the world, so I believe the Holy Spirit is literally present in the church of Christ and in every gathering of that church. I do not think you can locate the Spirit of God. I do not think you can say there is more of Him here than there. I believe He is as much in this church to-day as in the upper room on the day of Pentecost, only our eyes are holden and we have lost the power to see Him.

Our Lord distinctly taught in John xiv. 20: "In that day (the day of Pentecost), ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." Three things are matters of common knowledge—that Jesus is God, that our standing is in Him, and that His life, begun in us now, is to have fruition in the future. In the present age the Holy Ghost reveals Jesus, and Jesus reveals the Father, and I believe there is a further stage in the Christian experience in which the Father reveals Himself. Jesus indicates that at the day of Pentecost a new epoch began.

There are thousands of Christians living on this side of Pentecost, as if that great event had never occurred. They are living on the same plan as the early disciples before they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Historically and chronologically they are on this side, experimentally they are on the other side of Pentecost.

This wonderful age in which we live, therefore, is pre-eminently the age of the Holy Spirit. It is also the age of the formation of the church of Christ. It is the age in which the Spirit of God and the church bear a double witness to Christ, and in which the Spirit of God is leading the church out into missions.

I need spend no time in showing that the Spirit of God was at work all through the Old Testament. There are three departments in His work—His work in creation (Gen. i. 3); His work in inspiration (2 Peter i. 21); and His work in quickening elect souls, as when He “clothed Himself with Gideon” (Judges vi. 34, R.V. margin), and moved in and through him to the accomplishment of His purposes.

I asked a man once whether there was more electricity in the world to-day, or in the time of Frederick the Great, or in the Garden of Eden. The man looked very wise, and said of course there was more to-day than ever before. I said to him:

“There always was as much as there is now. The only difference is that certain persons have discovered the laws by which electricity can be applied.”

Now I hope you will understand me when I say that is a precise illustration of what the blessed Jesus has done for us all. The Holy Spirit was in the

world before the birth of Christ, but Christ, in His earthly life, revealed the laws of His operation, so that anybody and everybody in the true church may now avail himself of the power of the Holy Spirit, which previously was reserved for an Isaiah or a Daniel, or some other favoured person. This was anticipated by Joel, who said that in the last days God would pour out His spirit upon all flesh.

Perhaps you have been in Switzerland, and witnessed what I have seen. I have gone out on the veranda of the hotel at 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning, and looked at the range of mountains that rose before me. At first all is gray and damp and chilly. But as I look, it seems as if God's angel has been stepping from one summit to another, lighting fires all along his path. Beneath, the mist still hangs over the valley, the clouds roll and tumble in endless confusion.

As I wait and watch, the sun rises. The mists roll up and disappear. By the time the sun reaches the meridian, his rays have poured into every nook and crevice in the valley.

So I think the Holy Ghost before Pentecost struck with living flame only the great mountain peaks among men. That summit was Moses; that, Samson; that, David; that, Jeremiah. But at the day of Pentecost, He who had been given only to the spiritual aristocrats of the race, became the common property of the democracy. "I will pour out of My

spirit upon *all flesh*; and your *sons* and your *daughters* shall prophesy, and your *young men* shall see visions, and your *old men* shall dream dreams; and on My *servants* and on My *handmaidens* I will pour out in those days of My Spirit" (Acts ii. 17, 18).

I. MEN SHOULD ACCEPT THIS POWER.

What folly it would be for a man to say he was not going to avail himself of the uses of electricity, but would go on in the same old way of past centuries! But did you ever think, my friend, that if you are content to live your life without the power which is within your reach, and which God sent to enable you to live better, you are making the same mistake!

You say you want to live like Christ and follow in His steps, and yet you are refusing to make use of the power which He has supplied. You say you always thought the power of the Holy Ghost was a spasmodic thing that came where people could stand the strain of a whole night in prayer or some other emotional experience. You have thought that you must leave the baptism of the Holy Spirit for people who were differently constituted from yourself. I thought that once. But I found this text in Romans viii. 2, "The law of the Spirit of Life." We know enough about Edison to be sure that he is not a man who works himself up to a high pitch of

nervous excitement before he completes a discovery. He simply obeys certain laws. The law of the Spirit of life is for anybody and everybody who will obey. If a man is clean and pure in heart and lives near God, he can always count on the operation of the Spirit of God. In your home you touch a spring or turn a key and the whole room is filled with light. Just as surely you can be filled with the light of the Spirit of life if you will obey the law.

II. THE LESSON OF CHRIST'S BAPTISM.

When our Saviour was on earth, He lived for thirty years in Nazareth, and He was taught the laws of the Spirit. He waited until the moment came for Him to be endued and anointed with the Spirit. He went to the Jordan and was baptised. In His baptism He identified Himself with the sins of man. He rose from the water as an obedient child of God, and the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove and rested upon Him. He went to the wilderness and was tempted. He came back, and stood in the synagogue, and said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, and He hath anointed Me to preach." The blessed Saviour would not begin to help a dying, broken-hearted world until He was sure He had the power of the Spirit of God.

Before He left this world He said, "I will pray the Father and He will send you another Com-

forter." When Jesus Christ received the Spirit, He received Him for His church, and for you and me.

He gave Him to His church, to be its permanent possession during the present age; and He waits to give each individual member of that church his or her share in Pentecost, on the one condition of applying for it by faith. As you took forgiveness from the hand of the dying Christ, take your share of the Pentecostal gift from the hand of the living Christ.

Don't think that blessed gift is only for elect men and for special work. I want you to understand the fulness of the Spirit is for every believer, to make you the men and women you want to be. The failure of your life that you complain of is that you are trying to attain the ideal without the power which alone makes the ideal possible.

The blessing of the day of Pentecost is always described as being "filled" with the Holy Spirit. God's will for believers is that they should be filled, women as well as men. As full as the tree is of sap when it rises from the roots and fills the futhermost branches, so we are to be filled with the Spirit until Christian fruitfulness is as natural to us as the flower and fruit to the tree. We may be as full of the Spirit as the tree is of sap, as the body is of life, as the mind is full of thought, as the heart is full of love, as the cold, dull iron is filled with the white flame of the furnace.

When we are living in the power of the Spirit our old sins will have no part in us because we are filled with something better. This is the true idea of becoming holy.

Some people say that you must give up this and that and the other, until the soul is bewildered. Let the love of God come in, let the purity of Christ fill you, and then the evil thought, the unholy word which have been the curse of your life, will naturally drop off. Just as the sap in the tree forces off the dead leaves in the spring, so if we are filled with the Spirit of God, the things which have cursed our lives will drop off naturally. It is God's Ideal.

You have known the Holy Ghost regenerating and quickening and blessing you. But have you known Him infilling you with His mighty presence and power?

I am prepared to admit that this *should* be the experience of the young convert, and might if he were properly instructed.

I remember reading the story of a young fellow named Joseph, who belonged to one of the great American cities. He was of a wild and evil disposition, the trial and torment of the local ministers who gave orders that he must not be admitted to their churches on God's day. A camp meeting was held near by. The third day Joseph was powerfully convicted of sin, and went forward and knelt at the penitents' form. An old lady who

was watching him, also went forward and knelt at his side. After several hours of agonizing prayer Joseph came into the full light of God.

The lady asked him to call at her house on his way home that she might give him a tract called "Counsel to Young Converts." By mistake, however, she gave him a tract on the filling of the Holy Ghost.

Joseph read it. He saw that the attitude of heart by which he received pardon was the attitude by which he could now receive all that Christ had further to bestow. He immediately entered into a joyous consciousness of the risen Christ; because when the soul is filled with the Holy Ghost, it is conscious, not of Him, but of Christ, whose face He reveals.

If you, friend, are unsaved and unregenerate up to this moment, in the name of Jesus I bid you look to Him! Not to the cross, but to Him who hung there! Not to the grave, but to Him who passed through it, and rose again! Not to the Bible, but to Him of whom it testifies! Not to the Holy Spirit, but to Him whom He glorifies! The moment you do so in faith, you are saved!

The Spirit of God came suddenly upon the church at Pentecost. He came suddenly upon the church at Samaria. He came suddenly upon Cornelius in Acts x. I believe, therefore, that the soul may suddenly receive and apprehend the great

power of the Holy Spirit. You can be filled a drop at a time, just as you can fill a well with water a drop at a time, or by turning a stream into it.

III. FIVE TESTS.

There are just *five tests* by which you may know that you have received this infilling. Let me give them to you.

1. Is the Lord Jesus Christ a living reality to you? (John xvi. 13, 14.) How do you look at Jesus Christ?

A great many Christians look at Christ away back on the cross nineteen hundred years ago, but they have no perception of Christ as a living presence with them day by day. When a man is filled with the Holy Spirit he does not talk much about the Spirit, but about Christ, because the whole aim of the Holy Spirit is to shed light upon Jesus. The people who talk about the Holy Ghost as if He were their Lord make a profound mistake. The Spirit does not glorify Himself or reveal Himself, but reveals Jesus; and hence the person who is most filled with the Spirit talks most about Jesus Christ as a living personality in his experience.

A striking episode took place in the life of Dr Dale of Birmingham, England, one Eastertide. As he was preparing his Easter sermon, it seemed as if Jesus glided into his study. His presence was so manifest to his heart that he said :

“Jesus is really alive! Jesus is really here! My people shall know that Jesus is really here!”

Ever since then, at Carr's Lane Chapel they sing an Easter hymn every Sabbath morning to remind them that Christ is really present.

Have you had an experience like that? Business man in your counting house, mother in your home, young man in your study, have you said to yourself:

“Jesus is here! Jesus is alive!”

You may know it; and if you do not, you are not filled with the Holy Ghost.

2. Have you assurance that you are a child of God?

There are many in our churches who dare not say with Paul, “I KNOW whom I have believed.” They are dishonouring God by not believing His Word. If you are filled with His Spirit, He will bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God (Romans viii. 16).

You may be a Christian without knowing it. If I save a person from drowning, the doctor may come and say, “Yes, that life is saved,” but the person may be unconscious of it for two hours or more. So you may be a Christian, and the consciousness of your salvation may not come for a day, or a month, or a year. But directly you receive the Spirit of God, you will know you are saved. Even though you have no emotional enjoyment, you know you are saved. There is a deeper

consciousness which the presence or absence of emotion does not affect.

When I come to my house at night, my little child comes running to meet me, knowing that I have candy for her in my pocket. To test her affection, I leave off the candy and come without it. She meets me just the same, and I say:

"My child, I have no candy for you."

She replies: "Father, I don't come for the candy, I come for you."

I drop the candy to see if the child really cares for me, and so God drops the happy feelings to see if we really care for Him, for Himself. But apart from feelings, there is a clear consciousness of God as our Father.

3. Have you victory over known sin? (Galatians v. 16-22.) "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."

I do not ask if you are sinless—you cannot be that in this life. A girl dusted a room in the early winter morning and did her best. At noon her mistress called her in and asked:

"Did you dust this room to-day?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Well, look at all the dust!"

"Well, ma'am, the light was dim this morning, and it looks different in the sunlight!"

So I am not asking if you are free from sin up to God's standard, which includes sins of omission as

well as sins of commission ; but are you kept from known sin up to the light God has given you? If you are being constantly overcome you are not filled with the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is like an antiseptic to impure thoughts, and unclean desires, and things which are selfish and worldly and abominable. I wish you to understand that the Christian life does not consist in avoiding this or that, but in being so saturated with something better that you have no desire for these sinful things. Some have only enough religion to make them miserable. The child which has had a good meal does not want the bones over which the dogs are fighting in the street. When you are perfectly satisfied and filled, you are delivered from the opposite. If you are full of the Spirit, you are delivered from the power of sin. You will be kept full of Jesus and holy desires, and the epidemic of sin will have no fascination over you.

Christian friend, you say you can't do without whiskey? Young man, you say you can't get rid of that bad habit? Young girl, you say you can't get the better of jealousy and gossip? Tell me, would God give us an ideal and leave us to wallow in the marsh of our own helplessness and impurity? No! Jesus Christ is not a theory, but a living power in one's life. You can be delivered from the claims of sin.

4. Have you power in witness-bearing? (Acts i. 8.)

Can you speak to others for God? If you are with a man who swears, can you stop him? Do you feel it an effort or natural? If you feel it an effort, you have not got what I am talking about. If you have, you will find it natural and easy.

I believe it is just the overflowing of our hearts which does people good. The forced, mechanical effort of our mind does not amount to much. It is not difficult for the bird to sing, for the child to laugh, and it should not be difficult for you to speak for Jesus. If you are living in Christ, and Christ lives in you, the living waters ought to spring up and overflow.

5. Have you the spirit of holy love (Acts ii. 45-47)? This I need not dwell on.

Is Jesus real to you? Have you assurance of sonship? Do you have the victory over your flesh? Are you able to bear witness as the early disciples did? Are you filled with the spirit of love? If not, there are three steps necessary—confession, surrender and faith.

Before God can come into your soul there will have to be a *setting right* of things which are not as they should be. I have gone through it all myself. There were things in my heart years ago that choked out all of God's fulness. As I knelt before God,

there was one thing in my life about which God seemed to say:

“As long as that thing is permitted in your life, I cannot give you the fulness of the Spirit’s indwelling.”

It was an awful fight, because I liked it, and thought I could not live without it. But, do you know, as I look back at that thing now, I think what a fool I was to nearly lose all for that which I now hate; for the minute you give up a wrong thing, you begin to hate it.

Perhaps it is the habit of excessive smoking which some of you men have. It may be some of the women use morphine. Perhaps in your business you are doing things which are not strictly right. If you are doing anything which your conscience condemns, you cannot have God’s best. If you cannot give it up yourself, then say to God:

“I am not willing to give it up, but I am willing to be made willing.”

Then comes *Surrender*. You must be prepared to take the second step, and say:

“I yield myself wholly to Thee, my Lord and Saviour. I place myself on the altar. I abandon myself entirely and absolutely to Thy will and service.”

Then follows *Faith*. Gal. iii. 14 tells us that we may receive the promise of the Holy Spirit by faith, just as we receive forgiveness, or any other

spiritual gift. You may not have the immediate gush of blessed emotion, but you must go on reckoning that you have received, because you have fulfilled God's conditions. Dare to start on your way home, sure that you have received, if you have complied with God's conditions. Then seek the filling again and again, whenever the power of the Spirit waxes low in your soul.

**THE ANOINTING WITH THE
HOLY SPIRIT**

“The Anointing which ye have received of Him.”—*I John ii. 27.*

XVIII

THE ANOINTING WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

THERE is no need for me to prove or attempt to prove that the Holy Ghost is a person. In the Greek, though the name for the Holy Ghost is neuter, it is followed by a personal pronoun *autos*, which could not be used unless the Holy Spirit was a person. Readers of the English Bible will remember that the Holy Spirit said: "Separate me, Barnabas and Saul," and the Apostle says: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit." Only a person can designate workmen, and only a person with a tender nature could be grieved. As you worship the Father and the Son, worship the Holy Spirit; three persons, but one God.

Before Pentecost the Holy Spirit brooded over our world. In chaos He moved to educe cosmos. He wrought in holy men to inspire the Word of God. He prepared the way for Christ. But Pentecost was His birthday. Just as Jesus Christ was in the world before His incarnation, but His incarnation was his birthday into the body, so the Holy

Ghost was in the world before Pentecost, but on the day of Pentecost He was born into the body of Christ. And as the body born of the virgin was the home of Christ, and through it He wrought, so the Church is the body of the Holy Spirit, through which He is working during this era, until the body shall rejoin the Head, and Head and body make one entity, a new man for ever more. As the manger was the cradle of Christ, so the upper chamber in Jerusalem was the cradle of the Holy Spirit's incarnation. Hence the Roman Catholic Church, claiming that she is the only true church, calls herself the see of the Holy Ghost. The word "see" is the Latin *sedes*, a seat. The Church of Rome says she is the seat of the Holy Ghost, and thus takes to herself that which is the province of the Holy Catholic Church—the body of Christ, which is not visible, but which consists of all who believe, is the seat, the see, the throne, of the most Holy Spirit.

Men talk as though God were an absentee. But every true believer, every audience gathered in the name of Christ, is the home, the see, the body of God the Holy Spirit.

Now on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came to give power for the preaching of the gospel. Jesus Christ was conceived of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Thing born of the pure virgin was wrought by the Holy Spirit, and through thirty years Jesus was

led and taught amid His native hills by the divine Spirit. Beneath His impulse our Lord went down to the Jordan, and being baptized He identified Himself with the sins of men: for the Jordan was (so to speak) saturated with the sin that was confessed over it, and when Jesus Christ stepped into it He became (as it were) identified with the sin of the race, though He Himself was sinless. From the Jordan He went forth to His work, but not before the sky had been rift, and the Holy Spirit had come upon Him with the gentle movement of a dove.

What! had He not been conceived by the Holy Spirit? Yes. Was He not one with the Holy Spirit? Certainly. Why then should He be again anointed? Because His human nature needed to be empowered by the Holy Spirit before even He could do successful service in the world. Jesus waited for thirty years until He was anointed, and only then did He say: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me (Greek, *epi*, UPON me), and He hath anointed Me to preach."

How absurd it is for us to send young men to college to equip them with intellectual store of classic and philosophic learning, and to send them out to teach, without insisting upon it that if Christ waited to be anointed before He went to preach, no young man ought to preach until he, too, has been anointed of the Holy Ghost!

For three years our Lord wrought in the power of the Holy Ghost. Never forget that our Lord's ministry was not in the power of the second person of the Holy Trinity, but in the power of the third person of the Holy Trinity. As Saint Peter said : "God anointed Him with the Holy Ghost, and He went about doing good." On the cross He offered Himself to God in the power of the eternal Spirit. He was raised from the dead by the Holy Ghost, and during the forty days He gave command to His apostles in and by the Holy Ghost. And before He went, He said to His disciples that as He received His Pentecost at the Jordan, He would see that the Church had her Pentecost too. He was conceived of the Holy Ghost, but He was anointed by the Holy Ghost. The Church was conceived by the Holy Ghost, but the Church, before attempting her ministry, must also be anointed by the Holy Ghost ; and what the baptism in Jordan was to the Head, the day of Pentecost was to the body.

The Head communicated the Holy Ghost to the body, as I explained in the preceding address.

I ask every Bible student to note that wonderful word : "He *received* of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost." No sooner had He received it than He turned to see if His people were prepared to receive it, and then He opened the window of heaven and poured down a Niagara upon His Church ; and ever since He has been there in the

glory, charged, yes, charged with the power of the Holy Spirit. And just as a man may touch a man charged with electricity, and a spark will answer, so you cannot touch the living Christ by faith without the spark of the Holy Ghost flashing into your soul.

Brethren, the Greek preposition *epi* is significant of Pentecost. Pentecost differs from regeneration. In regeneration the Holy Spirit is described as being *within*, but in Pentecost and ever after the Holy Ghost is described as being *upon*. He anoints, He falls upon, He equips; and I ask that before this meeting shall close, every one in this audience who has been regenerated by the Holy Ghost shall become anointed, filled, empowered with the Holy Ghost. It would make the greatest difference possible in your life. There is where you have failed, my brother. You have been preaching the cross, but you have not been preaching the cross in the demonstration and power of the blessed Spirit.

When I was at Leicester, there were many discharged prisoners whom I took from the prison gate to a house, where they lived, and worked, under my care. I had a firewood factory. The great beams came from Norway, and they were sawn up by a circular saw wrought by a crank, and on that crank fifteen men were kept at work to give them an opportunity of regaining their character. But these men served me ill. I lost much money. I presently

swept them away, and instead purchased a gas-engine, and the gas-engine did in an hour as much work as the fifteen discharged prisoners did in eight hours.

One day I asked my circular saw how it was that it turned out so much work, and the saw at first said it could not tell. I asked if it had been sharpened. It said no. I asked if it had been polished. It said no. I asked if it had been oiled. It said no. Then I said :

“How is it?”

“Why,” it replied, “I think there is a stronger driving power behind me. Something is working through me with a new force. It is not I, it is the power behind.”

Would God that you, my brother ministers, who have been working with the power of intellect, of energy, of enthusiastic zeal, with but poor effect, may become linked to the power of God the Holy Ghost stored in Christ ; for as soon as you shall link to it, not you, but the power of God through you, will repeat the marvels of Pentecost.

One word more here. You ask me if the day of Pentecost was a specimen day. I answer : yes, and for two reasons. First, on the day of Pentecost the priest in the Temple presented twelve loaves, the specimen and the result of the harvest ; and inasmuch as God chose the day of Pentecost for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, He surely meant us

to understand that the day of Pentecost was a specimen day, and that what He did that day He was prepared to do every day ; and He would have done it if the church had not choked and frustrated His plans. Secondly, in Acts ii. 39, you have these words of Peter : "This promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Understand therefore that the promise of Pentecost is for you also, because God has called you, and from to-day you may go forth charged with power from on high.

Now a step further. You say to me : "Sir, tell me how I may get this power myself."

I will. I know a little of it, thank God, and I hope as the years pass that I may know more and more. This truth has revolutionized my life.

Any mechanic knows this law to be true : obey the law of a force, and the force will obey you. I repeat it : obey the law of a force, and that force will obey you. Take water-force. I cannot make water do my will until I understand the law upon which it works. If I want water to serve me, I must study the law by which water seeks its own level ; and if I construct my own machinery to obey the law of falling water, then having obeyed the law of water, water will obey me. What has Edison been doing for the last twenty years in his laboratory ? He has been studying the law of electricity

and having studied the law upon which electricity works, he has constructed his machinery to obey that law ; and ever since he perfected his obedience, electricity has been his slave, and there is nothing he cannot make electricity perform if only he is patient and wise enough to understand the method on which electricity will work.

I once asked some men this very profound question : "When was there more electricity in the world—now, or away back a hundred years?"

They all said there was more electricity in the world to-day than there had ever been before. Poor fools they must have been to come to such a conclusion. Why, before Adam stepped the sward of Paradise there was as much electricity in the cloud, in the air, and in nature as there is to-day, only man did not understand the law of electricity, and therefore electricity would not obey his summons. There was plenty of electricity, but men never used it.

So is it with the Holy Spirit. There is as much Holy Spirit power in your little village church, my brother, as there is in the largest tabernacle in the country, and the mistake of your life has been that you have never yet learned the law of the Holy Ghost ; for if you had, the Holy Ghost would have come flowing through your life as much as through the life of a Peter or a John. You seem to think that God is a God of favouritism. You seem to think that God has His chosen favourites whom He endues

with the Holy Ghost here and there, whilst all the rest are left to take their chance. I admit that the gifts of the living Christ are given on His sovereign decision, but the power of the Holy Ghost is FOR EVERYONE, for you.

Now let me tell you briefly the conditions on which, if you obey them, you may at this minute and from now be able to—I was going to say, but perhaps it is too startling—to *command* the Holy Ghost. I think I will say that, however, because God says: “Of the work of My hand command ye Me.” And if a man will obey God to the uttermost, he may command the power of God at any moment.

Now what are these conditions? They are as far as I know five. If you discover another, let me know.

First. *You cannot have the power of the Holy Ghost without having the Holy Ghost Himself.*

That is, the Holy Ghost must come to you as a person before you can enjoy His attribute. In other words, you must be a holy man before you can wield the power of the Holy Ghost. There are plenty of men who think that if they could only get the power of the Holy Ghost they would be able to fill their churches and sell their books and get themselves name and fame. They want *it*, but not *Him*. You cannot have it without having Him. If you want the power of the Holy Ghost, open your heart

to-day and be filled with the Holy Ghost, and then you will have His power.

Second. *You must be cleansed.*

Oh, I do want to speak wisely! I do not want needlessly to offend you, or denounce you. But I do feel in my heart that if the Holy Spirit is going to work through you or any body He must have a cleansed vessel. The body must be clean.

Now I know that I might here dilate on many of those indulgences that men and women permit. I would much prefer not to characterise them, because you yourselves know anything in your life which is inconsistent with the perfect majesty and purity of that Spirit who has made your body His temple. But if my body is really the temple, the residence and the throne of the Holy Ghost, I must be as careful of it as I would be if I were the custodian of a temple in the inner part of which the light of God shone. I need not say more than that.

Third. *You must live for the glory of Christ as your supreme end.*

Jesus Christ came into the world to glorify the Father, and the Holy Ghost came into the world to glorify the Son. If therefore you want the Holy Ghost to work with you you must agree with the Holy Ghost to glorify Jesus, for the Spirit was not given till Jesus was glorified.

Fourth. *Your preaching and teaching must be in harmony with the Word of God.*

I am a Quaker by extraction, and I glory in it, especially when I know what they have been in this country. I dissent from them because I believe they went wrong when they magnified the Holy Spirit to the exclusion, in many cases, of the Word of God. And with all love I would say that if there is one danger ahead for the Salvation Army of the present day, it is lest they should magnify the work of the Spirit of God in experience, apart from the Word of God taught to their converts. Remember that the Holy Spirit is like a locomotive, the Word of God like the steel rails; and you must have the steel rails of the Bible as well as the steam-power of the Holy Ghost. Let the Holy Ghost fill you, but He will work along that Book. And I hold that the fact that the Holy Spirit elects to work through that Book is its most complete vindication against all that modern critics have to say. As long as the Holy Ghost is prepared to stand by it and to work by it, I hold it to be in an incomparable sense the Word of the living God to man. I am well satisfied to accept it all.

Fifth, and last. *The Holy Spirit must be received by faith.* Gal. iii. 14 is the battle-axe. I would not be without that text for anything: "That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

All God's dealings with men are on the same principle, by faith. By faith you are regenerate, by faith you are justified, by faith you are sanctified,

by faith you receive the Holy Ghost, by faith you receive Christ as the power of God into your life. It is all by faith.

To-morrow your little girl will come down to breakfast. She is very hungry, and the bread and milk or the oatmeal is on the table. You do not say :—

“ Little girlie, run upstairs, and agonise, roll on the floor for an hour, and then come down.”

You say to her : “ Little one, I am so glad you have got a good appetite. Now there is your chair, in you get, say your prayer, and start away.”

That is what God says to the soul. Those all-nights of prayer for the Holy Ghost are principally necessary to get the people who need to get into a fit condition to receive the Holy Ghost ; for when the people are ready the Holy Ghost will come without their agonizing.

THE GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED

“Faith as a grain of mustard seed.”—*Luke xvii. 6.*

XIX

THE GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED

THERE is nothing arbitrary or capricious in God's dealings with the soul. If one man has more of God than another, it is simply because he has learned the holy art of taking more of God into his life. On the same stream one man may get more water power to drive his engine than another, not because there is any arbitrariness in the water, but because the one man has learned how to utilise the water power better than the other. The same mighty power of God is flowing by every one of us, and if you would have the most power in your own life and work, you have simply to comply most absolutely with the conditions on which God gives Himself to you.

I am thankful to say that those conditions are not conditions of emotion, but that, irrespective of your emotional temperament, you may come into intimate and powerful relationship with the eternal God, who works according to law. All you have to do is to bring yourself into such an attitude towards God that you may receive from Him everything

that He has to give the human soul. Most men think that they must receive God's gifts through some man's ministry. They are living on God at second—or third—hand. There is no reason why you should not live at first-hand.

The Lord had said that His disciples must forgive seven times a day if necessary. The disciples replied: "You are expecting too much; but if it ought to be done you must give us much more faith."

Christ said: "You make a great mistake; you do not need more faith. Use the faith you have, though it be no larger than the smallest seed. If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you." Luke xvii. 5, 6.

It is not the *quantity* of faith, but the *quality*, which is important. A grain of mustard seed and a pellet of dust may appear at a distance to be much the same, but the difference between the two is immense, because the one has no life burning at the heart of it, whilst the other contains life as God has kindled it. The one thing that you need is to have faith, as small as you like, but faith which has in it the principle of life, namely, faith with God in it. That is enough to remove mountains of difficulty,

and to uproot sycamine trees and plant them in the sea. That will be sufficient.

The one thing that shows whether or not your faith is of the right quality is whether it is directed towards the right object, which is Jesus Christ. If your faith be infinitesimal, if it be full of changeful emotion, if it be groping in the dark, if it be unable to see closely the face of Christ, if for long months you have no conscious enjoyment of the presence of Christ, yet, if your faith is reaching out its trembling hands towards Christ, that movement proves your faith to be the faith that binds you to Christ, and you are a child of God.

People say that it is presumptuous to say that you are saved. But is it presumptuous to say that God is true? And if God says that the soul which believes in Christ has eternal life, is it not presumptuous on your part to say that you have not, and refuse to say you have if you believe? That would make God a liar. If you want to affirm that God is true, then dare to say :

“I am a sinful lost man by nature, but I simply trust in Jesus Christ. Therefore I dare to say that I have the eternal life that God has promised.”

The object of faith, therefore, is not the Bible, but the Christ of whom the Bible speaks ; not the creed, but the Christ of whom the creed is true ; not the cross, but the Christ who died on it and lives for evermore.

If to-day, with much ignorance and imperfection, you are holding to the living Christ, the faith that you have towards Him will save you, and I would rather have a little faith in the right object than have any amount of faith in the wrong object. If a man holds with one hand a life buoy, it will save him ; whereas he might hold a block of iron with both hands and he would drown. I have met a good many people in the world who talk about their great faith, and they have had great faith in their great faith ; but it is a better thing to have a little faith in Christ than to have a great faith in your great faith. A great many are always looking at their faith until they can see nothing else, like a girl when she is first in love—she is always looking at her love and wondering whether it is good enough for her lover, and the more she thinks about it the less she thinks she has. The only way to make her love grow is not to think about it, but to think about the person she loves. The man who is always muffling up his throat will catch cold. The man who is always wondering whether he is ill or not will make himself ill. And the man who is always worrying about his faith will have no faith left to worry about. The only hope for the soul is to look at Christ.

But Christ says, Faith as a grain of mustard seed can move mountains and trees. What did He mean?

The mustard seed grows to a height of some twenty feet, almost a tree. There lies the tiny seed, saying :

"I cannot. I am sure I can never produce a growth of twenty feet."

Ah, wait! Thou wilt say something else presently. Away there is rich, deep soil saying to itself :

"Oh that I had some means by which to give vent to my slumbering strength, but I have no opportunity of pouring it forth."

Ah! if we could only bring these two together: this tiny seed that sighs its inability, and that soil that is conscious of all ability. If only that seed may abide in that soil, and that soil may pour itself through the tiny aperture of that seed, it will bear much fruit, it will realise its furthest possibilities.

Your faith is like the tiny grain. You think you will never be able to produce a holy and useful life. But the great God is there, nearer than words can tell, and if only your soul can come into living union with the eternal God, there is nothing that He will not be able to effect by your instrumentality.

There are five processes. First, there must be contact ; second, solitude ; third, death ; fourth, reception ; and fifth, individuality.

First, *there must be contact.* As long as that seed

is isolated from the soil—in the barn, on the shelf, or in the sack—it abides by itself alone. Only when it is brought into contact with the soil can there be any fruit. And as long as your life is apart from God, as long as you are trying to justify yourself, to sanctify yourself, or to work for God, the true fruit of your life is impossible.

I do not say you are not a good man, or that you are not trying to do good, but you have not learned yet that apart from God you can do nothing; that all the fussy activity of your life—running hither and thither, putting out startling advertisements of sermons, preaching brilliant essays, organising your church—shuts God out and amounts to nothing. It fills the newspapers, it attracts the attention of men; but it is of wood, hay or stubble, for the only thing which is permanent in a man's life is that of God which goes into it. As long as you are apart from God, though trying to serve God in a strange anomaly, you are missing the true power of your life. There must be more than ever contact between your soul and God—a perpetual and unbroken contact, the life hidden—hidden with Christ in God, as the seed is hidden in the soil.

Get out of sight! This perpetual publicity, this living for the eye of man, this trying to please men, there is too much of you in it all. Be buried in the soil, and there will be some chance that you will do work which will live.

Second, *there must be solitude*. The little seed falls into the earth to be wholly isolated from its companions, lying there month after month beneath the envelope of frost and snow. In silence and solitude it waits.

This comes to a man very often in a sick chamber, or when people turn against him. How many a man or woman has felt this sense of loneliness with God! Sometimes the church has turned from its pastor, and acquaintance or friend has looked shyly upon the soul which has given itself up to God. The little seed drops alone into its tiny grave, and lies in contact with the soil; and so the soul full often, being stripped of every human help and comfort, is brought face to face for the first time in its life with God in Christ, and the one deep thought of the soul is that henceforth God shall fill its vision, and be its Alpha and Omega. When God is all in all, there is the promise of marvellous results.

Third, *there must be death*. Every tree grows out of a grave, and every stalk of wheat springs from a grave. When you walk over the autumn fields you are walking over a graveyard. Beneath your feet hundreds of tiny grains lie entombed. It might seem as if the grain has sacrificed its power to bless men with bread by lying there in a lonely grave of isolation and seclusion, while the very heart of it is being torn out of it by the insidious work of death

and corruption. Ah, that is so often the necessary step and condition of the coming harvest! Sometimes God takes a man into the chamber of death where he sees his little child or beloved wife fading from him. Sometimes He strips a man of his reliance upon his rhetorical eloquence, upon his brilliant gifts, or upon all those habits and associations and reinforcements in his own life upon which he had been accustomed to rely, and he has to die to all.

The story is told of Tauler, the great preacher, that before the days of Luther he filled the cathedral at Strasburg with an enthusiastic audience. Across the hills there came Nicholas, a simple Swiss, who was deeply versed in the Word of God. He said to him :

“ I want to confess to you.”

While listening to the confession of the peasant, Tauler found himself confessing—confessing that after all his life had been a failure. Through the peasant he heard the voice of God saying to him :

“ Tauler, great preacher, thou must die; thou must die before thou canst truly bear fruit.”

He tore himself away and went alone for a year into his monastery cell, and there God stripped him of his reliance upon his eloquence and brilliance and upon his force and power as a man.

At the end of twelve months he came out of that cell and stood again in his pulpit. The church was

crowded with the élite of the city. But half way through the sermon he broke utterly down, and the congregation dispersed, saying :

“ Ah, our great preacher is spoiled.”

A week after he began to speak to a few humble people that gathered still in the church, and to pour out the sermons which are still blessing hundreds and thousands of readers.

In the early part of our life we feel strong, and say that we will prevail by our thinking, our learning, our eloquence, that we are going to carry the world before us ; but there comes a time in life when we find that all that doesn't really count, and we bow down before God, saying : “ Lord God, I have done with it.” That moment we lay hold upon resources of divine power that begin to flood our lives. The minister may no longer produce brilliant sermons, but he gives messages—he no longer works for God, but God works through him. That is death to self.

The fourth stage is very beautiful—*receptivity*.

Away down in its little grave, as the spring comes, there is a gentle knock at the door of the little seed, which has lost its waterproof coat. It is the knock of Mother Nature, which is God. She says :

“ May I come in ? ”

The seed, from within, cries : “ I have nothing to give thee. I am broken, helpless, torn, and at the end of myself.”

But Mother Nature says, "May I come in?"
 "Thou canst if thou wilt."

The door is opened, and Mother Nature pours a tiny, trickling stream of her wonderful energy into the perforated, lacerated, broken mustard seed; and the pulse of life is felt within, forcing down the rootlet into the soil, and forcing up a green spire which makes its way through the heavy clay that conceals it, until at last the little green shoot raises its head above the surface of the field, and looks around and says:

"Perhaps I can after all! If Mother Nature goes on pouring her energy into me, there is nothing that I can't do."

So the root gets deeper, and the spire grows higher. It is not the seed; it is Mother Nature in the seed. It is not you, but God in you. It is no longer the fussy, active, restless running hither and thither, imitating this man or that, and searching for all the brilliant things that other people have said and then linking them together into one patchwork and holding up before your people, like Joseph's coat of many colours; but it is God who speaks through you. God is working in you to will and to do His good pleasure, and you working out all the good works that God works in, and energising, according to the working of Him that energiseth within you mightily.

If you apprehend it, this truth may revolutionise

your life as it did mine ; because there will never more be anything impossible to you. A mountain in front of you does not matter if God works through you ; it is moved into the sea. There is simply nothing impossible to the man who has learned the art of being a channel for God.

The fifth point is *individuality*. The mustard seed produces mustard growth ; the grain of wheat, wheat growth ; the acorn, oak growth. George Müller lets God into his soul, and Ashley Down is covered with orphan houses. Spurgeon lets God into his soul, and you have the Tabernacle, and volumes of sermons, and the orphan house, and Pastors' College. Moody lets God into his soul, and Northfield and Chicago, books distributed through the world, hundreds and thousands of souls won for God, are the result of a life that towers over the continents.

Did you ever notice that there is scarcely a miracle that Jesus did apart from somebody's faith ? Christ on earth always needed the seed of somebody's faith through which to produce the growth of miracle. You think the eleventh of John is the story of the resurrection of Lazarus, but I am not sure. I think it is the story of the resurrection of Martha. The Lord Jesus comes to Bethany and finds Lazarus is dead. He must have sympathising faith through which to work, as a pivot for Him to work on. The

disciples are no good, they are too panic-stricken. Mary is at home in the house. So He sets to work on Martha, and begins to reveal her possibilities. Faith lives on promises, so Christ put in the promise :

“Your brother shall rise again.”

“Oh, yes,” says Martha, “of course he will rise at the last day!”

That is what we are always doing—we think that wonderful things happen before we are born and after we are dead ; that heaven touches the earth at each horizon, but is so far above us where we stand. But Christ says to Martha :

“Talk about the last day! Wait for the last day! I AM the resurrection!”

Martha had to think about that for a time.

After a while they got to the grave. Christ must have sympathising faith to work with, and so He said :

“Martha, didn’t I tell you that *if you believed* you would see the glory of God?”

I suppose she answered Him with a gleam of returning faith, and as soon as He saw that He was able to use her, working with her as His collaborator, so to speak, and Lazarus came forth.

Think no more about your faith, but about Christ. Be quiet before God. Open your whole soul to Him that He may sweep through your life, and work

through you. Everything in life depends on whether we work for God or allow God to work through us. Yield then your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. Keep your will adjusted with God's will, and your heart open to Him, and expect God to work through you for the removal of mountains or sycamine trees.

How often that story of the agonised parents comes back to our thought, who brought their demon-possessed boy to the Lord. "If thou canst do anything for us, have mercy upon us and help us," was their pitiful request; as though they were far from being sure that the Lord had power enough to cope with and remove their awful trouble.

And our Lord, in effect, said, You put the *if* in the wrong place. There is an *if*, but it is not on My side but yours. "If thou canst *believe*, all things are possible to him that believeth." It was as though the Saviour looked around for faith, as small as a point, on which to rest the lever of His Almighty Power. And when the father cried out with tears, "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief." He took no notice of the unbelief, and laid hold of the tiny residuum of faith. This was enough; through these small straits, the ocean of His love would flow—

“The most impossible of all,
Is that from sin I e'er should cease ;
Yet shall it be, I know it shall,
Jesus, look to Thy Faithfulness ;
Since nothing is too hard for Thee,
All things are possible to me.”

HEART REST

“Ye shall find rest unto your souls.”—*Matt. xi. 29.*

XX

HEART REST

I HAVE left out of my addresses a great many themes, such as justification, and adoption, and inspiration, and the second premillennial advent, all of which I steadfastly hold. I have tried to hold up to you the doctrines of the inner life, not the objective, but the subjective side of Christianity. But in expounding the latter you must not suppose that I do not with equal tenacity hold the objective, the former.

I hardly know how to finish this series, except by speaking upon the rest of God. If I can only be the Joshua to conduct you into rest, my work will be worthily finished; for the climax of the teaching of the inner life is always the perfect rest of the heart.

The voice that breathed o'er Eden spoke of rest. In Gen. ii. 3 we are told of the rest of God, and upon that day there fell no night, because the rest of God has no shadow in it, and never terminates. God has left open the door. It stands wide open, and every heart which He has made may share in it. A rest which is full of work; but like the

cyclone, all the atoms of which revolve in turbulent motion around the central cavity of rest, so do all the activities of God revolve around His deepest heart which is tranquil and serene. And it is possible, if you and I learn the lesson, amid anxiety and sorrow and trial and pressure of work always to carry a heart so peaceful, so still, so serene as to be like the depth of the Atlantic which is not disturbed by the turbulent winds that sweep its surface.

Now this rest of God spoken of in Genesis was not exhausted by the Sabbath, or by Canaan ; for after each of these had existed for many a century God still spoke of His rest as being unoccupied. And at last in Matt. xi. 28, 29, a simple peasant (so He seemed) stood up amid a number of peasants and fisher-folk and others, and said :

“ On this breast of Mine is a pillow for every heavy heart. My breast is broad enough, My heart is deep enough. I offer Myself to all weary ones in every clime and age as Shiloh, the rest-giver” for Shiloh in Him had come.

One feels that here is the accent of Deity. He says :

“ I am meek and lowly in heart.”

And yet He assumes to Himself the prerogative of giving rest to all that labour and are heavy-laden. How can you possibly account for the meeting of humility so great with pretensions so enormous in

this meekest of men unless He be more than man, the Son of God incarnate? You will notice that as He stands there upon some mountain slope, with Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum on the landlocked lake of Galilee at His feet, He speaks of two kinds of rest, the rest He *gives*, and the deeper rest which He shows us how to *find*. "I will give you rest," He says, and then in a softer undertone He whispers: "Take My yoke and you shall find rest."

I will not speak now about the rest He *gives*—rest from the guilt of sin, rest from its penalty, rest from conviction, rest from an accusing conscience, rest from the dread and the wrath of God. That rest He gave you, beloved, when you knelt years ago at the cross-foot, and from those parched lips the dying Christ, your priest and intercessor, gave rest unto your soul, and being justified by faith you had peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

I will not speak of this but of something deeper, because I find that there are tens of thousands of Christians who have got the first rest, but have not got the second. They could look death in the face without wavering, but they cannot look panic, disaster, bereavement, pain or trial in the face without disquiet.

"You shall *find* rest," but you must look for it. I want to show you *where* to find it, and *how*; in three ways, which are one, for they converge in one.

I

First. *You must take His yoke.*

Now, at first sight it appears ridiculous that those who labour and are heavy laden should find rest by having the imposition of a new yoke or burden, however light. He says: "My yoke is easy, My burden is light." But then, even an easy yoke with a light burden imposed on labouring and weary souls would surely not give them rest. How can it be? Ah, listen! It is not a yoke that Jesus imposes, but it is the yoke that He Himself carried, and a yoke by the very nature of it includes two. He says then—standing beneath a yoke—to you, weary soul:—

"Come hither and share My yoke with me, and we will pull the plow together through the long furrow of life."

I have been told that there are farms in the West so large that you may start a furrow in the morning, and pursue it all day, and only finish it at night, returning the next day. Whether that be true or not I am not here to say, but it will serve my purpose. One day when I was at Northfield, Mr Moody took me to Mount Hermon school. He had a yoke of beautiful white oxen, and he told me that when one of these oxen was being yoked in, if the other happened to be on the far side of the farmstead it would come trotting up and stand beside the other until it was yoked in also. Jesus stands to-day with

the yoke upon his shoulder, and He calls to each one, and says:—

“Come and share My yoke, and let us plow together the long furrow of your life. I will be a true yoke-fellow to you. The burden shall be on me. Only keep step with Me, and you shall find rest to your soul.”

Christ's yoke was His Father's will. “I delight to do Thy will, O God.” Now it is not to my purpose to discuss here the human and the divine side of Christ's character. But to me it is as though Christ curtained off His divine attributes, as we might allow the curtain as of a theatre to drop from the roof and to shut off the whole of the apse behind. Any moment the curtain could be lifted, and I suppose you would still grant that apse to be a part of the building, but it would be curtained off for a definite purpose. So for the purposes of understanding our human life in all its aspects, our Lord voluntarily emptied Himself, laid aside the use of His divine attributes, and was content to live as Elijah, or John the Baptist, or as you and I have to live, a life of perpetual dependence upon God.

Directly a creature lives so, it has to take God's plan, and then to take God's power. Whenever God gives a plan, He gives the soul everything which is necessary for its completion. So when Moses on the mountain saw the plan of the tabernacle, every diamond and pearl and piece of gold and silver and

wood and carved work and embroidery complete, painted by the rainbow upon the cloud or standing before him like a fair vision, he knew that down below amongst the people he could find a duplicate for everything that he had seen. So Jesus Christ was always looking at the Father's will, the Father's plan, and then seeking by faith the Father's power. That was His yoke.

It came into evidence so often. For instance, when He healed on the Sabbath day, and they accused Him, He said: "I could not help it. My Father worketh hitherto, and I could do no other than work out what My Father wrought in." He went across the lake to give His disciples a vacation. Five thousand hungry men broke in, and in their advent He saw the intrusion of His Father's plan, and adopted it. He started for the home of Jairus. A woman with a touch arrested Him, and in her slight touch He saw again His Father's will and plan, and waited to heal her. Then He moved leisurely forward, knowing that at the house of Jairus He would have sufficient power to raise his daughter. And in the garden it was His Father's will beneath which He bowed His meek soul, saying: "Not My will, but Thine!"

In the context also there is a most lovely illustration of this. He had been wrestling from the human side (so to speak) with the great problem—why God hides things from the wise and prudent, and reveals

them unto babes ; and He said : " Even so, Father." The Revised Version translates it : " Yea, Father," but it ought to have translated it : " Yes, Father." Christ's life was a perpetual " YES " to God. And if you want to live a life of rest you must pace the weary furrow of your life with an upturned face, saying : " Yes, yes, yes." Always yes !

A gentleman went into a deaf and dumb institution in London to inspect it, and at the close the boys and girls were gathered at the foot of the platform. He wrote on the slate :

" Why did God make you deaf and dumb, and me able to hear and speak ? "

A sob went through the audience. Then a little boy came down the aisle, and took the chalk and wrote the answer beneath :

" Even so, Father : for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

That boy said " yes " to God.

Someone says : " If I always had to do with God, I would not mind. If it was disaster, shipwreck, fire, anything which I could trust to God, I hope I am Christian enough to bow to it. But what worries me, and makes me feverish and restless, is that things come to me from my fellow-men. I cannot say ' yes ' to those."

But God's permission and appointments are equally His will. Job thought so, for though Satan

blasted his prosperity he said: "The Lord hath taken away." Joseph thought so, for he said: "It was not you that sent me down here, but God." David thought so, because he said: "God hath let Shimei curse; let him curse." Jesus thought so, because when Judas came into the garden to arrest Him He said: "The cup that My Father giveth Me to drink, shall I not drink it?" Though it had been brought to His lip by a Judas, it had been mixed by His Father.

Now it seems to me as if you and I are enclosed in God. An arrow comes from the enemy's bow. A man that hates me writes an anonymous letter. Someone defrauds me. Some woman sets an unkind story afloat about me. The evil travels towards me. If God liked, He could let the arrow pass this way or that. But if my God opens and permits the evil to pass through His encompassing power to my heart, by the time it has passed through God to me, it has become God's will for me. He permits it, and that is His will for my life. I do not say that that man will escape his just doom. God will deal with him. I am not going to worry myself about him. In early days I would have taken infinite pains to avert the evil that men wished to do me, or perhaps to repay them, or to show that the evil was perfectly unwarranted. I confess that I have ceased to worry about it. If you silence one man you will start twenty more. It is ever so much

better for peace of mind to accept the will of God, to accept His permission and His appointment, to look up into His face, and say :

“ Even so, Father.”

Someone says: “ Sir, before you go on, I want you to answer this question. Five months ago I had the loveliest little baby boy that ever mother fondled. My husband and I perfectly doted upon that little fellow. He took sickly, and we hung over him and prayed for him, and did everything we could for him. He closed his eyes one day in death, and I have never been able to feel resigned since then. Am I very wicked?”

“ What do you mean by ‘not feeling resigned’?”

“ Well, I shed floods of tears when I am alone.”

“ My dear woman, that is all right. Jesus wept. He gave you power to weep, and tears relieve the over-tired, over-wrought system. Cry on till God shall wipe every tear away.”

Do you say: “ Sir, I do not quite mean that; I feel as though I cannot forgive God about it. I cannot feel as though I can say yes.”

“ No, because you are beginning in the wrong part of your nature. God asks you to *will* submission, and the *emotions* will follow suit. You cannot begin by *feeling* resigned, but you can begin by *willing* resignation. Say to Him: ‘I will Thy will.’”

“ But I do not feel it.”

“Never mind! Say it a hundred times a day: ‘I will Thy will,’ and within a week you will change your note, and instead you will say: ‘I choose Thy will.’ By saying that a hundred times a day for a week, you will change your note again: ‘I delight in Thy will.’”

We begin by willing it, we come to choose it, and we end by delighting in it. And that is the secret of rest.

Will you take the yoke of God to-day? God's will comes to us (first) by His Spirit, (second) by His Word, and (thirdly) by circumstances. And I think it is in circumstances that we are most tested. It is just there that we have to meet God, and just as in some electric light the two points have to come very close together before the light shines between them, so the point of your will and the point of God's will have to touch, before the light of acquiescence and peace flashes out.

There are some people who bear the yoke because they cannot help it; there are other people who *take* it. Have you *taken* it? Take it now by your will. You have lost your dear husband or wife, or you have lost your money, or you have lost your lover. Now it is no use running away into society. I meet with many girls who have been disappointed in love, and they have gone into society, and made themselves

hard, and steeled themselves against love in every way, while they have been running away from themselves, from God. You will have to come to an end at last. You will learn to look up into the face of the Crucified, and say :

“Jesus, I take the yoke.”

You know when you are driving a young horse, if that horse frets and kicks, it simply gets itself into a lather, but it has to go your way after all. Much better for the young horse if, instead of plunging and kicking and fretting, it would only take the collar and the bit right away. That is what you are—a young colt ; and you are foaming and fretting and working yourself into a fury.

You will never get right in that way. Come back, and quietly take what God permits, and understand that in that there is the secret of rest ; and a new tranquillity will come. You will have your floods of tears, but you will say : “I take the will of God.”

“Anoint your head and wash your face.” I like that verse. We go about whining : “O dear ! my suffering !” And so we give people the conception that God is very hard, and everybody pities us, and it is rather comfortable to be pitied. You feel that you are somebody if you excite somebody else’s pity, and in that you get your reward. But if you anoint your head, and wash your face, and put on your sweetest look, and dress your nicest, and live

your sweet orderly self, hiding your pain in your heart, God who seeth in secret will reward you openly, and you shall live to see what you thought absolutely necessary to your life to be a handful of withered leaves. I thank God for my *dis*-appointments, because I see now that they were *His* appointments.

II. *There is another method by which you can find rest in your soul.* This one is *by faith*. "We which have *believed* do enter into rest" (Hebrews iv. 3).

The point there is that faith has two hands. With one hand faith is always handing over, and with the other she is always reaching down; the up and the down life. The angels went up on the ladder carrying Jacob's worries, and they came down the ladder bringing God's help. Mind you have the two directions in your life. Send them up, and let them come down.

Do you know what it is when you are worried to kneel down and say to God: "Father, take this," and by one definite act to hand over the worry to God and leave it there? I heard a lady say that she had been in the habit of kneeling by her bedside and handing things over to God, and then jumping into her bed, and by a strong rope pulling in all the things after her. Now that is not the best way. When you really *trust* God, you put a thing into His hands, and then you do not worry yourself

or Him. If there is one thing that annoys me more than another, it is for a man to keep saying to me: "Will you do this?" And I say: "Certainly," and then he keeps sending postcards or letters to me all the time to work me up. I say:

"That man does not trust me."

So when I have really handed a thing over to God I leave it there, and I dare not worry for fear it would seem as if I mistrusted Him. But I keep looking up to Him,—I cannot help doing that,—and say:

"Father, I am trusting."

Like my dog at home: he used to worry to be fed at dinner, but he never got any food that way. But lately he has adopted something which always conquers me: he sits under the table, and puts one paw on my knee. He never barks, never leaps around, never worries me, but he sits under the table with that one paw on my knee, and that conquers me; I cannot resist the appeal. Although my wife says I never must do it, I keep putting little morsels under the table.

Soul, do you know what I am talking about? That is the way to live—with your hand on God's knee. Say:

"My God, I am not going to worry; I am not going to fret; but there is my hand, and I wait until the time comes, and Thou shalt give me the desire of my heart."

Take His yoke, and trust Him.

III. *Lastly, reckon on God's faithfulness.*

I remember so well Hudson Taylor coming to my church the first time I ever met him. He stepped on the platform and opened the Bible to give an address, and said: "Friends, I will give you the motto of my life," and he turned to Mark xi. 22: "Have faith in God." The margin says: "Have the faith of God," but Hudson Taylor said it meant: "Reckon on God's faith to you." He continued: "All my life has been so fickle. Sometimes I could trust, sometimes I could not, but when I could not trust then I reckoned that God would be faithful." There is a text that says: "If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful, He cannot deny Himself." And I sometimes go to God about a thing, and say: "My God, I really cannot trust Thee about this, I cannot trust Thee to pull me through this expenditure of money with my means, but I reckon on Thy faithfulness." And when you cease to think about your faith, and, like Sarah, reckon Him faithful, your faith comes without your knowing it, and you are strong.

This is my parting text: "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." 1 Cor. i. 9.

Fellowship! The same Greek word occurs in Luke v. When Jesus was in Peter's boat on the lake, and the net was breaking with the big haul of fish, then Peter beckoned to his partner. So

that we might read the text thus: "God is faithful, by whom ye were called into *partnership with His Son.*" Wonderful conception — that Jesus Christ came to share my guilt and sorrow, that I might be lifted into partnership with Him forever!

If a New York business-man wanted to start his son in business in London, he would call some old and confidential clerk into fellowship with his son, and send them over together. Suppose the old clerk should take one of the most expensive sites in the city of London, put his name down for an immense rent, and open a big business, a man might come to him and say:

"You have launched out?"

"Yes," he says, "I was sent to do it."

"Have you any money? Are you worth much?"

"No."

"Have you no money to fall back on?"

"No."

"Then, how do you dare to enter upon this amazing expenditure?"

"Because I have been sent by the head of our house to open this place. He told me to go ahead, and that he from New York would meet all the outlay. I have worked for him for thirty years, and he has never failed me yet. He is faithful, and he will stand at my back to the end."

Now, brothers, you and I and every Christian

worker have been called to rest and work in Christ. Behind you is your faithful God, and He cannot fail. If you will take the yoke of Christ, if you will hand things over to Christ, and if you will count upon God at your back, I do not mind what happens,— your heart will be at rest. Like the shell which, taken from the ocean, repeats the murmur that she learned in the ocean depths, so your heart will repeat the deep sweet music of the heart of God, out of which you have come.

THE SECRET OF FRUITFULNESS

“I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.”—*Genesis* xvii. 6.

XXI

THE SECRET OF FRUITFULNESS

WHEN God says to a soul, "I will make thee exceeding fruitful," it becomes all others carefully to notice the circumstances and conditions under which that promise is made.

There has been a great amount of heart-searching throughout the church in recent months because of the failure of conversions. Great communities of Christians, after toiling for a whole twelvemonth, have been compelled to confess that their ranks are not increased by a single unit. Ministers, well furnished for their work, have had no sheaves to bring from the whitened fields, and the total aggregate of conversions from the world hardly avails to meet the drain caused by an inevitable leakage. Oh! if God should say of some hundreds of us, "I will make you exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of you," with what new hope we should anticipate our work! Would it not be a day for which all other days were made and waiting, if the Eternal God were to speak to some child of His by these lines, and say, "Thy name shall no more be called

Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham, the father of a great multitude?"

I. *The Time.*—"When Abram was ninety years old and nine." He was an old man and well stricken in age. According to the laws of human life it was not likely that he should have a child. Ask any men belonging to the neighbouring clans, who would be Abram's heir; they would have answered:

"The son of a slavewoman, Ishmael by name. There is no child by Sarah, his wedded wife, and no likelihood of there being one. Poor man, it seems strange that all his vast possessions should go to such an heir!"

So men talked! And it was at such a time that God stepped in and said:

"I will make thee exceeding fruitful."

Years ago you thought you could effect something in your life. You had energy, genius, the grace of oratory, the power of personal attraction and fascination. You could sway men — men gathered around you and recognised their born leader. Perhaps you could organise efficiently; beneath your word and deft hand, a rabble would fall into rank and become an army. The faculty of selection was yours; intrepid courage, wise counsel, quick sympathy. Possibly you had money; you thought it was simply a question of employing the best talent and equipping your workers in the best

style. But all this is over now, and you are compelled reluctantly to confess that the total residuum is disappointing. At the best, our Ishmaels are like wild asses' colts. And you are coming to think that the remainder of your life will never rise above the dead levels of the past, will never achieve any large success for God, will never be fruitful in the conversion of men.

"I will do my best," you say, "building up believers, if I may not win the ungodly. I can train children, but never bear them. Mine the fashioning of the stones, but not the quarrying."

To such God comes with His assurance: "I am able to make thee exceeding fruitful." Fulfil the Divine conditions, and there is no reason why the great multitude should not hail you, Parent!

"It cannot be! Nature forbids. The experience of the past forbids. Declining brilliancy of gift and energy of power forbid. Other branches recently grafted into the vine may stoop to the ground with their heavy fruitage, but I shall always be as a dry tree."

Wait! Ponder these words again. Write them upon the tablets of thine heart. "When Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared unto him, and said, I am the Almighty God." "What nature cannot do, Almightyness can. What human energy cannot effect, the Divine Spirit will. Till now thy might has hindered Me, has forced Me

to wait. In these many decades My might has been thwarted, frustrated, neutralised by thy trust in thyself. But now that this has passed, there is room for My Omnipotence to work, and I, the Almighty God, swear by Myself, since I can swear by no greater, that if thou wilt fulfil the conditions of My covenant, I will make thee abundantly fruitful, and thou shalt be father to a great multitude."

II. *The Condition*.—"Walk before Me, and be thou perfect."

This is the one prime and irreversible condition for the life which shall become fruitful. We have walked before our friends, our neighbours, our church and the world, very eager to win their regard and approval. Each step we have taken with the consciousness that we were being watched, and with the secret desire that it should be approved. All that must be changed. "Walk before Me," He says, Whose eyes are as a flame of fire. "Let your eye be single. Let your intention be Godward. Let it be your one aim to please Me. The eyes of the Lord run to and fro in all the earth. . . ." "My eyes are ever toward the Lord."

The word rendered "perfect" does not mean that moral blamelessness with which we are accustomed to associate it. It connotes whole-heartedness, entire surrender, absolute consecration up to the

measure of light. Be perfect; there must be no reserve. Be perfect; there must be no Babylonish garment withheld from the fire. Be perfect; there must be no gold, silver or precious stones, which are not freely exposed to the searching tongue of flame. Be perfect; there must be no lowing of the herds or bleating of the flocks which have been surrendered to God.

It is the prime condition of fruitfulness. Have we conformed to it? Is there a glad acquiescence to God's every command? Have we presented ourselves as a living sacrifice? Are we willing that God should have all? Do we recognise His will as the one blessed code of life? And are we prepared to walk like this, step by step, though the feet bleed as we plod through the tangled brake or pass over the jagged rock? Then take heart, for it is to such that God says:

“I will make thee exceeding fruitful.”

III. *The certainty.*—“I will *make My covenant* between Me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.”

There will be no doubt about the matter. Where God binds himself by a covenant He does not draw back. When He passes His word it binds Him. Have the waters of the deluge ever returned to drown the world? Has He lost one soul included in the everlasting agreement ratified by the Blood of

the Cross? Has He broken the covenants of day or night, of the return of the seasons, of His care for man?

God's covenants originate with Himself: "between *Me* and thee." All the promises emanate from God's heart. It is of grace that He says, "I will make thee exceeding fruitful." We cannot earn, or deserve, or win; we just fall on our face and let God talk right on.

God's covenant is individual and personal: "between *Me* and *thee*." Every believer is included in the covenant entered into with his Head, but there are great moments in the history of the soul when God accosts it—in a moment of reverie or solitude—and says, "From to-day, behold I will make My covenant with thee. I am for thee, be thou for Me. I am all for thee, be thou all for Me. I will give Myself to thee in ever-deepening manifestation, if thou wilt give thyself to Me in ever-deepening consecration."

Has God ever said this to you? Get alone and give Him the opportunity. Recite the provisions of the new covenant, till one of them sparkles out as if struck by a ray direct from the Throne. And let this be your attitude specially when you partake of the Lord's Supper, the emblem of the Blood by which the covenant was ratified. To your wistful soul God will draw nigh, and whilst you are fallen to your face in humility and wonder, He will talk to

you and say: "Behold, I make My covenant with thee."

IV. *The sign.*—"This is My covenant: ye shall be circumcised."

Can we ever in this connection forget the words of the apostle: "In Christ also ye are circumcised with a circumcision made without hands in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ?"

This, too, is inevitable. There can be no spiritual fruitfulness which has not been preceded by the use of the sharp knife. Here is one of those profound revelations of the purpose of God in the symbolism of the Old Testament which establishes its divine origin. How wonderful that before Abraham could be the father of a great multitude, he had to submit to suffering! But how precisely the figure fits the spiritual analogy which we are considering. In those who are to be spiritually fruitful there must be the putting off of the old habits, the affections and evil desires of the old nature, the desire of vain-glory and admiration and praise; there must be the environment of the Cross.

An eminent servant of God once said that he hedged himself around with the Cross of Christ, so that whatever advances were made to him or words said to him, all might come to him through that hedge of fire. Nothing less will avail.

Do you shrink from this sharp cutting-off? Remember it is made without hands, but it is the circumcision of Christ—that is, it is effected by hands which were nailed to the Cross for very love, and whose gentle touch often brought healing and comfort to the sore-suffering ones. Into Thy hands, O Son of God, we commit our spirits, that Thou shouldest free us of everything which hinders our fruitfulness.

Take these assurances. God quickeneth the dead, and calleth the things that are not as if they were. In hope, believe in hope. Without being weakened in faith dare to consider yourself now as good as dead. Dare to look at the deadness of the Church and neighbourhood with which you are associated. Then look unto the promise of God. Dwell on it. So only will you not waver through unbelief, so only will you wax strong through faith. Give Him glory, count on the faithfulness of Him that promised, and the titter of incredulity shall be turned into the Isaac-laughter, as you welcome a spiritual seed which shall multiply, as the years pass, like the grains on the shore and the stars of the Milky Way.

LIFE A POEM

"We are His Workmanship."—Eph. ii. 10.

XXII

LIFE A POEM

MAN has but one life to live, and each must be desirous that that life should tell to the very uttermost for God and for humanity. In Ephesians ii. 10, we find words which will help us as long as we live:

“We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

The word “workmanship” in the Greek is “poem.” We are God’s poems. I suppose that each life is a definite thought of God. He has incarnated one original idea in each of us. As no poet repeats himself, but puts a distinct thought in each ode or poem, so God never repeats Himself in any human life. He breaks the mould as soon as He completes His work. Let us remember, therefore, to be original. I lost ten of the best years of my life by trying to imitate other people. Although we may all derive help from the study of biography and from friendship, yet we must always be going back to God to know what He means for us, and

then ask Him to work out in our lives His thought to the very highest possibility.

Are you prepared to accept this, and to yield yourself to God day by day that He may accomplish through you the full purpose of His will, and give a listening world His poem of power or purity or love?

This epistle to the Ephesians is the epistle of "Inness." That is, it is the epistle in which from first to last Paul uses the little preposition "in," and tells us what we are in Christ Jesus. Just as this whole creation slept in the mind of God to be elaborated step by step to its consummation, so the whole Church of Jesus Christ lay in the mind of God before the mountains were brought forth or ever He had formed the earth. And you and I were appointed to a definite place in that wonderful body. What that place was will not be made fully clear to us until we stand before God in the eternal light, but it is comforting to know that there was a definite place in the purpose of God for you and me.

Doesn't that give a new meaning and dignity to your life, that it is the working out of the conception of God, and that every day you must try so to walk as to realise the purpose which was in the mind of God when He created you in Christ Jesus? As one looks out upon men and women and things, life seems so full of commonplaces and little anxieties, worries, troubles and misfortunes, that one is apt to get into the way of supposing it does not matter

very much how he lives. But if we remember that there is an eternal purpose in Christ in our regeneration, we shall always try to act worthily of our high calling in Christ Jesus.

The greatest thing you can do in this world is to live a saintly, holy, lovely life. All the small things of your life, the worries, anxieties, the troubles, your location and environment, the lines you are compelled to follow—all these have been contrived by God to give you the best opportunity possible to become what He wants you to be. God could have made you anything He liked. He could have made that woman a queen; He could have made that man a millionaire or a prince. But out of all the myriad opportunities of this world God Almighty chose for you just that position in which you find yourself to-day, because He knew that was the one place in which you could come nearest His ideal. It may be there is some awful sorrow in your life. It may be someone is wearing you away by constant, tiresome worry and trial. But always bear in mind that nothing is so small as not to have been contrived by God to make you as much His ideal as it is possible.

Now face your life. You have been fretting, murmuring, envying, and longing to be free; overlooking the beautiful things because of two or three miserable ones. You have not heeded what would elevate and comfort you because you are so op-

pressed with what hurts you. That is not the true way to live ; but every day to learn your lesson and every day to bring your will to the will of God, that your will and His may coincide.

GOD'S PERMISSION.

But someone says, "I am quite prepared to admit that my present position is in general the result of God's choice, but not that the troubles and worries that come to my life from other people are God's choice. I draw a distinction between what God directly appoints and what comes to me through the intervention of other men and women."

I used to make that distinction once, but could find no rest while I did. Besides, I saw that you and I are enveloped in the care of God. Supposing a man out yonder shoots a poisoned arrow at me, in some newspaper article, or caustic remark, and it comes winging its way toward me. God Almighty might ward that arrow off by the shield of His protection. But supposing he lowers the shield and lets it reach my heart, has it not become His will for me? I therefore go through the world daring to believe that not one thing, however minute, occurs to me without being God's chisel chipping away a little more of myself and producing a more perfect likeness to the conception which was in His mind for me.

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One summer I was in Luther's country, and I took a trip through the pine forests. I do love the pine forests of Germany, so absolutely quiet, with their colonnades of trees like the colonnades of a temple. About noon I was extremely tired and exhausted, and coming out from the forest to the fringe of it I found a blackberry bush full of the choicest, richest, most enjoyable blackberries—I think I never tasted blackberries that were so luscious. Within ten minutes I had rifled that bush of all its produce. I was quite ashamed of myself, and said:

“I am sorry to have treated you in this way.”

But the bush said: “You need not be sorry. I have been waiting for you to come for the last three or four months. I was created for this. It is very lonely here, and I have kept vigil all through the winter storms and the long, dark nights until the spring came, when I began to prepare this banquet for you. I have had such pride in getting ready the basket of fruit that you have enjoyed. Now that you are satisfied, my year's work has received its crown.”

I thanked the bush, and said: “Good-bye. If I come again next year will you have another feast ready for me?”

“Yes,” said the bush.

And I answered: “You remind me of many a

lonely saint of God, who through the long months of pain and suffering is preparing a basket of fruit, of which, if no earthly saint partakes, the Master Himself will eat."

That is what I mean by being just where God wants us to be ; willing to stay at the stake without being bound because God has put us there, to keep standing quietly at our post amid pain and suffering, preparing baskets of fruit of which Jesus and our fellow believers may partake. Providing the fruits of a holy life in this world is fulfilling Christ's purpose for your life.

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"Created in Jesus Christ, unto good works, which God before prepared THAT WE SHOULD WALK IN THEM." You have not got to create your path, but to find it—not to cut your way through the tangled undergrowth, but to discover the path which your heavenly Father has prepared for you from the moment you first give yourself to Jesus, to the moment when you will be welcomed home. Never forget that you have been created for a prepared path. God, who knew exactly what was in the path, created you for the path and the path for you, and your life is simply the discovery of God's prepared path for that day. It may lie over green sward or down the steep incline ; it may be lonely and solitary or through the busy populace ; but your path, beloved friend, has been prepared for you

from the foundation of the world, by the wisdom and love of God.

There are two things, therefore, which are necessary for all of us. The first is to know the path, and the second is strength to walk in it. I want to speak a little on those two.

First, how may I know which is my prepared path, either for a day or for my life?

Heb. viii. 11 gives you a never-to-be-forgotten challenge, which (in point of fact) is repeated four times in the Bible—and when the Bible says one thing four times you may depend upon it it is well worth your notice: "They shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." Preceding the account of the new covenant, you have God's word to Moses: "See that thou make all things according to the pattern shown thee on the mount." Be still before God. In that silence your own restlessness, your own energy, the activity of your flesh will die down. You will put aside a good deal of what you originate, and you will learn to see God's plan and pattern, which will probably be a very different thing to that of your own invention. Be in prayer, open your heart to God, and presently the pattern of the tabernacle, with every letter and tassel and hanging, will appear

before you, and then you will go down into the vales beneath to produce what God hath revealed.

And remember when God commands He provides the stuff. He never gave any plans to Moses for which provision was not made. If Moses had put in one thing extra he would have had to have a collection for it; but as long as he worked on God's pattern, God was responsible for the provision of the material.

Let me just indicate how you may know the path of God's will.

When I was crossing the Irish channel one dark, starless night I stood on the deck by the captain and asked him :

"How do you know Holyhead harbour on so dark a night as this?"

He said: "You see those three lights? Those three must line up behind each other as one, and when we see them so united we know the exact position of the harbour mouth."

When we want to know God's will there are three things which always concur—the inward impulse, the Word of God and the trend of circumstances. God in the heart, impelling you forward; God in His Book, corroborating whatever He says in the heart; and God in circumstances, which are always indicative of His will. Never start until these three things agree.

You may have an inward impulse to be a minister,

young man, but you have that invalid mother to support. Therefore the trend of circumstances and the inward impulse do not tally, and you must wait. If you do not know what to do next, stand still until you do. If God has not indicated the path beyond a certain point, remain quiet until He does. Throw the responsibility back on God.

There is a remarkable illustration in Acts xii. 12, of the way in which God leaves us to the action of our judgment, when our judgment is enough. Peter was in prison. He could not emerge, and the angel therefore came to him and led him out, the gate opening of its own accord. You will always find that the gates will open of their own accord if you are in the company of God's angels.

The angel then took Peter through two streets, because he was so dazed he thought he was dreaming. But when the night air had revived him the angel left him. "And when he had considered the thing he came to the house" of John Mark. You see the angel was there when he was dazed, but when he woke up the angel said :

"Now, Peter, you have your senses. You can find your own way without me, and so I will leave you."

God will lead you by your own judgment, and when judgment is enough, don't expect a miracle, for God uses his miracles sparingly.

The more stupid you are to understand the more

you must rely on God. I think stupid people really get on the best with God if they are content to be stupid and not seem wise. Thomas was so dull—he lived a week behind the other apostles; but you know how eager Jesus was to explain to Thomas the mystery of His resurrection, and came specially to help him.

If I had in my family three or four children who were really bright and one who was stupid and obtuse in his intellect, and I told the children that on a Saturday afternoon I would go with them to the woods to gather the spring flowers if they would meet me at a certain place—perhaps I might find the little fellow's face still dull and cloudy because he could not understand my meaning. Would I let him miss the treat when he needed it so much more than the others? Am I going to punish him for his stupidity, which may in some part be attributable to me? No, I take him on my knee and explain it to him again. If still he does not understand, I say to him :

“Wait right here, and after dinner I will take you with me.”

So the stupid child gets more of my kind and loving help than the others who have gone on and are ready to meet me at the appointed place.

If you are one of God's stupid children who cannot catch His meaning, stand still until God takes you by the hand and says : “Come along with Me.” God is bound to make you know.

When you have asked God to guide your judgment, and have thought it well out and acted as you thought the wisest, seeking His will and moving forward, suppose you find yourself in some great difficulty? That does not prove that you have made a mistake, or that you are not in God's path. It simply proves that any other path would have been impassable. There is a way under the difficulty, or around or above it, and presently it will be made passable. Whenever you decide on a course, trusting God and asking Him to block you if you are wrong, go on; for if it were not His path for you He would have told you. Dare to go on.

When you know what your path is, you must learn to appropriate the power which is within your reach to walk in it. For these "good works" there is a sufficiency in Jesus Christ, in whom we were created. For every good work there is a counterpart of grace in Christ. The pain, the sorrow, the worry are all pre-determined, and the grace for them all is in Christ. And further, the special form of trial was intended to compel you to take from Christ what otherwise you would have missed. Blind men were permitted to come to Christ to show that there was eye-salve in Him; deaf and dumb men were permitted to come to elicit hearing and speech; dead men were brought to Christ for

all the world to know the life that was in Christ. As I understand it, even sin can bring out qualities in God which otherwise would never have been realised.

Up to now you have probably been looking at some trial in your life with a great deal of anxiety, and you have been trying to cope with it and have been mastered by it, perpetually beaten down to the ground. That is only because Jesus wants to show you what He can do.

In Ireland a friend of mine once went to call on what we call a decayed Irish nobleman; that is, he had seen better days. He had a title, and was nominally the owner of a large tract of country. My friend passed in the gateway and proceeded up to the old ancestral house, but on reaching it he found there was only a housekeeper there. It was a lovely place, but she said that her master, the nobleman, might be found at the gate lodge which he had passed. My friend found that he was stricken with a strange disease, which led him to think that he had no money at all, and in order to economise he deserted his magnificent home, which he could well keep up, and live in the lodge.

It was a strange thing to do, wasn't it? But it is what you have been doing all your life. God meant you to live a royal life, and He put into Jesus Christ everything to enable you to live that life. You have seen the plan, and you have not dared to realise it

because you thought you had not capital enough, whereas in Jesus Christ God has put the fulness of His possession. "Blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ" (Eph. i. 3). "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. ii. 9). "His divine power hath given unto us all things" (2 Peter i. 3).

If ever God puts me forward to new responsibility I always go back to Him on an honourable understanding that He will give me more of His help.

You probably understand intellectually what I am saying, but have you never learned the art of TAKING from Christ? If I were to say to you, "Stop praying; you have prayed enough; give up praying and take," would you understand what I meant? You have been praying to God as though you had to wring it from Him with the greatest difficulty. When you have prayed for a thing, take it! At the end of your prayer, stop still and take!

"Believe that ye receive, and ye shall have" (Mark xi. 24). When you have definitely and reverently believed on a promise go away and reckon that, whether you feel it or not, you have received.

All these things will be taught you one by one if you will only present yourself to God. Give Him your mind, that He may think into you His thoughts. Give Him your heart, that no love may be there but His own and such love as He permits. Give

Him your hands, your body, the whole of your life, that through it He may fulfil His own will. Then keep looking up to Him and receive from Him that which you need.

That is, as far as I know, the secret of living well. May God teach you further and help you to give up all to Him!

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