

Westminster Pulpit- G Campbell Morgan-2

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026 - Psalm 4:6 - Restlessness and Its Remedy

Who will shew us any good? Psalm 4:6

That is not the inquiry of the psalmist. It is a question which he quotes, in order that he may reply to it. Let us, therefore, read not only the inquiry but also the answer:—

There be many that say, Who will shew us any good?
Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us.
Thou hast put gladness in my heart,
More than in the time when their corn and their wine are increased.
In peace will I both lay me down and sleep;
For Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.

"Who will shew us any good?" So far as we are able to judge from the pages of history, humanity is one in all ages. There are changes upon the great stream of human life, but they are surface changes; changes in manners and in methods, and even in the maxims of men; but underneath is the same human nature, asking the old questions, making the old complaints, and wondering with the old amazement. Humanity today is confronting the problems of long ago. In the process of the ages they come to the surface, and men attempting to answer them, find themselves again and again unable so to do, and decide presently that they will abandon the effort, and the problem sinks back in the tide and is forgotten. It reappears, and when it reappears we call it new, but "there is

nothing new under the sun."

In the days of the Psalmist he said there were people who asked, "Who will shew us any good?" It is the language of a man who, looking back, is dissatisfied, looking around him is full of cynicism, and looking on is pessimistic. It is the language of restlessness and dissatisfaction. The question is being asked today by men in utterly different circumstances. Satiated men, overfull, full to repletion, come at last to the moment when they say, "Who will shew us any good?" Hungry men, conscious of the pinch of poverty and the pang of want, gaunt, desperate men say, "Who will shew us any good?"

Successful men, using the word as the world uses it, men who seem never to have failed in any enterprise their hands have touched. We watch them as they climb from point to point, until at last we think of them as having achieved the most remarkable success, and then they come and sit by us and say, "Who will shew us any good?" "Vanity of vanity, all is vanity."

Men who have failed, for some reason we are never able to discover, there are men who always seem to fail; trial after trial, attempt after attempt, effort after effort, but always beaten, always a little lower, until at last with heartbreak they say, "Who will shew us any good?"

Is it not worth our attention that men in such opposite circumstances make the same inquiry? Does not that fact suggest that the inquiry is a revelation of some underlying malady which is independent of circumstances; the full man, the hungry man, the man successful, and the man of failure are alike disappointed. Let us hear their challenge. It is sounding in our ears on every side. This age is peculiarly restless. There is a hot feverishness manifest on every hand expressing itself in a thousand ways and with ever varying emphasis. I venture to say that you can express the whole of it in this old, simple, blunt language of my text, "Who will shew us any good?" Is life worth living?

Have we any answer to that inquiry? In reply to that inquiry concerning the inquiry, I would say at once, yes, we have an answer. The answer is as old as the inquiry. The answer lies here upon the page of this ancient psalm. While men may quarrel about the authorship and about the date, I am infinitely more interested to discover its consciousness of human unrest and its answer. Here is the answer:

Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us.
Thou hast put gladness in my heart,
More than in the time when their corn and their wine are increased.
In peace will I both lay me down and sleep;
For Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.

Am I not right in saying that is an all-sufficient answer? Has not the consciousness of this congregation agreed as to the accuracy of that answer? "Who will shew us any good?" said the restless, feverish men of the psalmist's day, and he replied, the source of good I will declare, "Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us"; the experience of good I will recount in your hearing,

Thou hast put gladness in my heart,
More than in the time when their corn and their wine are increased;

and finally, I will give you the result of this goodness, "In peace will I both lay me down and sleep." "Who will shew us any good?"

Is that the inquiry that was hot in your heart as you found your way to the sanctuary tonight, my brother? Is that the question you are asking, sister mine, after all the attempts to satisfy the craving of your fine nature with the things of dust and the excitements of the world? Tired, broken, disappointed, angry, cynical, do you say, Is life worth living?

I pray you listen in the sanctuary to this great answer, "Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us," which being interpreted, may thus be explained. This man, and those of us who take our stand by his side in testimony, declare that we find good where God found it and finds it. If that declaration seems for the moment to wander a little away from the meaning of the Psalmist when he said, "Lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance," I beseech you keep that word in mind while I depart to a distance only that I may come back to it to discover its richest meaning and profoundest intention. We find good where God found it. Where did He find it? We read those old and familiar words in the first chapter of Genesis. I want you to be quite simple and like little children, and see what the first chapter of Genesis says. Light, the earth and the sea with all its myriad forms, the sun in the heavens in the daytime, and the silver queen of night, all the flowers, the birds of the air, and the fish in the sea, and the great creatures on the earth, and man; and God said these things are good. "Who will shew us any good?" Wherever you are you are near to some of these things. God says these things are good. Turn a deaf ear to the man who tells you they are evil. They are not evil. Do not believe the man who affirms that this is a wicked world. It is an absolutely untrue statement if by the world you mean the earth God created. These things are good. Light is good. The earth with its store of wonders is good. The deep and fathomless ocean of which the finest thing in literature is in the Bible, "Thy way was in the sea, And Thy paths in the great waters." The ocean is good. All the flowers and fruits of the earth, the fauna and flora of nature are good. The brightness of the sun, and the sunlight in either winter or

summer; the radiance of the moon and the pictures she flings upon the sky as she plays with the clouds; these things are good. The fish in the sea, the fowls of the air, in every sense are good. You are living in the midst of these things and are saying, "Who will shew us any good?"

There is something wrong somewhere. Step a little higher and look once again at the Genesis picture. This time not at isolated items which in every case God pronounced good, which in every case rested the heart of God, and at last so rested Him that He hallowed the day of rest as a memorial of His own satisfaction with the things in the midst of which you live your life and I live mine. Climb a little higher and what are the conditions which are presented to your vision in this early chapter. The first is that of the supremacy and sovereignty of God. The second is that of the viceregal dignity of man. He is made a little lower than God, and is given dominion over all the creation beneath his feet. The third is that the creation potentially is waiting for the touch of men in fellowship with God to answer him in laughter and flowers, the abundance of harvest, yielding up to him the deep and profound secrets that lie within her bosom. If you will take one step higher and look no longer at isolated items, no longer at the condition, but look at the spiritual suggestiveness of this first chapter of Genesis with its picture of original conditions, what do you find? A picture of fellowship. A picture of cooperation. A picture of happiness. A picture of fellowship between man and God, and between man and everything beneath him; and therefore, between everything beneath man and God, through the instrumentality and mediation of man.

Man in rebellious selfishness shuts God out of his life. There is the tragedy of it all. As God is my witness, the last thing I desire to do is to speak in metaphor, or to look at dim and distant pictures. If you came here tonight saying, "Who will shew us any good?," the root trouble with you is that you do not know God. I will make that affirmation on the positive side. No truly Christian man or woman ever asks that question. The man or the woman who by grace has come into fellowship with God says, "Thou hast put gladness in my heart. More than they have when their corn and their wine are increased."

"In peace will I both lay me down and sleep:
For Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety."

If you are hot and restless, unable to sleep, unable to find anchorage, crying out in the agony of your soul, "Who will shew us any good?" Is life worth living? The reason is that you have lost touch with Eden. You have lost consciousness of God.

Now some of my young friends are saying, We understand the reason for that very peculiar reading in Genesis, but why did you turn to Matthew? I read that old story of the baptism of Jesus, and of the word that came out of heaven, because there, in the Man of Nazareth coming to fulness of human life and just entering upon the ministry to which He was ordained, I find God's new resting place. If that sentence sounds a strange one let me tell you just what I mean. In Genesis, God saw that His creation was very good, and He rested; and then came the tragedy of rebellion, the tragedy of sin, and man lost his rest. When man lost his rest through sin, God lost His rest, and never found it again until He rested in His Beloved. "In Whom I am well pleased." Pleased with earth and air and sun and flowers and fish and fowl, the whole creation; pleased with man, but wounded in man's apostasy, God never found rest again, until He found satisfaction in the perfection of the humanity of Jesus. If you should be inclined to charge me with imaginative interpretation, I pray you hear me while I quote the words of Jesus upon a memorable occasion. Passing through the Bethesday porches, He saw a man who had been for thirty-eight years in the grip of infirmity. He healed him, and when men criticized Him for working a miracle on the Sabbath day, He answered, "My Father worketh even until now, and I work." You must interpret His word by His miracle. He claimed in that moment to be identified with God in activity, and what was the activity? It was activity in the presence of human limitation resulting from sin, the activity which wrought against the thing that spoiled until it was spoiled, and man remade.

But the earth when it was created did not yield up its secrets, did not sing its songs, did not come to the full manifestation of its potentialities. Man was there to discover its secrets under the guidance of God, to make it sing its songs, to bring its potentialities out into flower and glory. There are most curious notions abroad in the world about the garden of Eden. I have seen pictures of it. They are almost invariably pictures of impossible Italian gardens, through the wonderful pathways and amidst the curious flowers of which man is seen walking. I do not so read my Bible. I read, "The Lord God planted a garden eastward, in Eden," that is, fixed its habitation, marked its limitations, arranged its boundaries, and put man "into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it"; made him responsible for it, put him there that he might delve, in order that presently to his unutterable amazement and growing wonder, flowers might grow, and fruits might ripen; put him there that through the process of the cultivation of that planted garden, under the government of God, he should bring to light its hidden secrets. Every rose that blooms lies potentially in mother earth, but it never blossoms to perfection until man's hand has worked in cooperation with Divine power. That is the picture that I find in Genesis. It is a picture of fellowship and cooperation, and therefore of happiness. No one in Eden's garden said "Who will shew us any good?" God said it was very good; and man, yielding obedience to the throne of the Eternal, and exercising authority over everything beneath him, said, it is very good. There was no restlessness, no feverishness, no disappointment, until—ah me, that is the root of the malady—I leave the until incomplete.

You say, "Who will shew us any good?" God help you to see the tragedy of all this. It is not true of all of you. Some of you find

perfect rest in one little plot of your garden because you find God in every blade of grass. "Who will shew us any good?" say they, and they cross the great Atlantic back and forth and play bridge and never see the beauties of the sea or listen to the anthem of the hurricane! They play cards ceaselessly, and then say, This voyage is very tiresome! "Who will shew us any good?"

Man out of harmony with God has lost the key to nature, and has lost the capacity for rest, and is hot and feverish and restless. The Man of Nazareth realized the first intention of God. In Genesis I read that man was given dominion over the fish of the sea and the fowl of the air and the secrets of the earth. In this Book of Psalms I find the question asked, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?" Singing up out of the Psalmist's essential humanity came the answer,

Thou hast made him but little lower than God,
And crownest him with glory and honour.
Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands,
Thou hast put all things under his feet.

But I cannot find that man, until I come to the gospel stories, and then the writer of the letter to the Hebrews quotes the ancient psalm and says, "We see not yet all things subjected to him. But we behold Him Who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus." If you watch Jesus at His work you will see the perfect Man mastering the secrets of nature. His miracles are attestations of His perfect humanity rather than demonstrations of His Deity.

Why do I linger here so long? Because to eyes that have ever looked upon the Son of God, the picture is full of glory and beauty. Yet I have another purpose. If in the things I have now endeavoured to say, you have caught a new consciousness of the perfection of the Man in Whom God found His rest, follow Him to the end, I pray you. What is the end of His life? The cross. What is the cross, "Who will shew us any good?" There He is, spoiled, mauled, murdered by men who ask that question. God came incarnate into the lives of the multitudes who had lost their vision of God, and "There is no beauty that we should desire Him." Therefore He was bruised and broken. "We did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." We were wrong. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." Incarnate God is upon the cross.

Is that the end? Is that the last word? By no means. Another man is hanging on a cross by His side, a thief, a robber, a malefactor. Out of the strange mystery of crucified iniquity there comes this weird and awful cry addressed to the central figure, "Jesus, remember me when Thou comest in Thy Kingdom." From the lips paling in death comes the regal answer, "Today shalt Thou be with Me in Paradise."

I see the first gleam, it is not the full light, but the first gleam, the accursed tree is the healing tree. The cross erected by man's sin is enwrapped in the Divine determination to save. By that sign of the cross, I know that all the tragedy is being dealt with, and that man can be remade. Behold Eden, and out of its ground came thorns, a curse upon man's sin. Behold the cross, and see the thorns are plaited into a crown bathed in blood on His brow. Coincidence do you say? There are no coincidences as accidents in the economy of God. Just as Mrs. Browning sang truly when she sang that the chaffinch implies the seraphim, so that crown of thorns reveals the way by which God deals with the malady, in order to bring man back into the consciousness of rest and of goodness. By that cross men may be repossessed of Eden.

Yes, you say, you mean that if a man shall trust in that cross he will find his way to heaven. I certainly do mean that, blessed be God, but I mean something else. I mean that by the way of the cross, by man's restoration through that cross into the place of fellowship with God upon the ground of sin forgiven, man can find his way into Eden here and now in this world. Do not let us be afraid of the simple illustrations with which we began, the light, the earth, the sea, the sun, the moon, the stars, the flowers, the birds; all the things of the earth; man can go back and find delight and rest in all these. You have often heard the saints singing it, and they mean it if they know the cross,

Heaven above is softer blue,
Earth beneath is softer green;
Something lives in every hue,
Christless eyes have never seen.
Birds with gladder songs o'erflow,
Flowers with deeper beauties shine,
Since I know as now I know
I am His and He is mine.

"Who will shew us any good?" The Psalmist's answer is the only one—

"Lord lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us." You have lost this world, because you have lost God. You find no rest in your own garden because you are out of fellowship with the God of the garden. You are tired of everything in this life because God

made you for Himself, and you cannot satisfy the clamant cry of your deep, profound life apart from Him. It is quite impossible.

Shall we not get back to Him? You say, The journey is so long. No, there is but a step betwixt thee and God. At this moment, while the preacher is uttering his last words, and while the men and women who are sitting next you know nothing and can know nothing of the transaction, you can return to Him, and the light of His countenance will be lifted upon you, and the gladness that is greater than the gladness of plenty of corn and wine will fill your heart, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding will garrison your heart, because you are right with God. May He bring us to the trysting place in His grace, and constrain us to that return which means perfect rest.

027 - Psalm 25:14 - The Secret of the Lord

The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; And He will shew them His covenant. Psalm 25:14

The sob of a great sorrow sounds throughout this psalm. The circumstances in which it was written are most evidently revealed by the words which occur through its process; desolation, affliction, distress, travail.

These and other kindred words, sobbing in sorrow, vibrant with pain, are the outstanding words of the psalm. Yet, its main message is not a message of despair, but rather of hope, of confidence. If at your leisure you will read this psalm again, you may discover that with which one cannot stay to deal at all, particularly now. The singer depressed by sorrow, yet perpetually rises above it; profoundly conscious of the overwhelming and crushing pressure that rests upon him, nevertheless spreads his wings and, rising, the sob becomes a song. The sorrow is made the occasion of the psalm. It opens and closes with prayer. The first seven verses constitute a prayer, and the last seven verses constitute a prayer; or, rather, and more accurately, the first paragraph and the last paragraph constitute one great prayer; and between these two paragraphs is the central one, beginning at the eighth verse and ending with the fifteenth. That central paragraph is occupied almost wholly with the contemplation and declaration of the goodness of God; not that these things are confined to that central paragraph; they run like a major note throughout all the minor wailing of the sorrowful experience, which created the necessity for, and found expression in, the psalmist's prayer.

Out of the central song of contemplation and declaration, we have taken this one verse, because it is the secret of the song in the midst of sorrow, the explanation of the reason why this man was able, even in the day of darkness, to lift a face radiant with light. It is impossible to escape the conviction, if the psalm be carefully studied, that in this declaration we have found the secret of this man's triumph over pain. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; And He will shew them His covenant."

My message tonight is to those who are sorrowful, a message to which I am constrained for a reason which I cannot give. I am content to answer the call, and attempt to lead such of you as are in sorrow, stress, strain, difficulty of any kind to an examination of this wonderful word of the psalmist of old, very familiar to all of us who have known anything of our Bibles from childhood, and full of wonderful suggestiveness. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; And He will shew them His covenant."

First, let us quietly meditate upon the blessing that is here referred to, "The secret of the Lord." Second, let us solemnly consider the condition upon which we may enter into the experience of the blessing described, "Them that fear Him." In conclusion, let us notice one result of the blessing which the psalmist describes, "He will shew them His covenant."

"The secret of the Lord." We need to be careful with this word. There comes to mind another of the great verses of the Bible, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever." I cite it only that I may ask you to remember that the word "secret" in that verse is an entirely different one from the word "secret" in our text. "Secret things"; that is, quite literally, veiled things, hidden things, things that cannot be discovered, things that cannot be revealed. There are always such, even for the saints, to the end of the journey; the secret, veiled, hidden mysteries of life and of government. But the word here is quite other, and I propose this evening to adopt a method of interpretation, wholly Biblical. I am going to illuminate my text by four other texts in which the same Hebrew word occurs, but in which it is used with a slight variation of application and of intention. If we can gather from these four the thoughts which they suggest, I believe we shall find something of the wealth and comfort that lie in this old and familiar declaration of the psalmist, "The secret of Jehovah is with them that fear Him." Let me be understood. The verses to which I shall now refer do not, in the whole of their statements, throw any light upon this passage; but the occurrence in them of the same word will help us to understand the richness of suggestion in our text.

I turn first of all to Psalm 111:1, and I find these words: "Praise ye Jehovah. I will give thanks unto Jehovah with my whole heart, In the council of the upright and in the congregation." We may therefore, with perfect accuracy, say that "The council of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

Let us turn to Psalm 55:14 : "We took sweet counsel together; We walked in the house of God and with the throng." The word of my previous reference was "council"; "Counsel" is yet another word with a slightly different suggestion. We should be perfectly justified in reading, "The counsel of Jehovah is with them that fear Him."

Let us turn to the Book of Proverbs 3:32, and we have the word of our text translated in the same way, but another suggestion is made by its use in the light of the context: "The perverse is an abomination to the Lord: But His friendship is with the upright." With the suggestion of the word there we shall deal presently.

One other reference, again from the Book of Proverbs 11:13: "He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: But he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter." Let us now examine these four verses, not for their own statements, but for their use of our word, in order that we may find out what the psalmist meant in all fulness and richness when he said, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

When the psalmist said, "In the council of the upright," he used the word in its very simplest sense, a sense more truly in harmony with its root idea than that of any other of the verses we have read. The idea is that of a company of persons sitting together, of one mind, of one heart; of a company of people separated from the heathen and from strangers, unified, of one heart, with single purpose, at absolute agreement with each other. It is a very beautiful idea, rarely realized in the experience of any company of men and women. The poetic and beautiful idea of the psalmist is that of the gathering together of such as have no controversy as between themselves—a perfect company. Once in the history of humanity, so far as I know, there has been such a gathering. It was on the day of Pentecost, when they were all together of one mind, and of one heart, and of one spirit, under the dominion of one Lord; with one master passion in their heart, that of obedience to Him. It was soon lost, and we have never regained it. That, however, is the idea of the Hebrew word; perfect union because of no discord; perfect harmony therefore. "The secret of Jehovah is with them that fear Him." Jehovah sits in council—that is, in perfect union, in perfect harmony—with such as fear Him. There is no controversy between them and Himself, no controversy between Him and such.

The word suggests the consciousness of perfect friendship, though no word be spoken. It suggests that friendship which is equal to absolute silence. Not the friendship—let me carefully safeguard this—that must be silent, but the friendship that can be silent. Turn the thought back for a moment, for the sake of illustration, to the simplest things of love and friendship in your lives. You have not many friends in the world. Mark that well. Just a few friends; many acquaintances, thank God for them all; but not many people that you can be absolutely safe in being silent with. I sometimes think that in all human relationships the last sign of friendship is this ability to be quiet. The acquaintance will entertain the stranger, and weary him by talking to him; but the friend will sit by his side silently, knowing that there is no need for speech; in mutual understanding, with no controversy, no conflict, nothing that has to be hidden. There are children of God who know this secret in its height and depth. We know that they know by the serenity and calmness and dignity of their friendship with God. That is the first thought, the council of the upright, the assembly, the meeting, the sitting together. The idea of speech is not in the word in this connection. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

In Psalm 55:14, the word, as its context shows, has a slightly different meaning, or, rather, shall I say a slightly different suggestion? Let us hear it: "We took sweet counsel together." Here the silence is broken; here is speech, but it is the speech of familiar conversation. It is a step in advance of the last. The word in its use in this psalm suggests the freedom in speech that comes when friends understand each other well enough to be silent. I am afraid that that is awkwardly stated. Yet some of you know at once what I mean. When friendship can afford to be silent, then speech is the speech of friendship. I never can make such a reference as this without there coming to my mind a passage from a book written by Mrs. Craik. Many of you are familiar with it, and those who know it best will least object to hearing it again. She says: "Oh, the joy, the inexpressible delight of being alone with your friend, when you can pour out everything that is in your soul, all you think, wheat and chaff together, knowing that your listening friend will with the breath of kindness blow away the chaff and keep only the grain." That is the kind of speech that comes out of the capacity for silence. "We took sweet counsel together." We talked to each other by the way, amid the busy throng, in the courts of the temple. We talked, and each said to the other all that was in the heart. This is the freedom that comes when friends understand each other. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." The secret of the Lord is with the man who has no secret from Him. Who pours out before Him all the things that are in his own heart, God can talk too of the things that are in His heart, and in His purpose, and in His will.

Can God speak freely to me? I make the question personal. I had rather do it than put the question to you. I do not propose a public answer, but a private investigation. Can God speak freely to me? This age often affirms that God does not speak to men now as He used to do. I will not argue it save to say that the measure in which that seems to be true is the measure in which men have ceased to talk to Him. If I have a secret from Him, then He cannot have His secret with me. When I have learned friendship with God so as to be able to pour out everything before Him, then He can speak freely and unreservedly to me.

I turn to the use of the word in Proverbs 3:32: "The perverse is an abomination to the Lord: But His secret is with the upright." The setting of the word there suggests another phase of the same great and gracious and wonderful fact. Not now the silence; not now that familiar and confidential speech in which each pours out to each the deepest and truest things of the life. Here the thought is rather that of advice and guidance. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." To such He can give advice, can guide, can say behind them as they walk the path all wrapped in mystery, "This is the way: walk ye in it."

Once again, while the verse seems to have least to do with our theme, the word is used in its fullest sense in Proverbs 11:13: "He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets." Secrets—what are they? Particular confidences, the last and most intimate demonstrations of friendship. As we grow older we do not talk so much about secrets. Take two children, especially girls, who are friends—close friends in the sweet, bonnie days of their winsome childhood, and the last proof of friendship is that one tells the other a secret! You smile at it. You have lost something since the days in which you were young enough to have secrets, and to tell them. Why do we cease talking about secrets as we get older? Because we are afraid someone will betray us. Why? Because we have so often betrayed someone else.

When Jesus Christ took the child, and put him in the midst, He was right. The child is nearer the ideal of the Kingdom of heaven than anyone in this house tonight. So we get back to the children, and their secrets constitute the last seal of their friendship. God help us all to see the beauty of it, when two children have secrets between each other.

"The secret of the Lord is with the upright." We do not want any exposition of it if we will thus get back to childhood and look at the children. God can tell His secrets to some people. "Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do? For I have known him." And He did not hide it from Abraham. Lot, the successful, progressive, business man knew nothing; but the old-fashioned man of faith got the secret of the Lord. Do not tell me that is old history. It is as fresh as the morning. There are men to whom God can tell His secrets still, the deep confidences of His own heart, of His own economy, of His own purposes. They cannot tell them to other people. Do not misunderstand me. The secrets of the Lord are not for publication. "I knew a man in Christ, fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I know not; or whether out of the body, I know not; God knoweth such a one caught up even to the third heaven... and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." God told Paul secrets, and you have never found out what they were. They were secrets that drove him and made him, and the revelation of the secret is not the telling of it, but the manifestation of the changed and glorified life resulting from it.

Mark the four things, then. I will but name them. The first thought is that of sitting in restful silence because there is no controversy. The second is that of mutual conversation. Just two, telling and listening. Then counsel, advice, guidance, and finally special confidences. The secret of the Lord.

Oh, sorrowful heart, God comfort you with this tonight. This is to be able to do what this man did in this psalm, say everything, the thing of sorrow, of desolation, of travail. The man who knows this will never play the hypocrite in the presence of God. He will never pretend resignation when he feels rebellion. He will pour out the rebellion in the listening ear of heaven, and God is never angry with that. To know this is to have found the light that turns the tear of sorrow into the medium of the rainbow of hope. "The secret of the Lord." Who does not desire it, long for it? To be able to sit in silence with God; to talk to Him and to hear Him talk to me; to know that when I talk He hears, and that if I listen He will speak; to have immediately and directly, not as the result of any mechanical contrivance or priestly intervention, his guidance, His counsel; some day, perhaps, to have Him tell me some secret.

Ere we pass from the brief meditation on the blessing itself, I must ask you to notice another word. Those of you who followed my reading of the psalm, perhaps wondered why, when it says Lord, I said Jehovah. Simply because it is the actual word. Every occasion in this psalm where the word Lord appears, the Hebrew word is Jehovah. I emphasize it because it is a significant word. This psalm, which is a sob of sorrow merging into a song of salvation, the psalm which has at its center this revealing verse that we are trying to think about, through all its process refers to God as Jehovah; not Elohim, which suggests His might, not the secret of the Mighty One; not Adonahy, which suggests His sovereignty, but Jehovah, which suggests His adaptability, His adaptation to the capacity of men and the needs of men. "The secret of Jehovah" the becoming One, the One Who becomes in all circumstances, to all men, the thing necessary to their succour and for their salvation.

Let us think for a brief moment of the condition. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." Though the distinction has often been made, at this moment we must make it again. Let us understand what fear really is. There are two kinds of fear. They have been defined as servile and filial. I sometimes define them thus. There is a fear which is fear lest God should hurt me. There is a fear which is fear lest I should grieve God. This last is the fear referred to in my text. They are utterly opposed. Servile fear dreads God, and issues in hatred, in deceit and in ultimate ruin. But this fear, how does it issue? Note the first fruit of this fear. I am certainly in the humor tonight for Bible definition. Let me go back to one of the wisdom books of the Old Testament, to Pro_8:13, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil." From that, turn over to chapter 16:6, "By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil." I am content with these two passages for our present purpose. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." What is it to fear Him? To hate evil and to depart from evil. The secret of Jehovah cannot be with a man who loves his sin. The secret of Jehovah cannot be with a man who, conscious of sin, hating it, yet refuses to abandon it. Is it true that we know nothing of being able to sit in silent fellowship with God? Is it true that we know nothing of holding familiar intercourse with God? Is it true that we know nothing of what it is to hear God directly, immediately, counseling, advising, guiding? Is it true that He cannot tell us a secret? Why not? There is only one reason. It is that our sin is shutting us out from God. The old prophetic word is a living word; it is the whole truth in a sentence for this hour. Hear me with patience. Have you been reverently, but decidedly, amused by the meditation of this hour? Have you said this is all a preacher's dreaming about the secret of the Lord? I can call witnesses in this house if it be necessary that the thing I have said is a

thing of sober and immediate truth. There are men and women here who know the secret of the Lord. I charge you remember if you know nothing of these things, if the language is foreign to you, then it is because of your own sin. Your sin—not your father's sin, God has dealt with that in the economy of His grace, and can break its power—your sin, your persistence in some way of evil, your definite decision and determination not to depart from evil. The crookedness of your business methods! The dishonesty between yourself and other men! Some sin of which friend and neighbour nothing know until this moment, but in which you still indulge. Your sins are the things that shut God out of your consciousness. I pray you pause and consider carefully before you affirm that the religious affirmations of past generations and the religious declarations of living men are false. Inquire whether it be not that you have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, that the spiritual sense is so blunted by your own sin that it is impossible for you to discover the very things in the midst of which you live. "The secret of Jehovah," the friendship of God, living, actual, personal, positive, is with them that fear Him; with such as hate evil and depart from evil. God will not give Himself to such as love evil and persist in evil. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

One final word. The psalmist gives us one result of the great and wonderful blessing. "He will show them His covenant." What is a covenant? An engagement entered into. The covenant of Jehovah with His people is an engagement into which He has entered with them, and I may add today, for I speak under the shadow of the cross, the engagement which Jehovah enters into with His people through His Son. The old prophet of lamentations and tears foresaw and most wonderfully described the great and gracious covenant. "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people; and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more." The first application was to the house of Israel, and will be fulfilled to the letter. The principle within it is the principle of the covenant, an engagement entered into between God and His people. He enters into an engagement with all such as hate evil and, desiring to depart from evil, find their way to Him through the Man anointed, appointed to be Saviour and Judge.

"He will show them His covenant." The thought is not that He will make plain to them the terms of the covenant, but that they shall see the ratification of it in the experience of their life.

The fear of the Lord is to have His secret; with what result? We shall watch through all the processes, and disciplines, and trials, and sorrows of life, God's faithfulness to His covenant with us. There will be many a day when, by reason of our own frailty, our own fearful and trembling hearts, we shall wonder whether or not God has forgotten; but before many hours have passed we shall be ashamed of our wonder. Has it not been so? Look back, dear sorrowing heart, tonight if it be possible; look back out of the midst of the present stress and strain and difficulty. There are other days in the past—dark, mysterious days—when everything seemed to be failing, when we were foolish enough to say with Jacob, "All these things are against me." Then come a little way forward from that place at which you have been looking, and you had to say with Jacob again, "The God of the covenant has been with me all my days." Is it not so? The showing of the covenant is not wholly postponed to the life beyond. Then it will be perfectly shown. Then—ah, then—and we know it well, who know anything of the secret of Jehovah, then we shall look back over all the way, and we shall sing, "Right was the pathway leading to this." But we sing it already in measure. The music is already being wrought out into clearness to our astonished ears. He is showing us His covenant.

Those who have been in His fear longest, and know His secret most profoundly, can trace the meaning of this text in its last declaration. There are men listening to me tonight, and women also, who look back over a pilgrimage of faith far longer than that of which I have had experience, and it is good sometimes to take a backward glance. There lie the strange, devious paths of life; hours of agony and hours of deliverance; strange, perplexing phantoms of the night that came gliding over the storm-tossed seas, and then the voice, "It is I, be not afraid." He is ever showing us the covenant. That He will continue to do, until if our Lord shall tarry and we pass through the valley of the shadow, then there will be light in the valley, and the gloaming and the glooming will merge into the gleaming glory of the unveiled face of God. "He will show them His covenant."

We are sure of the last anthem because "The secret of the Lord" is already ours. Then may we learn to set the sorrows of the hour in the light of the present consciousness of God, and the sob of sorrow shall become the song of salvation.

028 - Psalm 27:13 - The Tragedy of Life Without Faith

I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Psalm 27:13

The psalm from which our text is taken is a song of conflicting emotions, in which victory is on the side of the nobler. As we listen to the singer we discover the opposing forces at war within the soul. Faith opposes itself to fear, joy strenuously contends with sorrow, songs resolutely lift themselves for the silencing of sighing.

The fear, the sorrow, the sighing are patent. Note the questions at the commencement of the psalm which even though they be

prefaced by affirmations of faith, reveal the assault of fear, "... Whom shall I fear?" "... Of whom shall I be afraid?" Observe the tumult of circumstances as revealed in the phrases that run like a dirge through the psalm; evil doers came to seek to eat up my flesh; mine adversaries and my foes. An host against me; war against me! The day of trouble! Mine enemies round about me! My father and my mother have forsaken me. Mine enemies, mine adversaries, false witnesses, such as breathe out cruelty! There can be no escape from the sense of the tumult and trouble in the midst of which the singer lived.

Nevertheless, the Psalm in its entirety has not made this impression upon the heart of man. It is preeminently a Psalm of faith, of joy, of song. Note the affirmations with which it opens. "The Lord is my light and my salvation... the Lord is the strength of my life"—or even better, more accurately—"the Lord is the (stronghold) of my life." Observe the affirmations answering the questions. My heart will not be afraid! I will be confident! Mine head shall be lifted up! I will sing, yea, I will sing!

Then observe, after the opening stanzas of praise, the prayer that breaks from the heart of the singer, and notice how through the brief prayer there throbs the note of perfect confidence mastering that of overwhelming pain!

Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice:
Have mercy also upon me, and answer me.
When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face; my heart said unto Thee;
Thy face, Lord, will I seek.
Hide not Thy face far from me;
Put not Thy servant away in anger:
Thou hast been my help;
Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.
When my father and my mother forsake me,
Then the Lord will take me up.
Teach me Thy way, O Lord;
And lead me in a plain path,
Because of mine enemies.
Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies...
For false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe:
out cruelty.

Finally consider the last stanza of the Psalm, marking well its appeal;

Wait on the Lord:
Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: and let thy heart take courage;
Wait, I say, on the Lord.

The spiritual experience revealed in this song is one which, I venture to affirm, we all most earnestly desire. The tumult of sorrow we know. Is the triumph possible? Is it possible to know triumph in the midst of such tumultuous circumstances of grief? We wonder, we question, we doubt. Our sorrows are so subtle, our pain is so poignant, our difficulties are so complex, our circumstances are so peculiar.

Well, let us consider the reason of this singer's triumph. It is, of course, declared in the opening affirmations—

The Lord is my light and my salvation;...
The Lord is the stronghold (strength) of my life....

It is illustrated in many subsequent statements which I have already quoted. From the standpoint of the soul's experience, the secret is most forcefully revealed in the words of my text. "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

A critical examination of the text seems at first destructive of its simplest meaning. You will observe that in the Revised Version and the Authorized, the first three words are italicized; "I had fainted..." In Miles Coverdale's translation, that wonderful version that has been, thank God, preserved for us in the Book of Common Prayer, the phrase has yet more of emphasis, "I should utterly have fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." There also, the whole of the words are italicized. These words constitute an exegetical gloss, introduced by the translators to fill up some gap, some hiatus, to complete the sense of the text. As a matter of fact we must omit them, if we are to be careful in our consideration of the text.

What have we left? "... Unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." When we yet further examine the text, we find that the word "unless" is not found in some manuscripts; neither is it found in the Septuagint, in the Syriac, or in the Vulgate. In the manuscripts in which the word is found, in the Masoretic Text, it is dotted over and beneath, which suggests that it is

a spurious word.

As to the first words, "I had fainted," we certainly must omit them. The word "unless," I am not prepared to omit. The absence of it from some manuscripts is not conclusive evidence. As old Hengstenberg suggests with quaint humor, the Massorites evidently lost their feet at this point. The sense of the passage demands the word. The statement without it is incongruous, following as it does immediately after the words, "... false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty." When the word is retained the whole text becomes a gasp, an exclamation! It is an imperfect sentence, indeed, no sentence at all, but a cry which is almost a groan. It is completed by a revealing hiatus, an eloquent silence. "... Unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!" Then the translators attempted to fill this gap, and inserted the words, "I had fainted," or "I had utterly fainted." I can understand why they put them in. They were trying to write what the man was thinking. He did not do so. He left the blank, suggesting a something that could not be expressed. "I had fainted!" Nay, verily, that is altogether too weak. The horror was greater than that. There are moments in which the soul cannot faint. That is the sense of my text. This man who sings so finely, whose music marches to major strains, all the while mastering the minor, pauses and reveals the deep secret of that major music in this half-finished exclamation: "... Unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." The horror is too profound for words; the terror is too terrible for utterance. It is nameless.

This, then, is a brief word of wonderful unveiling of the soul's consciousness of some lonely singer in the long ago, perchance David, more probably Hezekiah, I know not—but of some soul who had been looking out upon life. Poetically referring to the thing upon which he looked by the phrase, "The land of the living," a phrase describing the earth as he saw it, the dwelling place of men; he said: "Unless I had seen more than the land of the living, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord there—!"

Leaving from this moment the peculiarly personal notes of the psalm, let us consider the essential thoughts of the text along two lines, first, the land of the living as it appears in itself; second, the land of the living as it appears in the light which is here described as the goodness of the Lord.

First then, the land of the living as it appears in itself. We must introduce this line of meditation by reminding ourselves of the viewpoint. It is not that of childhood. Childhood never sees the land of the living as this man saw it. Childhood, thank God, is beneficently sheltered and cannot see the things that some of us see so clearly and so tragically today. No child looks tragically upon life. Oh God! must I not amend that to say no child ought to do so! I fear there are some children who do, but it is not the natural viewpoint of the child.

Once again, it is not the natural viewpoint of youth. As Browning sang, "Youth sees but half." Youth is only intended to see half. It has not yet seen life in its entirety.

This is the viewpoint of that which, for lack of a better term, I may describe as maturity, the viewpoint of the man or the woman who has been compelled to face all the facts of life, who has passed through childhood's years with their sweetness and their softness, their laughter and their fun, who has gone beyond the golden age of youth, who has seen the colors fade upon the eastern sky and has tramped under the grey or under the blazing heat.

What, then, are the experiences of such? The land of the living is to them the place of weakness. There comes to us inevitably sooner or later this overwhelming sense of inability. We look back over the pathway we have traveled. We look at the things we have done, and looking back, we note how imperfect they all have been. We look carefully at the things we are doing today, and the sense of imperfection is even more appalling in the presence of immediate service than when we look at that which has been rendered. Then, ah, then, we look on, and there are so many things to be done which we shall never do, intentions that will never be fulfilled, work that has to be dropped and left and cannot be carried out. Not that the work does not need doing, not that the intention was not glorious, not that the vision was untrue, but that we are unable to do it. The appalling sense of inability, incompetence, weakness!

The land of the living is the place of disappointment. The sense of disillusionment comes inevitably to the human soul. We become disappointed with ourselves; we become disappointed in others. We become disappointed in the matter of our hopes and our aspirations. Many of them are not realized; and those we do realize, are they ever what we thought they would be? Are we ever satisfied? Is it not so, that when we have climbed the mountain height upon which we set our eyes and towards which we have striven strenuously, we are disappointed because there stretches away beyond us other mountain heights shutting us in, and we have not reached the level we thought we should have reached when that mountain height was climbed.

The land of the living is the place of mystery. Oh! this tangle of human life; the injustice of things; the perplexing problems that fret the soul; the thousand questions that perpetually force themselves out of the agony of life and find no answer. By mystery are we hemmed in; we do not know; we cannot explain; and the sense grows upon us with the passing of the years.

The land of the living is the place of sin. I use the word resolutely. Employ any other term that may better help you. However much we may argue concerning it, and whatever philosophy we may employ to attempt to explain it, there is this appalling consciousness

of that which is wrong, out of joint, and not out of joint merely, but diseased withal. The terrific sense of the presence of the poison, of its power, and its pollution.

Again, and let this be the last word in the dark and dreary outlook, the land of the living is the place of death. Death, indiscriminating, ruthless, ghastly! Do you tell me that you have lost your hatred of death? Then you are abnormal, and your abnormality is not the abnormality of health but of disease! Death is ghastly, death is hateful! Death that touches the little child in its sweetness, and the child is gone! Death, that strikes down the standard-bearer at the head of the army and leaves a gap that cannot be filled! Death, that by some accident or catastrophe sweeps upon the soldiers of the Cross and the servants of sin alike and engulfs them together so that the place that knew them knows them no more.

Unless there is something more to say than all that, what a tragedy life is, what a horror! The land of the living, this life in the midst of which we find ourselves, without God, what does it mean? No final wisdom or knowledge; no adequate strength to deal with things; no authority that moves right onward toward a goal; no possibility of restoration. I do not wonder that this singer gasped out, "... Unless I had believed!..."

But the gasp was but an interlude in a song. Let us then look again at the land of the living as it appears in the light of the goodness of the Lord. Immediately we are halted by a phrase that suggests a truth, "... the goodness of the Lord!" The truth suggested by the phrase is that of the Lord of goodness, the biblical conception of God, the conception of God which inspired this song, the conception which inspired all the songs of this great Psalter. Shining through the whole of them in their unveiling of the human soul is the light of the God of revelation, the God of the Bible.

Goodness is one of the richest words in our vocabulary if we will but interpret it by the teaching of the biblical revelation. A greater word than holiness is this, a finer word than righteousness, including both, but having other qualities, which suffuse them with light and tenderness and mercy. The Hebrew word here so translated means radical and fundamental rightness, but it was a word that was used and translated by other words, beauty, gladness, prosperity. The Lord of goodness is the Lord of all that is right, all that is beautiful, all that is glad, and all that makes for the true prosperity of human life. He is the Lord of goodness, for He is the fountain head from which all these things proceed and the means by which these things become real in the experience of the race.

What light does this fact of God fling upon this strange, weird, life of ours? How does it help us? In what sense does belief in this God turn the sighing into the song, the fear into faith, the sorrow into joy? What are the things that make the triumph note of a song like this that thrills with pain?

I affirm in the first place that in the light of this revelation we come to understand that life is related to Him, and therefore that it is greater than all its experiences; creating their possibilities, but refusing to be exhausted in them. There is a saying of Jesus which we quote perpetually, and never perhaps without seeing some new light in it. "And this is age-abiding life"—that is life which is the life of the age, which cannot be destroyed in an age, or exhausted in an age, which runs through the whole of them, and touches them, and changes them, but is not changed by them—"to know Thee, the only true God...." Now mark what this means in the case of human life. In the light of this revelation I come to the profound consciousness that my life is greater than all its experiences.

Life itself, whatever mystery it may have to face, whatever pain it may have to endure, whatever darkness it may have to go through, whatever agony it may have to bear, whatever sins it may have to mourn, life is vast. It is a Divine creation, and it is thus to this very God of goodness. Therefore, all these experiences of life, being related to Him, take on a new meaning, have a new value, have a new suggestiveness.

I have said that the land of the living is the place of weakness, that we become conscious of inability. In the light of this revelation of man's relationship to God, we discover that the sense of inability is a suggestion of possibility. I cannot do these things, and yet they are things that are to be done and can be done. The fact that I have seen the vision of them is in itself worthwhile. Human life will be measured presently and ultimately not by what it has achieved, but by what it set itself out to achieve, which, if it but be related to God, it will achieve in spite of all the darkness and the apparent disappointment of the present hour. That I know my own weakness is a sign of my own power. That I know there are things I do not know is a sign of my capacity to know the things I do not know. When a man says, "I cannot know the Infinite," in that acknowledgment he confesses that he knows it. He cannot include all the facts that are within it within his present consciousness. But to recognize the Infinite is in some sense to know it. That is at once a demonstration of relationship to God and a result of relationship to God. It would be a dark day indeed for the race if men became satisfied with the things that they have done and the things they are doing and imagined that when they had done their piece of work, all work had forever been completed. It is this very sense of inability which becomes the inspiration of endeavor for it rises out of a sense of possibility.

Again, the experience of the land of the living as a place of disappointment is after all but a demonstration of high possibilities to the man who has seen the face of God and rejoiced in the light. Noble disappointment is a demonstration of the splendor of things seen although never realized. Art thou disappointed with thyself tonight? Then know this, that if thou hast seen a vision of thyself which is

finer and higher, in the seeing there was value. The goodness of the Lord in the land of the living is that which makes a man, broken and disappointed with himself, look up into the Face of Deity and resolutely and daringly say, "Thou wilt perfect that which concerneth me. If you take that away from me, then I despair in the midst of life. But leave me that, and,

With spirit elate,
The mire and the fog I press through,
For heaven shines under the cloud
Of the day that is after tomorrow."

If the land of the living be the place of mystery, to the man who has seen the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living or who believes to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living, the very fact of mystery is but the expression of profounder things, greater and more glorious. In the twilight of the Jewish Dispensation, the great founder, the lawgiver, uttered words that are to us today fresh and wonderful because of their immediate value; "The secret things" are the things that fill the soul with fear, the things of that realm of mystery which lies about us in life; the problems that confront us; the questions we ask and no answer comes; the secret things! Well, what of them? "They belong to the Lord, and the revealed things are for us and for our children." When we believe to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living, we know that there are no secret things from Him, that what we know not, He knows, that what amazes us never amazes Him, that the things for which we find no solution lie naked and open to His vision. Then if there are things which assault us and we cannot understand why they are permitted, the fact that they are permitted no longer troubles us, for He has permitted them, and He can make no mistake. The whole problem of evil lies there illuminated, and there and there alone the heart can find its rest.

The land of the living is the land of sin. The consciousness of sin is born of the conviction of holiness. Apart from the conviction of holiness there is no consciousness of sin. Then let us remember that in the full biblical revelation of God, at the very heart and center of the awful holiness that appals us, there burns and flames the infinite compassion which becomes passion and acts there-through for the saving of sinning souls. Woe is me, I am a sinner! Unless I believe to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living! But believing that and seeing that and knowing God, then even my sin shall not make me afraid!

And what of death? Our protest against death is the protest of life, and our horror of death is the horror of health. When once we see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living, we discover that death is not in His original intention for humanity. The scientists may tell us it is but the fulfilment of the natural order. We affirm that it is the carrying out of an unnatural condition resulting from human sin, that there should not have been any place for death had there been no failure and no sin. The goodness of the Lord in the land of the living transfigures the sackcloth and declares that through death there is the life, and beyond death there is a resurrection. If you take these things away from me, then death is still a horror so terrible that the only relief from it is in itself. I am not surprised that men who lose the Face of God end their lives, "... unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!" Without that light, life is not worthwhile; life is a tragedy. Blot out this God from the heavens, deny me the Deity of the Face that shines in human tenderness for the unveiling of the Divine, take this God of the Bible away from me, then life is some hideous mockery and sport of demons. Unless! Oh! the horror of it, the nameless horror of it! Fainted? Nay, the soul becomes too quick and alive, with very agony and despair, challenge and revolt, hot anger and rebellion, ever to faint. Rebellion against what? Against the tragedy, the weakness, the disappointment, the mystery, the sin, and the death, the whole dark outlook!

Ah! but we have believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living; we have believed because we have seen the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living, and we believe still to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. We believe that all the things which in themselves fill the soul with fear are held in the grip and grasp of the Great Father of an infinite grace.

At last there will be some explanation of all the pain and the mystery and the disappointment.

What then is to be the true attitude of the soul? Let the psalmist tell us as he ends his song.

"... Wait on the Lord." Or as the American version has it, "... Wait for the Lord. Be strong, and let thine heart take courage. Yea, wait thou for the Lord."

Those who have seen the Face of God are those who have seen it in the Face of Jesus. This is the ultimate in the biblical revelation. Through all the Old Testament we have prophecies, hopes, gleams of light, rosy flecks of a dawn yet to be. Would we view God's brightest glory? we must look in Jesu's Face! To the soul who has seen the Face of God in the Face of Jesus, faith is forever against fear, joy lays hold upon sorrow, and songs rise up against sighing.

What then is the condition? Wait! There is nothing more difficult to do. It is much easier to work for God than to wait for God. To dare in active service is a far less wearisome thing than to wait, and yet by waiting the victory comes as well as the vision.

Moses, nurtured in the Court of Pharaoh, came to an hour when there was born within him a passion to deliver. What was his

mistake? The mistake of imagining that in the hour when that passion was born, he was able to do the thing he desired to do. He had to wait for forty years. He always had to wait. In the hour of the wondrous deliverance, when by plague and judgment God set His people free, Moses did no other than wait. It is by waiting upon the Lord that the victory will be won. His goodness will be seen in the land of the living in proportion as His people wait upon Him.

I repeat as I finish, that this outlook is not that of childhood, and the final message is not for the child; the outlook is not that of youth, and the final message is not for youth.

The outlook is that of the men and women who have looked at life, looked at it all, and who if they have had nothing other to look at than life, have gasped with horror and been faint with fear! If such have believed to see the goodness of the Lord, then He teaches them this lesson, that in their waiting, they give Him His opportunity to work. He worketh for him that waiteth for Him.

029 - Psalm 32 - Sin, Sorrow, Silence

Psalms 32

A Psalm of David, Maschil.

- 1 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.
- 2 Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity,
And in whose spirit there is no guile.
- 3 When I kept silence, my bones waxed old
Through my roaring all the day long.
- 4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me:
My moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.
- 5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee,
And mine iniquity have I not hid.
I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD;
And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.
- 6 For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found:
Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.
- 7 Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble;
Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.
- 8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go:
I will guide thee with mine eye.
- 9 Be ye not as the horse,
Or as the mule, which have no understanding;
Whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle,
Lest they come near unto thee.
- 10 Many sorrows shall be to the wicked:
But he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.
- 11 Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous:
And shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.

Whoever wrote this Psalm knew much of spiritual experience on ordinary human levels. It is difficult sometimes to understand how some of these psalms were written so long before the coming of Christ. They seem to have been written by men who were almost as familiar as we are with all the great facts of the grace of God, as that grace was made known in Christ Jesus.

Among all of them, I do not know one that has more of the evangelical spirit than this, the thirty-second. Who that knows anything of the abounding and abundant grace of God has not at some time or another found a suitable vehicle of expression in its language? Observe the experiences that thrill throughout it. Sin is here, not as a theory, but as an experience. It was written by a man who knew sin, who knew it in his own life, who knew its bitterness, its burden, its hateful-ness; who had been very profoundly under conviction of sin.

Here, also, is the experience of sorrow, sorrow described in figurative language as the overflowing of waters; described, although not in words, yet inferentially, as the sweeping of a great storm; described, again, by inference as a prison house. All these figures are here, not actually named, but suggested by the terms that the psalmist used to describe his victory over sorrow.

The psalmist knew also that desolating experience of ignorance with which we are all familiar. I do not mean merely intellectual ignorance, but spiritual ignorance, the ignorance of not knowing which way to take, the ignorance of perplexity about the things of life created by the problems that vex the soul. All these experiences of the soul are grouped and referred to in this psalm.

Yet observe again that the things to which I have referred, sin as an experience, sorrow as an experience, ignorance or perplexity, or, if you will, silence—for I think the word "silence" is a most eloquent word to express what we feel when we do not see the way, or know the way, when there is no light upon the pathway, or voice speaking to us—sin, sorrow, silence; all the experiences of the human heart are here in order that over against them may be placed the things that correct them, the things that cancel them. If this man knew sin he knew forgiveness. If this man was familiar with sorrow he had experienced a wonderful succor. If this man was conscious of silence he had been brought into the place of instruction, and of a speech that had become to him the very guide and counsel of all his days.

Therefore, this is a psalm that thrills to tireless music, and makes its perpetual appeal to the heart of those who share these common human experiences.

Now, let us look a little more closely. First of all, observe its opening exclamation and its closing appeal. Between these we shall find a very definite movement of experience. When this man sat down to write this psalm he began with a doxology. It is the fashion of the Church today to close services with doxologies. The fashion of the Bible is to begin with the doxology. We find it in the psalms and in the epistles. There are doxologies at the close also, but the great writers of the Bible constantly began with a note of praise and gave their reasons for praise afterwards.

The first verse of the psalm reads thus:

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Whereas that may be a very accurate and beautiful sentence, in the Hebrew it reads somewhat differently; this is what the psalmist wrote:

O the blessings of transgression forgiven, and sin covered.

As a matter of fact, in that first verse there is no personal pronoun. The psalmist was not describing an experience in which man has any place, or any part, except as the result of something that God has done for him, and provided for him.

It is an exclamation resulting from contemplation and meditation. All the experience which he was about to describe in the psalm found its vent in his opening doxology. The blessings are two: transgressing forgiven, and sin covered. Every form of sin is recognized in the course of the psalm. Presently there is a reference to iniquity. All these are different words, conveying different ideas of sin.

The Hebrew word, "transgression," means the actual, wilful wrongdoing of which a man is conscious, and of which he is guilty. "Sin" is the common Hebrew word which has the same significance as the common Greek word, namely, missing the mark. No day passes in my life in which I do not sin, which does not necessarily mean that I sin wilfully but that I come short of the glory, I fail of the highest, I do not attain unto the best. After thirty years at least of the experience of following Jesus Christ, the apostle had to say, "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect... I count not myself yet to have apprehended." In so much as I have not attained, in so much as I am not yet made perfect, in so much as I have not yet apprehended, I am a sinner, I miss the mark, I come short, I do not reach the standard.

There are thus two ideas in this opening doxology: one wilful and positive sin, the other, missing the mark, in which will may have no part. Both are dealt with; the transgression is forgiven, and missing the mark is covered. That is the opening exclamation. It is that of a man, conscious of God's infinite grace, of what someone has spoken of, and I think wonderfully spoken of, as "the incredible mercy of God."

O the blessings of transgression forgiven, and sin covered.

The psalm ends with an appeal.

Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous;
And shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart.

The opening exclamation and the closing appeal are closely linked. "Oh the blessings of transgression forgiven." "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous." "Of sin covered." "Shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." The blessings of the forgiveness of transgression and of the covering of sin come from God, and in response to those blessings we are called on to be glad in the Lord, and to shout for joy.

Between that opening exclamation and that closing appeal we have the general movement of the psalm, a record of the experiences of life in sin, in sorrow, and in those silences in which the soul is ignorant as to the right way to go and the right thing to do.

First, as to sin. Everything is founded on a right relationship with God, which results from the activity of grace as expressed in the first verse. Moving out from that provision of grace, the psalmist deals with the individual. "Blessed is the man." In the first verse is an exclamation: "O the blessings," the blessings that God provides for the race; and consequently, of course, for individual men; but now, from that contemplation of the whole economy of God's grace, he passes to the individual soul.

Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity,
And in whose spirit there is no guile.

Here the psalmist describes a man standing before a judge, the judge being the Lord, the judge being Jehovah. Here the psalmist describes a man acquitted by his judge: the Lord imputeth not iniquity. Here, moreover, the psalmist reveals the condition on which that judge will acquit the man, "in whose spirit there is no guile." Let it be remembered that we cannot have this second blessing apart from the first. There must be, first, the fact of the infinite blessings in the economy of God, of transgression forgiven, and of sin covered. That is taken for granted in the first outburst of praise. This psalm was written, if not consciously, yet most surely, under the shadow of the Cross. It could not have been written anywhere else. Nowhere else can we find the possibility of transgression being forgiven and sin being covered. Calvary, dark Calvary, with all its mystery of darkness and of light, of sin and of salvation, of the unveiling of sin in the light of the glory of God, and the unveiling of the grace of God against the dark background of sin. All that is expressed in the first verse; then we get to the second verse, and we find how God is prepared to deal with a man who is conscious of sin, of iniquity, which is perverseness, crookedness, the life out of the straight.

This verse always comforts my heart, because the psalmist said: "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." He did not say, Blessed is the man unto whom his neighbor imputeth not iniquity. I am very thankful for that. He did not say, Blessed is the man unto whom those to whom he ministers impute not iniquity. The man stands at no judgment bar save that of God, and, believe me, it is far easier to please God than anybody else. I would much rather have to please God for one day than anybody else in the world. It is far easier to please Him, for He is far more reasonable, more patient than are men, for His reasonableness and patience are based on His perfect knowledge. I think one of the most wonderful things in the Bible is that in speaking of the ultimate rule of the earth by God's anointed King it declares that He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes or by the hearing of His ears. Think of judgment in England today, think of law in England today, think of any law court into which you may go—everything is based on the sight of the eyes and the hearing of the ears, and there is no other way in which men can judge. In every court of law witnesses give evidence of what they saw and heard, and the jury listen and find their verdict, and the judge passes his sentence, on the sight of the eyes and the hearing of the ears. God does not judge by the sight of the eyes or by the hearing of the ears. How, then, does He judge? His judgments are righteous. They are so because they are based on His knowledge of all the underlying facts of the case. There is an old saying, To know all is to forgive all. It may be falsely used, but there is a vast amount of truth in it, and we may depend on it: if we knew all we should be far more likely to forgive most men than to condemn them.

"Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." There is a grandeur about this statement in that it shuts the man up to God, excludes all other judges and juries, and says: Stand before God, and let Him judge you!

And what will He do if a man will stand there? It depends on the man. God will not impute iniquity to him if there is no guile in his spirit. That is the condition. What is guile? Deceit, cloaking over, trying to hide! We are inclined to say that no man can practice guile in the presence of God. Think again. Oh, how constantly we do it by arguing in God's presence that some evil thing is not so very evil, or we try to find an excuse for sin. That is guile. God imputes iniquity, fastens the guilt on the soul that is hiding it; but if the sin be confessed, He puts away the guilt which the man cannot himself put away. If there be no guile, if there be no cloaking, no hiding, if the moment has come in which I am constrained to say, Oh, God, I have hidden this thing long enough by trying to excuse it; I have done with it; God be merciful to me a sinner; then, in a moment, swift as the lightning's flash and swifter, sweet and gentle as the daybreak, the guile is no longer imputed, the man is acquitted; God immediately pronounces on that man the verdict of guiltless, and the man says, "Happy is the man unto whom Jehovah imputeth not iniquity, in whose spirit there is no guile." That is how God deals with sin.

In order that this may be clearer, the psalmist immediately described the contrary experience, showing exactly what happened in his own soul when there was guile there, when he was cloaking something evil, and hiding it.

When I kept silence, my bones waxed old
Through my roaring all the day long.
For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me;
My moisture was changed as with the drought of summer.

I do not think there is any language in all the Bible more wonderful in its clear, concise, graphic, startling revelation of the experience

of a soul trying to hide sin from God. When I kept silence, when I knew, knew in the deepest of me that something was wrong but would not own it, I tried to put a brave face on it and excuse it to myself, and to make myself believe—strange and devilish deceit—that God did not disapprove, which was only another way of trying to make myself believe God did not know. Then

My bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long;
My moisture was changed into the drought of summer.

There was no life; there was no sap. What that means may be learned by quotation from another psalm, "The trees of the Lord are full of sap." The Hebrew does not say "sap." The word has been added by translators, and it is very full of beauty. Yet another psalm will help us, the one which declares that those who put their trust in God are like trees planted by the rivers of water. A tree planted by the rivers of water is a tree whose roots run down and under, and find their way to the Water. In the case of such a tree, a living, healthy tree, we may take the utmost bough and break it, or take a leaf and break it in twain, and sap exudes. The trees of the Lord are full.

My moisture was turned into the drought of summer. There was no sap, no life. The godly man is like the tree planted by the rivers of Water. There is sap, he is full of it. In business he is full of life; and in everything full of strength. But the man with sin unconfessed is like a tree in the desert, having no water; it is dry, scorched, burnt up. His faith in God fails. The death of faith in God expresses itself in the death of faith in one's fellow man. The man who believes in God believes in humanity. The man who loses his faith in God begins to question humanity, is suspicious of everyone. That is the condition of those who keep silence.

The psalmist then tells us why his bones waxed old and moisture Was changed into drought:

For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me.

That sounds severe, and so it is, but it is full of beauty. Not Only is the severity of God in it, but also His goodness. It is as though the psalmist had said: In those days when I kept silence and tried to hide my sin Thou didst give me no peace, Thy hand was always on me, always troubling me; the thing I tried to hide Thou didst keep alive within me as a consciousness. That habit of life, that friendship that God condemned, that thing we persisted in, how it haunted us! That was God's hand on us! He will not let us escape. We argue it out and think it is settled, and go on, and, suddenly, it rises before us again: the controversy with God is continued, and God never rests until it ends in our submission, if we are His children:

Day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me.

Now take the opposite:

I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid.

Then the psalmist goes yet further back to show how quickly God answered, and how quickly God acted. Whereas the psalmist did acknowledge the sin and ceased to hide the iniquity, God did not wait for the actual acknowledgment, but in the moment when the psalmist decided he would do so God met him;

I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord;
And Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.

I said I would do it, and the moment I made up my mind Thou didst act. That is a true picture of God. Some child of God may be burdened with sin, sin persisted in; if such a one at this moment will say, I will confess my sin, then, in the moment in which the heart has taken the attitude of confession, God will forgive the iniquity of the sin.

How truly the prophet described Him as "a God ready to pardon." Oh for some figure of speech to help men to understand the meaning of that "ready to pardon." There is no figure of speech finer than that of this psalm: He is so ready to pardon that when man makes up his mind to confess, he is forgiven before he does confess. God does not wait for your formalities; He deals with your attitudes. He does not wait until the Sabbath day comes round. He does not wait until the human confessional is open. He does not wait until the special Inquiry Meeting is called at the end of the service. He does not wait for an hour. This is not ancient history; it is present fact. At this moment, without sigh or sound that mortal ear can detect, or attitude that the eye of man can observe even before the thing is said, when I make up my mind to confess, "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin!" Do you wonder that when this man was going to write a psalm about this matter he had to begin:

O the blessings of transgression forgiven, and sin covered.

In the moment in which a man ceases guile and makes his soul naked in the eyes of God he is forgiven. God, in an awe-inspiring mystery, respects the veil that a man tries to fling over himself, and excludes Himself from communion with the man until the man tears the veil and says, I am going to be before God what I really am, when, in that moment, God makes him what He would have the man to be.

Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.

Then follow the matters of sorrow and silence. "For this let everyone that is Godly pray." "For this" means because of this or for this cause. It does not mean we are to pray for forgiveness. There is no need to do that. All we have to do to obtain forgiveness is to quit hypocrisy, and to make our souls naked, and confess. So it is not that we are to pray for forgiveness, but because of it. The questions of sin and sorrow are intimately related, and the place of prayer is thus guarded. It is only when a man is guileless before God, and sin is dealt with by God, that he has free access to the place of prayer. Having that access, a man finds that the way of prayer is the way of deliverance in sorrow.

Surely when the great waters overflow they shall not reach unto him.

That is an apparent contradiction. When the great waters overflow they shall not reach him! That is a paradox indeed. It is the picture of a man in the middle of overflowing waters, but the waters do not reach him. The same thought is in the next figure:

Thou art my hiding place; Thou shalt preserve me from trouble.

Not keep me from going into trouble, but preserve me from it when I am in it.

Thou wilt compass me about with songs of deliverance.

Not keep me from going into prison, nor even necessarily bring me out of prison; but enable me to sing in prison!

The psalmist does not declare that the Godly man is to be immune from sorrow, but that he is to be triumphant over it, that sorrow is not to be allowed to harm him. Great waves and billows will overflow him, so that the Godly man of all godly men, God's own Son, could perfectly say, All Thy waves and Thy billows have gone over Me! Oh, the waves and the billows that have gone over our heads, floods of great waters; and yet, even though at the moment we felt as though we were about to be drowned, we were not drowned! The great waters have not reached, they have not harmed, they have not destroyed us, because we had access to God by prayer, and so sin was dealt with. We prayed to Him in the time when the proud waters went over our souls, and we were delivered.

Thou art my hiding place; Thou wilt preserve me from trouble.

Quite literally, Thou wilt preserve me in a tight place. Oh, yes, we may often be in a tight place, but we shall be preserved; for nearer to us than all the pressure of circumstances is God, and though circumstances press until we think we shall be ground to powder, we never are, because the resistance of God against the pressure of circumstances keeps us safe.

And yet again,

Thou wilt compass me about with songs of deliverance.

Such songs are sung in prison. We are familiar with the New Testament illustration. Paul and Silas sang praises when they got out of prison? No! After the thunder, after the earthquake that shook their feet loose from the stocks? No. They sang with feet fast in the stocks, with backs sore from Philippian rods. That is the place of song to the forgiven soul. The psalmist knew sorrows, knew the sweeping of the storm, knew the rolling of the waters, knew the loneliness of the prison house; but he knew deliverance, he knew a hiding place in which he was safe, and therefore he could sing in the midst of the sorrowful hours.

Then he passed to the matter of silence, and now he seems to have been so full of the consciousness of God that he adopted the language of God, changed the methods of his speech, and did not sing of God, but wrote as though God were singing to him:

I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go;

I will counsel thee with Mine eye upon thee.

Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding;

Whose trappings must be bit and bridle to hold them in.

Else they will not come near unto thee.

Many sorrows shall be to the wicked:

But he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.

"I will instruct thee," that is, I will make thee circumspect, I will make thee intelligent. "I will teach thee in the way which thou shalt go," that is, I will point out thy way with the finger. This is a picture of God dealing with a soul troubled, perplexed. The sorrow of silence is the worst of all, the appalling perplexity of hearing no voice in the hour of greatest need. God says, I will make thee intelligent, and then with My finger I will point out the way. It is as though God bent over the soul perplexed and in difficulty about the way, and said, I will give thee the capacity for understanding Me, and having done it, I will show you the right way. And, more, I will counsel thee; not, I will guide thee with mine eye, but, I will talk to you, and give you counsel with My eye on you. I will never lose sight of you.

Then follows a loving word, which is most arresting. It may thus be expressed bluntly: Do not be a mule! The horse and the mule need to be kept near to their drivers, with bit and bridle, so that they may be controlled. God says, I do not want to put a bit in your mouth; I want to keep you near Me in other ways. If we will not yield to the constraint of His guidance, then He will put bits into our mouths; but He would rather that we waited for Him, watched for the pointing of His finger, listened for the whisper of His word, and followed the light in His eye.

What wonder that the psalmist finished as he did:

Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous!

If we have done with our hypocrisy, He will put away our sin; that being settled, if we pray, He will guard us from all the evil of our sorrows; He will guide us with His counsel. Then let us be glad in the Lord, and let us not be content with being glad, let us obey the further command:

Shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.

When men really know God, they become hilarious, full of laughter and merriment and song and perpetual gladness.

So may He in His grace lead us into the secrets of communion.

030 - Psalm 32:9; Ephesians 5:17 - Understanding, or Bit and Bridle

Be ye not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding; whose trappings must be bit and bridle to hold them in, else they will not come near unto thee. Psalm 32:9

Be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Ephesians 5:17

The similarity between these two texts is self-evident. The Hebrew Psalmist, and the Christian Apostle say the same thing. The method of the former is illustrative and pictorial; that of the latter is more direct and interpretive. Each of these men, separated from each other by centuries, saw two ways of living. The one was described by the Hebrew Psalmist in the figure of the horse and the mule, which must be held in with bit and bridle. That same way was described by the Apostle in a word that really is vibrant with sarcasm—"foolish!" This word, being literally translated, means: having no mind. That is one way of life. The Psalmist describes the method to be adopted with that state of mindlessness; the Apostle simply refers to it. The other way of life is described by Psalmist and Apostle by words which we have translated by the same word "understanding." The Hebrew word translated "understanding" means to separate mentally; or, as to say, to distinguish. The Greek word translated "understanding" means to bring together or, as we say, to conclude.

The distinction between the two statements is that the first illustrates one method, while the second interprets the other method. So these texts complement each other while moving in the same realm and uttering the same injunction. The first declares what has to be done with the mindless horse or mule, or man. Such must be held in with bit and bridle. The second shows what the understanding mind takes hold of. It apprehends the will of the Lord.

In these injunctions a central idea of life is implicated, two methods of life are revealed, and in each case an appeal is made to choose the higher and the nobler. These, then, are the lines of our consideration.

We shall perhaps see the central idea of life most clearly by considering the illustration of the Hebrew Psalmist. What, then, are the functions of bit and bridle in the case of the horse and the mule? Let me say at once, and that for my own soul's comfort, that many of you may know a good deal more about horses and mules than I do. However, I am not proposing to deal with the characteristics of these animals, but rather to take the simplest things, which are perfectly patent to the ordinary person. In the case of horse and mule, the bit and the bridle mean, first, restraint, and second, realization under restraint. The restraint is preliminary, the realization is final. The restraint of bit and bridle is the indication to the will of the animal of the fact of a superior will. If the Psalmist said, and he did say, and that with inspired accuracy, that these animals have no understanding, he did not mean that they have no intelligence. Understanding is something far more than intelligence. Horses and mules have intelligence; they have emotion; they have will. These are the elements of human personality, but in a lower degree and yet very definitely, we find them in what we call the lower animals. No man knows anything about a horse who says that it has no intelligence. And that a mule has will none will deny who has attempted to manage one! The purpose of bit and bridle is to indicate to whatever there may be of intelligence in the animal that it has to do with a superior will.

Thus it becomes the method of compulsion by the superior will, that which keeps all the forces represented in the life of the animal near to the master and under control. That is what the Psalmist says: "Be ye not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding; whose trappings must be bit and bridle to hold them in else, they will not come near unto thee." The Revised Version

has greatly helped us there. The text is somewhat obscure, but the Authorized rendering: "In order that they may not come near unto thee," is entirely misleading. We put bit and bridle on horse or mule in order to indicate to whatever intelligence they may have that they have to do with a superior will and in order to compel their will to yield to that superior will.

But there is a reason for such restraint; it is always in order to teach realization. In the horse and the mule there are forces of strength, of energy, of swiftness. The purpose of the bit and the bridle is that these forces may be controlled and exercised, that they may become useful, that they may realize something.

For the sake of illustration let us exercise our imaginations and put ourselves in the place of the mule—some of us have not far to travel. The first sense of bit and bridle is simply that of something curbing, hurting, checking, mastering. As to mules I do not know, but I do know that after a while a horse will come to know the very touch of your hand on the bridle. You have but to make your own peculiar movement of the bridle, and it will turn to the right or left, it will halt, trot, gallop, or canter, as you desire. By restraint you have realized its powers, and you have given to the animal itself the sense of power. By the imposition of your superior will, curbing, checking, reining, mastering, you have made its life useful.

Now, what are the implications of that very beautiful illustration from the old Hebrew who loved a horse and a mule I verily believe, or he never would have written this psalm? The first is that life is power, energy, force, having values beyond its mere being. If life be energy, power, force merely, having no value beyond being, then it does not need bit and bridle, it does not need control, it does not need method or direction. In that case, let us merely live. But when a religious singer of the long ago and an apostle of the Christian era charge us not to be mulish, implicated in the charge is the idea that life is power and energy and force, having values beyond being; in other words, that life is purposeful. No human life has come to its realization when it is simply lived. It comes to realization only when it is being lived for purpose.

Again, the figure implicates the truth that life lacks direction within itself for the realization of this purpose. It can exist, but it cannot achieve. The horse and the mule can live in the wilderness and the prairies, but they will not achieve. Lasso them, corral them, break them in, put the bit and the bridle on them; then they will achieve. The bit and the bridle are the means necessary to achievement. Man can live without any control external to himself. He can answer all the impulses of his own being, he can let them have full sway and run riot. He can live, but he cannot achieve. Unless the forces in his being are under some kind of controlling power that will direct and energize, life is nothing more than a putting forth of effort, which is without value.

And so, finally, this figure of the bit and the bridle teaches us that life needs restraint in order to be realized, it needs impulse in order to achieve, and that such restraint and impulse come, not out of the forces of the life, but from without.

Now let us look at the two methods of life suggested. Neither of these methods is godless. The man who is entirely godless is not in view. Neither writer was thinking of such a man. The Hebrew Psalmist was singing for the people of God, and the whole point of his charge is its application to the people of God. He was appealing to those who had heard the voice of God saying to them:

I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go;
I will counsel thee with Mine eye upon thee.

It was that sense of the Divine relation to the soul, and the soul's relation to the Divine, which led him immediately to say what he did. Because of that, because God is pledged to your guidance, "Be ye not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding." So also when Paul wrote this injunction in the Ephesian letter, "Be not foolish." Therefore I say again that neither of these ways is godless. They rather reveal two methods of God with men; which method He adopts always depends on the man. Whether God shall adopt with me the method of the bit or the bridle, or the higher method, depends on me. But to that we will return in conclusion.

Now, what are these methods? The first is the method of compelling pressure; the second is the method of impelling motive. In the first we see life controlled by pressure from the outside; in the second, we see life impelled by the mystic motive of understanding, which is within. The first is the method of conflict; the second is the method of communion. Be not like the horse and the mule, which have no understanding, and must be kept under control with bit and bridle. The necessity for getting near, and being under control, is admitted; but because there is no understanding, the bit and the bridle, the compelling pressure, the conflict ending in victory for the superior will, are necessary. Be not like that, said the Psalmist; have understanding. More bluntly, the Christian Apostle said, Be not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Get the deep profound inner secret of your life so related to God that you will understand by the communion of love rather than by conflict the restraint which is necessary for realization. We are offered the choice between the restraint of compelling pressure and the restraint of impelling motive, the restraint of bit and bridle and the restraint of understanding. Bit and bridle mean the fight between two wills, and ultimately the mastery of the weaker by the stronger. Bit and bridle are the symbols of intermediary methods, made necessary because the soul is not consciously near to God, because it has no understanding. Horse and mule must be held in with bit and bridle, for they have no understanding. They are not near to their master in spirit, in thought, in mind. They cannot help it. They are not to be pitied. But when a man is in that state he is to be

pitied, nay, he is to be blamed. In the case of a man, the bit and the bridle mean God's employment of compelling pressure to force the will to higher purpose in harmony with His own will. God's method with most of us has had to be that of the bit and the bridle, of adverse circumstances, personal affliction, chastisement; and all because we have not been near enough to God to understand Him.

The method of understanding, the method of communion, the method of impelling motive, is the method, not of conflict between two wills, but of co-operation between the will of man and that which Paul, in another of his letters, so gloriously and adequately described as the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

The method of understanding is based on the comprehension of these very facts concerning the Divine will, that it is good and acceptable and perfect. To understand the will of the Lord is to love the Lord. Understanding is infinitely more than knowing. It is the comprehension, not merely of what the Lord commands, but of why the Lord commands. Understanding does not mean that we always know immediately the reason of what the Lord commands, but we know the One Who commands so well as to be perfectly at rest, even when we cannot understand the immediate reason of the command. It is good, it is perfect, it is acceptable. If we would finally apprehend the meaning of the word "understand," we may remind ourselves of another great psalm in which the Singer declared: "Thou understandest my thought afar off." That is infinitely more than knowing it. God understands the thought, He knows the reason of it, the genesis of it, how it came to be. Understanding the will of the Lord is the response of the soul of man to God's understanding of the soul. God's understanding is ultimate and final and perfect, and there is no darkness in it. As the soul of man knows these things about God, that soul understands. What it does not know of God's immediate reason or purpose it does understand to be perfectly right, since it is His will. Is there any finer word in the language to express what friendship is than the word "understanding"? Leave all your acquaintances, and think in the narrow circle of your friends. I am not speaking disparagingly of acquaintances; they are very valuable. But no soul has many friends. Fasten your attention on one. The greatest thing you can say to that friend is, "You understand." That does not mean that your friend can explain to you the mystery of the thing you are thinking, but it does mean that your friend understands this mystic call of the soul. Understanding goes out beyond intelligence, beyond emotion, and beyond will. It is a spiritual apprehension. To understand what the will of the Lord is, is to apprehend His motive. It is not always to know what the motive is, but it is to know that the motive is mastered by His infinite and unailing love.

Now we see why I read that passage in Isaiah for our lesson, which, in some senses, seems to have very little connection with the line of our meditation. I read it for its remarkable suggestions concerning Jesus. The prophet of the olden time, having climbed a great height, having dived into a great deep of understanding, described God's perfect Servant, and in that passage we see Him first as Man, and then immediately as God. The merging of the human and the divine is wonderfully indicated, and in both cases we have this thought of understanding. "He shall be quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord." That is the final glorious word about the Messiah in His ideal humanity. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. The Revisers have rendered it: "His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord." The Authorized Version had, and it was a better rendering: "He shall be quick of understanding." Sir George Adam Smith translated it: "He shall be keen of scent in the fear of the Lord." That is understanding! That is the story of the life of Jesus on the manward side, understanding. To my risen and glorified and exalted Lord I render apology for saying the thing I am going to say. There was no need for bit or bridle in the case of Jesus. No compelling circumstances crowded Him into obedience. He went through circumstances that were to His soul as the burning of fire, but not to compel His obedience. He was quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord.

The very next sentence in Isaiah reveals Him on the other side, as God dealing with man. He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears; but He shall judge righteousness judgment. In other words, when the Messiah exercises the judgment of Deity His judgment is not based on the only things that human judgment can be based on; neither according to the seeing of the eye nor the hearing of the ear. His judgment shall be based on understanding, on perfect knowledge, and perfect sympathy. So the light of the great passage comes to help us. This is the higher way of life, understanding. He who understands, yields, not to the pressure of bit and bridle, but to the sweet constraint of the eternal love. Be ye not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding. Be not foolish, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

Both texts make exactly the same appeal. That appeal is based on human capacity. That is the Biblical distinguishing conception of man. He is ever presented as capable of knowing, and of communing with God. Outside the Biblical revelation men have not yet reached that conclusion. They are approaching it. In the days of my youth the physical scientists were telling us that God was unknowable. Science is now beginning to admit that there may be the possibility of communication with a spirit world. That statement, however ignorant it is in some of its applications, is a step towards the ultimate truth that man is fashioned for having communion with God directly and immediately. That is the Biblical revelation. Think hurriedly of its outstanding figures. What are they? The first is that of a man in a garden. It is the story of Adam, the first man. What is the peculiar fact about him which the Bible insists on? That he could talk with God. What is the story of a man who came out from a great civilization that was entirely pagan and became the father and founder of a race that stands to this age in the world for the great monotheistic idea? It is the story of a man called Abram, who heard God speak, who was capable of communion with God. What is the story of a man who was a great lawgiver, and so great a lawgiver that his national code remains to this day the final court of high national morality? It is the story of

a man, Moses, who spoke face to face with God as a man talks with his friend. What is the story of all those prophecies of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Hosea, Amos, Habakkuk? They are all stories of men who heard God, who spoke to God, and in whose very bones the fire of the divine word burned.

Finally and centrally, there is the story of Jesus, and it is the story of a Man Who walked over dusty highways and over our fields, and in the midst of our temptations, enduring our toil, living by trust as we live by trust, but all the while talking with God. The Bible says to every man that he may know God and understand God. The highest function of the human soul is the function of adoration. That goes far out beyond intercession, is greater than thanksgiving, is far more magnificent even than praise which is uttered. It is the function of speechless consciousness of God. For that man is made.

The Biblical idea of man is that out of that exercise of adoration there shall come human inspiration for the carpenter's shop, the commonplaces of life, the doing of the next duty that comes, the taking of the next turning. That is the deepest meaning of Christianity.

The conception of Jesus concerning man is found in the words which John records for us in His final prayer, words perpetually quoted and never exhausted by quotation: "This is age abiding life, to know Thee, the only true God."

The letters of Paul's imprisonment, those to the Ephesians, the Colossians, and the Philippians, breathe his consuming passion that Christian people should come to the full knowledge of God. Again and again we find him expressing his thankfulness for their faith, their hope, their love; and when we read this we are inclined to say: What more could be needed? These people had faith and hope and love. Yet Paul said: I am praying always earnestly for you. To what end? That you may come to the knowledge, epignosis, the full knowledge of God. And there is the Biblical conception. In man is the light of life. In his new birth that light is rekindled. First, it is daybreak; then it groweth more and more unto the perfect day; and so at last it becomes high noon in the life of the soul. If a man will walk by that light, if he will answer that light, he lives by understanding, and the bit and the bridle are not necessary.

The appeal of the text expresses a divine purpose, and the divine purpose fundamentally is that of restraining and realizing life; and the divine desire is that this shall be done by understanding. The divine love, however, says: If you will not walk in the light by understanding, then you must learn by bit and bridle.

So, finally, the appeal of the text offers a great alternative, revealing to the life two methods of God with the soul, urging the higher, that of understanding, but definitely declaring that if the higher is not answered, then God will employ the other, and that for very love.

Now are we saying we have indeed been foolish, we have been as the horse and as the mule, and so we know the bit and bridle? If so, and I speak not to you now, but with you, let us learn to yield to the bit and the bridle, and if we do, because God has created us as He has, we shall come to understanding. Is not that the more common experience of life? Am I not touching the realm of experience when I say that almost all of us pass into the realm of understanding by the way of the bit and the bridle? With the majority of us it has been bit and bridle.

The young I would urge to choose the understanding way at once. This urging comes from one who has known much of bit and bridle through his own folly, through his own lack of spiritual mindedness. Choose the way of understanding. Cultivate your fellowship with God. Make time for the secret place, for the quiet hour, for getting near to God without pressure, that you may know, that you may understand. For the doing of this the great Lord Christ, our Saviour and our King, is ever at our disposal. Take advantage of His comradeship. Watch the glance of the eye, listen to the sound of the voice, observe the activity of the hand. Such contemplation brings the soul nearer to God, to more accurate understanding, and so makes less necessary the bit and the bridle.

031 - Psalm 37:7 - The Secrets of Rest

Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. Psalm 37:7

Whatever place Mendelssohn really occupies in the firmament of composers, it is certain that no single number of the great oratorios has made profounder or more lasting appeal to the heart of humanity than the poised and perfect air, "O rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." This is due, not only to the perfection of the music, but to the fact that Mendelssohn understood the theme.

The place of the writing of the air in his own life is full of interest, although not now to be dealt with at any length. Those of you who are familiar with the story of his life, a wonderful life of only eight and thirty years, will remember that it was in 1838, when he was twenty-seven years of age, that the subject of Elijah was suggested to him for an oratorio, and that it gradually took shape through years of stress and strain. You will also remember that in 1846 it was produced in Birmingham, and that he went back home again, broken in health, to die in a little more than a year. There can be little doubt that when the music of Elijah was written by Mendelssohn he was himself passing through stress and strain, yet living in the secret place of the Most High, knowing what it was indeed to "rest in the Lord."

Those of you most familiar with that oratorio will know the place this air occupies therein. It is in the second part. We have listened to the angry clamor of Jezebel in that strange hour when it seemed as though unrighteousness must inevitably triumph again over righteousness in Israel, in spite of the victory on Carmel. We have seen the prophet descending from the altitude of his triumph to the lowliness of the juniper tree. Under the juniper tree we have seen the angels come and minister to him. Mendelssohn, in his arrangement of the oratorio, has gathered some of the strains of the perpetual music which had comforted the heart of man, and has treated them as though the angel sang them to Elijah. Among the rest are the words of our text, "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." That placing of the air in the great oratorio is in perfect harmony with the spirit of the psalm, the introductory part of which we read as lesson. It opens in an atmosphere electric with trouble:

Fret not thyself because of evildoers,
Neither be thou envious against them that work unrighteousness,

and moves in its earliest verses through stages of experience until at last the ultimate note is reached in my text,

Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him

Let me attempt this morning to lead you first in meditation on the attitude described: "Rest in the Lord," interpreted by "wait patiently for Him." In the second place, let us inquire quite honestly, Is this possible? Finally, and briefly, let us attempt some personal application.

First, then, the attitude described in this passage: "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." I have already reminded you of that to which I now return for a moment. The text occurs in the first seven verses of the Thirty-seventh Psalm. The rest of the psalm is but exposition, explanation, application of the theme of these verses. All its fundamental verities are in these seven verses. Will you note the boundaries of them: the first phrase is,

Fret not thyself because of evildoers."

The last word is,

Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way,
Because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.

It is immediately evident that this opening movement in the great psalm is in the nature of a protest against panic. Whether the Psalmist was speaking to his own soul, or was writing to comfort and help a comrade, we cannot tell; the fact of importance is that behind the psalm we become conscious of strange conflict; it was composed in an atmosphere perplexing to the man of faith; in the background we see evildoers, men who work unrighteousness, and we see these men prospering in their way, bringing their wicked devices to pass. Wickedness is triumphant. That is the picture in the background. The psalm is addressed to a troubled soul, troubled by this vision of the apparent victory of evil, and I repeat that these opening and closing words, so far as the introductory movement is concerned, are those of protest against panic, "Fret not thyself," literally, Make not thy heart hot in the presence of the apparent victory of iniquity.

Between that opening word, "Fret not," and that final word, "Fret not," we find an ascending scale: "Trust in the Lord.... Delight thyself in the Lord.... Commit thy way unto the Lord.... Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." Rest, that is the eighth note in the octave. The fundamental note, and the first, is trust. Trust, delight, commit, rest, and wait patiently! As I was preparing my sermon I wished that I could take this congregation and divide it into sections, and make them sing the notes. I would like those occupying the section on my left hand to sing on one note, "Trust in the Lord." I would like those sitting in the central section to sing on another note, "Delight in the Lord." Then I would like those sitting on my right hand to sing, "Commit thy way unto the Lord." Finally, I would like those in the gallery to sing on yet another note, "Rest in the Lord." Then we would have a fine harmony, a perfect chord, the fundamental note, "Trust in the Lord," and the eighth note completing the music, "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." All around, the victory of iniquity, the clash of arms, the sound of war, the triumph of unrighteousness, and in the midst of it the music, "Trust... delight... commit... rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." Such is the musical motive, theme, method of the great psalm.

For a brief moment longer let me detain you on one matter to which I have already twice referred. The theme of the psalm was that of the energy and prosperity of evil men, causing perplexity and fretfulness to the man of faith. That is the situation. The men of faith, men who have endured on many a hard-fought field as seeing Him Who is invisible, men who have made great ventures on the basis of their conviction that the spiritual is true, men who have made sacrifices in the interests of the ultimate conquest of the world in righteousness for God, are conscious that things do not seem to be going that way; the drift is against righteousness: Jezebel, in spite of the victory, on Carmel. That is the background. War in spite of arbitration. New rebellions everywhere in spite of revival of spiritual interest. How is it that iniquity prospers? What is the meaning of the fact that these evil men are bringing their wicked

devices to pass? The heart is hot, restless. Panic seizes the soul. To that condition the psalm appeals: "Fret not thyself because of evildoers"; and the ultimate word is, "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him."

What is this word "rest"? You notice in the margin of the Revised Version a suggested alternative reading: "Be still before the Lord," or even more directly and literally, "Be silent to Jehovah." The word "rest" is one which literally means dumbness: be dumb, be silent, be quiet. You recognize immediately that this is not fatalism, but faith. If I take out of my text the phrases "in the Lord" and "in Him," it has no meaning and no value. If I take out those words, what have I left? "Rest... and wait patiently." That would be the uttermost word of fatalism, and absolutely impossible of realization by intelligent men. "Rest," but "in the Lord"; be dumb, be silent, but in the consciousness of Him. We are to be still in the consciousness of the fact that whatever the appearances of the hour may be, men and affairs are still within the grip of His government.

Yet, as I have pondered these words, I have come to the deliberate conclusion that the only interpretation of the opening injunction to "rest in the Lord" is to be found in the closing injunction to "wait patiently for Him." These are not two things which can be separated; rather, they constitute one great inclusive charge to rest, to be still, to be silent, to be dumb before God, and all that interpreted by that strange word, the meaning of which we are so apt to miss, "wait patiently for Him."

When, for myself, I really began carefully to ponder this great and final word in the music of the psalm, I confess I was almost startled to discover the meaning of this particular word which we translate wait patiently, for there are not two words in the Hebrew, but one. I was startled, I say, when I looked at this word carefully. Take the word as to its real meaning, and it seems entirely to contradict our popular conception of what it is to wait, and to wait patiently. The root meaning of the word is to whirl incessantly; it suggests incessant movement instead of quiet passivity. One was driven therefore from the word to its use. That it would be entirely false to the spirit of the psalm to interpret the meaning of the Psalmist by the root significance of the word is apparent, therefore we must discover the use of this Hebrew word. One found that it was occasionally used exactly as it is used in the psalm to indicate an attitude of soul in the presence of God; but it is far more often used to indicate strenuous agony, proceeding through processes, toward ultimate triumph. It is a word that has within it a sense of pain. It is a word which is persistently used for the travail which issues in birth. In the choice of the word there is a fine recognition of the fact that the hardest thing the man of faith can do is to wait. There is agony in the waiting, but it is the agony that moves toward realization. There is a pang in the waiting, but it is a birth pang. There is travail in the waiting, but it is travail that is co-operative with forces which are moving to victory. Consequently, one discovers in the use of this word, strangely startling in its root significance, that to wait patiently recognizes two things, sensitiveness of the wrong and sensitiveness to the issue.

When thinking of these things I heard outside my study window the sigh of the wind, and became conscious that autumn was upon us, and I confess that sorrow and sadness crept into my heart, sadness that dimmed the brightness of the vision. When I put down my work I took up the Westminster Gazette, and the first thing that met my eye was a little poem written over the signature of S. Gertrude Ford. I want to give you that poem. I will read it without interpretation, save to say that if you listen to the two views of autumn you will see the two viewpoints of the soul that waits, sensitiveness to the darkness and the tragedy around, but also sensitiveness to the issue, the larger fact that lies beyond.

Two Visions of Autumn

Leaves flaming and then fading; pomp of mists
That wreath, at dusk and dawn, the mountain's brow
With pride of opals and of amethysts;
The nest bare on the bough;
The swallow on the wing; the reign of flowers
Whose beauty breathes a wail of "Ichabod,"
Chrysanthemums that crown autumnal hours,
Asters and golden-rod;
The last crops garnered and the last-ripe fruits
Gathered; a sound of sighing in the air—
A sigh, too, in the tune the robin flutes,
And Autumn everywhere!
Autumn! the sleep that brings the waking night;
The scattering of the seed, not sown in vain,
That needs must fall into the ground and die
If it would live again;
The building of the throne where spring shall sit,
Girt round with all her lovely pageantry;
Such death, and only such, as holds in it

The birth that is to be—
This now and Winter later; then, O then,
The violet's breath, the cuckoo's call, the fair
New life that leaps in birds and beasts and men,
And Springtime everywhere!

That is waiting patiently. And the singer sang to me out of her consciousness of autumn the profoundest interpretation of my text: to the nest that is empty on the bough there is sensitiveness to the flight of the swallow, to the moaning, sighing of the autumn winds; but there is also the rarer sensitiveness to the issue, the life wrapped in the womb of death that shall burst to life in flowers, and bring the victory that is to be.

"Fret not thyself because of evildoers" because at the moment it seems as though the darkness were comprehending, apprehending, extinguishing the light, because it seems for the moment as though unrighteousness were winning its victory. "Fret not thyself," but rather "trust... delight... commit thy way... rest and wait patiently," keen and sensitive to the agony of the hour, but more sensitive to the springtime and the summer that are to be.

Is this possible? That depends entirely on our conception of God. What is our doctrine of God? Let me ask the question in another way, using the word with great carefulness and accuracy: What is our theology, our science of God? I want to make this affirmation: a man's conception of God creates his attitude toward the hour in which he lives. Or, to reverse the order of my statement, my attitude toward the hour in which I live is a revelation of my conception of God. Let us be careful in this matter. Our figures may imprison us, may dwarf our thinking, may blight the possibility of true spiritual conception. What is our conception of God? Is He King? What do you mean by king? A king may be a despot. Is He Shepherd? What do you mean by shepherd? What is the ultimate passion of the shepherd, the fleece and the profit from the carcass of a dead sheep? Is He a Father? Be very careful; a father may be one who gives his child an inheritance of death. By all of which I mean to say the highest, inspired figures of the Bible must be very cautiously used. We must always remember, when speaking of God, that we cannot interpret Him by the figure. We must know Him Himself, and so correct the figure to the standard of the infinite fact.

Trust in the Lord, delight in Him, commit thy way unto Him, rest in Him. Who is He? Whether I am able to rest in Him depends on the answer I give to that inquiry. I have to ask these questions to drive me back to this library. What God is revealed in the Bible? Let me summarize.

He is a God of knowledge. Here I dare not trust myself to stay, and I need not. I am speaking to men and women who know their Bibles, and the music of that fact is singing its way into your hearts, "He knoweth my downsitting and mine uprising, my going out and my coming in." He putteth my tears into His bottle; He numbereth the hairs of my head. I lift my eyes to the heavens, and look at the marvels there, unknown, unfathomable, and because He is strong in power not one faileth. He knows.

He is a God of wisdom, which is infinitely more than a God of knowledge. Knowledge is consciousness of the facts. Wisdom is knowledge in its application to necessity.

He is a God of holiness. Let me change the word "holiness" to the old Anglo-Saxon word "health"; He is the God of health, spiritual, mental, physical, and therefore the enemy of disease in spirit, mind, and body. His passion is a passion for completeness, holiness, perfection, and therefore He will make no truce with sin, and will sign no contract with imperfection. He is a God of holiness.

He is a God of might, able to do all His wisdom suggests, and His knowledge proves necessary.

He is a God of justice, judging not by the seeing of the eyes or the hearing of the ears, but by His perfect knowledge of the underlying motive. For that justice the heart of man cries out almost more than for mercy: to be judged ultimately by One Who will take into account the passion that burned and yet always seemed to be defeated. The God of infinite justice.

He is a God of patience, content to wait and walk with man; and in all poetry there never was a dream more beautiful than that He walks with men, accommodating the fine majesty of his goings to the feeble, halting frailty of human failure. The God of patience.

To summarize all, He is a God of love. I cannot grasp the idea in its totality, but it is inclusive, exhaustive, final.

These are all characteristics which merge in the fact of being, and I want some revelation that will help me to condense, to focus the glory that cannot be seen. The answer to that demand came when He appeared in human flesh and tabernacled among men and they beheld Him full of grace and truth. That is the revelation of God. The measure of our rest is the measure of our knowledge of God as He has been revealed to us in Christ. Restlessness is the revelation of lack of familiarity with God as He has been revealed in Christ. To know Him is to know that beyond the autumn is the gracious winter, and beyond it the glorious spring and triumphant summer, the endless cycle of operation that produces the results on which the heart of love is set and makes the very wrath of man to praise Him while the rest He girds upon Himself and restrains.

There are inevitable questions that a man must ask if he meditate on such a theme as this. Am I at rest? Have I learned to wait patiently? The problems are patent enough, God knows, and we know! Only the callous and hardhearted are unconcerned in the presence of the problems. This waiting patiently is not waiting callously, indifferently; it is not lazing in an armchair while the world drifts on in its agony. It is keen, sensitive, agonizing, consciousness of pain; but underneath is ever heard the anthem of the glory of God assured. The problems are patent enough; we need only merely interpret what I say by the last and most immediate manifestation. I was reading that little poem of Blake, the "Anguish of the Innocents." I am not going to read the poem; I remind you of certain phrases:

A robin, redbreast in a cage
Puts all heaven in a rage;

and again,

A dog starved at his master's gate
Predicts the ruin of the state;

and yet again,

A skylark wounded on the wing
Doth make a cherub cease to sing.

Dear old Blake, father of nature poetry, he was very near the heart of God; he knew. If you are insensitive in the presence of the problem of the hour you are not waiting patiently; if there is no whirling agony there is no true waiting. Yet there is a great difference between this whirling motion of the sensitive soul in the presence of agony and the fretfulness of the unbelieving heart.

Wait patiently. How can I do it? I take you back again to the thing I tried to say at the beginning: "Rest in the Lord" is the final note in an ascending scale. What are the things preceding? Trust in Him; that is the first venture of faith. Delight in Him; that is the discovery of His way and His law, and falling into His line. "Commit thy way unto Him"; that is, see to it that He has the governance of your life. Then rest in Him.

This, of course, is not the whole, or else we are but idle and noneffective, and that were to deny the persistent Bible teaching that man is called to fellowship with all the enterprises of God. Is He the God of knowledge? Then it is ours to know. Is He the God of Wisdom? It is ours to enter into fellowship with Him, to act wisely. Is He the God of holiness? Then we must be holy. Is He the God of might? Then we must be strong. Is He the God of justice? Then we are called to do justly. Is He the God of patience? Then we must be patient. Is He the God of love? Then love must master us.

But in order to give true effective service it is necessary that we should learn to rest and to wait patiently for Him. So may He bring our hearts into patient waiting through Christ.

032 - Psalm 46:7, 11 - Jehovah of Hosts - The God of Jacob

Jehovah of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Psalm 46:7; Psalm 46:11

In the history of the human race nothing has ever been done for its help or uplifting save through the principle of faith. Doubt is always destructive. Faith is forever constructive. That is to state the principle in the widest and broadest possible way. I am not now speaking only of the faith of the Christian, though, of course, it is to that I am proposing to come. It is true in every walk of life and every department of thought that the man of faith builds. The man who lacks faith breaks down.

This being granted, I submit that the particular quality of faith which has done most for the uplifting of humanity is that of faith in the living and eternal God. Faith that believes in the existence of God, and believes, moreover, in the Divine interest in human affairs, is the faith which has most helped the race.

The fact of God as the foundation of faith is our theme. I am speaking to Christian workers, to those upon whom the burden and the toil that makes His Kingdom come is resting, to those who sometimes amid the conflict are weary and almost discouraged. I am perfectly sure that it is the occasional experience of anyone doing real work for God. If we know what it is to get underneath even the edge of the world's agony with the imperial, lonely Christ, then we know what it is to have days of darkness, hours of questionings, problems, trials, temptation, and difficulties in Christian service.

Yet notwithstanding all such hours, and occasions, and questionings, an undercurrent of conviction exists in the heart of every member of the Christian community; it is one of unswerving and unabated confidence in God. He is the rock foundation upon which we build—the strong rock upon which faith fastens while we toil and suffer and serve all the while confident of the ultimate victory.

If I remind you of these things, it is because I think sometimes amid the toil we should stop and be conscious of the rock. The rock is always there, but perhaps the consciousness of some trembling child of God will be stronger for pausing to think of it.

These old Hebrew singers and seers had a very keen consciousness of the fact, though, perchance, they did not understand the nature and character of God as we do. They had to wait for the full shining of light in the Person of Jesus. This Psalm begins with the announcement in a single word of all the truth that it afterwards unfolded. God—and the psalmist has said everything when he has said God.

Yet, essential light is always such that we cannot look at it. We have not yet been able to gaze upon pure light. Light must be analyzed to enable us to appreciate it, to understand it. The pure light is the final fact, but the light must be broken up in order that we may apprehend it. After the psalmist has uttered the word which is all conclusive, he proceeds to say things about it until he comes to the seventh verse in the heart of the Psalm, until he comes to the closing sentences of the Psalm, and in these two verses he breaks up for us the essential light. "Jehovah of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." All I want to do is to consider this breaking up of the essential truth concerning God upon which our faith has fastened and must fasten if we are to continue to be workers together with Him and for Him.

Will you follow me, then, along two lines of meditation? First, a consideration of the twofold truth about God which my text suggests, and second, the twofold statement the psalmist makes based upon the twofold fact. The twofold fact concerning God—He is Jehovah of hosts, He is the God of Jacob. The twofold declaration he makes about this God; first, "He is with us"; second, He is "our refuge."

First, then, the twofold declaration concerning God: "The Lord of hosts... the God of Jacob."

"The Lord of hosts," or, as the American Revision has given it to us, "Jehovah of Hosts." The name by which he knew the Deity as self-existent and eternal. Other names of God which have come to us from the Hebrew people are preceded by qualifying words but never so with Jehovah. The Hebrew never wrote this name fully. It was the unpronounceable name, the incommunicable name, the name that stood lonely in majesty as the sign and symbol of the infinite things of God which no man could perfectly comprehend and therefore no man perfectly explain. Jehovah was the name which most forcefully gave expression to the facts concerning God which were beyond human comprehension—His absoluteness, without beginning, without end, without counsel taken, without forethought—for there was no thought before him—Jehovah.

If we are wise, we stand with the Jew in the presence of the name and confess our ignorance while we bow in reverential worship. Jehovah speaks of the continuousness of God, the self-determining power of the Most High, and His inward sufficiency, so that there is nothing beyond His consciousness. It is the greatest of all the words into which the fact of God is compressed in such a way as to announce forevermore to men that it cannot be expressed so that the mind of finite man can ever understand it.

The psalmist comes very near qualifying the word, for he adds "of hosts." Not that the word "of hosts" really qualifies "Jehovah," for, rather, the word "Jehovah" qualifies the "of hosts."

"Hosts." How is that word used in the Bible? It is employed in the Old Testament Scriptures and in the New Testament in different ways. It is used first with regard to the stars. We read in Genesis, "And the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them" (2:1). In the prophecy of Isaiah, "Lift up your eyes on high, and see Who hath created these, that bringeth out their host by number; He calleth them all by name; by the greatness of His might, and for that He is strong in power, not one is lacking" (40:26).

The same term is also used of the angels. "... I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right hand and on His left" (1Ki_22:19); and in the song that sounded o'er Bethlehem's plains after the angel's solo, it is recorded, "... there was... a multitude of the heavenly host praising God..." (Luk_2:13).

In the Book of Exodus the word is applied to the children of Israel. They are spoken of as the host of God. Thus it is used of the stars in the heavens, of the unfallen intelligences that people the world beyond our vision and knowledge, and of the companies of men that march across the earth and dwell upon its surface, of stars and seraphim and saints, host of stars, hosts of angels, hosts of saints. I believe in my text it is used of all these.

This phrase, "Jehovah of hosts," teaches us that Jehovah is absolute, sufficient, and superior. It declares to us that God is the Lord of the heavens and all their inhabitants. As one has beautifully expressed it, "The universe of matter and the world of mind were not only created, but are marshaled and ordered by God." We are now looking upon one side only of the Divine nature and being, thinking of Him as the One Who knows all hosts and marshals and controls them by His own power, and we are reminded of the wisdom of God and of the might and majesty of the Most High—"Jehovah of hosts...."

Turn to the other half of the declaration concerning God. "The God of Jacob...." If we were not so familiar with this text, we should be startled by the very daring of bringing together two such descriptions of God as we have within its compass. "Jehovah of hosts,..."

and in a moment, by a rapid change of terms, we are given another revelation of God, which I do not hesitate to say is far more startling than the former, especially when considered in the light thereof. "The Lord of hosts,..." and then suddenly, "the God of Jacob..." "The Lord of hosts,..." and as the phrase passes our lips we are amid the eternal expanse, the unfallen intelligences, the vision of any one of which would blind us were it granted to us at this moment. And suddenly, almost without warning, we move from the stellar spaces on to the earth. The stars grow dim until they are seen but as flecks and points of glory upon the darkling brow of night; the angels pass from our vision; and we are on one small planet, amid the hosts of heaven, in one small country upon that planet, looking into the face of one lonely man—Jacob. The psalmist says that the God Who is the God of all the hosts is the God of that man as surely and positively interested in that one speck of thinking life as in all the unfallen intelligences of the upper spaces; as surely and as positively committed to that man as to all the order of the infinite universe.

We have not yet reached the height and the depth of the mystery. We have not yet reached the word that is most startling of all in this consideration. Notice carefully what the psalmist says: "The God of Jacob..." I think we should not have been quite so startled if the psalmist had said the God of Israel. He says, "the God of Jacob..." I know only one man who is meaner than Jacob and that is Laban. The only comfort I ever got out of Jacob is that he was one too many for Laban. Of all men for astute, hard-driving meanness recommend me to Jacob. But God is "the God of Jacob..." Oh, my soul, here find thy comfort! I do not know whether it helps you, but it helps me. He is the God of Jacob, mean as Jacob was. This is the thing on which my faith fastens. "The Lord of hosts,..." yes; but "the God of Jacob!..." But was that man such a man as I? The longer I live the more astonished I am that God ever loved me at all. The longer I live the more astonished I am at that infinite grace which found me and loves me and keeps me. The meanness that lurks within, the possibilities of evil that I have discovered make me ask, "Will God look at me?" He is "the God of Jacob." He was his God and loved him notwithstanding all his meanness, enwrapped him with provision, led him, told him where to rest his head, and when he had laid that head upon the stone, linked heaven and earth with a symbolic ladder to teach him His care for him even while he was Jacob. Infinite in His majesty, "The Lord of hosts..."; infinite in His mercy, "the God of Jacob..." Stupendous is His power, upholding all things by the word thereof, "the Lord of hosts..."; sublime in His pity, "the God of Jacob..."

This revelation moves me more than any other. The very distance of the other fact enables me to assume an erect posture in the presence of it. "The Lord of hosts..."—and I hear the music and rhythm of the eternal order amid stars and angels. "The God of Jacob..."—I thought He was far away, I hoped I might, perchance, see the glistening of His dazzling robe of glory among the everlasting spaces. But He is not far away, He is with Jacob! It is not only in immensity but in littleness that God is great. Mark the condescension of this figure of speech; note the beauty of it. Notwithstanding the failure and wreckage of this life, despite the fact that it is anything but what God meant it to be, that in its foolish attempts to create its own destiny and carve its own fortune it has led itself into the region where character is blighted and spoiled by the dwarfing influences of vain ambition, yet the inspiring word comes to me—"the God of Jacob..." He has created man, and man has broken all His laws; but He is his God still and broods over him tenderly, his folly notwithstanding.

Let us consider what the psalmist says concerning these facts. First, then, the declaration, "The Lord of hosts is with us..." May I make application of the truth by reminding you again what this phrase "of hosts" means? He is the God of the stars, the God of the angels, the God of men in multitudes and companies. The God of all these hosts is with us, and for our making, for the making of Jacob, He will press all hosts into service if necessary. "But," you say, "this is imagination. Do you mean to suggest that this God, Who is the God of the individual, of Jacob, will use the stars for our making?" I desire to tell you nothing that is not within the covers of the Bible. I have no commission to speculate or philosophize. I have a commission to preach the Word. Let me read some Old Testament words:

The kings came and fought,
Then fought the kings of Canaan,
In Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo;
They took no gain of money.
They fought from heaven,
The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.
The river Kishon swept them away,
That ancient river, the river Kishon....

And then we are not surprised that the writer of the historic fact in poetic language addresses his soul thus: "... Oh, my soul, march on with strength." "The Lord of hosts is with us..." The God of the stars is committed to me, and, if there be necessity for it, the very stars in their courses shall fight for me against the foes that hinder me as I climb upward toward the home of God. He will command the whole universe for the making of a soul. Do you doubt me there? Then let me remind you that for the purchase of my soul and yours, for its reconciliation and redemption, He gave in one supreme gift that which was infinitely superior to all the stars—the One by Whose word they were made, and in Whose might they have consisted through the ages. He gave Him for the remaking of my broken, maimed, spoiled life. The stars, the hosts of God if need be, will be pressed into the service of the making of the saint, and into the service of the saint as he goes forth in toil for God.

But what of angels? Need I tarry to say anything about angels? I fear I must. This is a very Sadducean age. I am never quite sure whether there are more Sadducees or Pharisees in the world today. I do not mean in the accidentals of past manifestations but in the essentials. The Pharisee was the ritualist in his age. The Sadducee was the rationalist, and if you want to know the essentials, you can find it in one brief description in your New Testament. "... the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit...." And there are a great many Sadducees abroad today. They smile and they say, "You do not really believe this story that angels help us." I believe angels help us. I still believe with the psalmist that "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him...." I still believe with the New Testament writer, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?" Poetry, do you say? I know it is poetic statement, but it is fact that makes the poetry. I believe that what Jesus said once was true. I do not quite understand it, but I am sure it is true. Jesus said, "See that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven." I tell you honestly that I do not perfectly understand it. But there are certain things in it I am sure of. "My Father in heaven," the "little ones," and "their angels." How the angel beholds the face of the Father, or how the beholding of the angel saves the child I do not quite know; but I am sure of the Father and sure of the children, and sure of the angels. And men and women, I beseech you, doubt this Sadducean age that questions the ministry of the spirit and the ministries of the angels, and believe me, if we could see things as they are now, the Lord of hosts has His hosts of angels guarding the children, watching our way, preparing as we go.

Angels? The prophet Elisha was shut up in the city, and his servant was terribly anxious, and he said to him, "Master, what shall we do?" And the prophet said to God, "Lord,... open his eyes...."

And lo! to faith's enlightened sight
All the mountain flamed with light.

Jesus faced His passion, and when a blundering disciple smote His enemy with an old sword, He said: "... Put up again thy sword.... Thinkest thou that I cannot beseech My Father, and He shall even now send Me more than twelve legions of angels?"

But what about the hosts of men? Is Jehovah indeed with hosts of men? Yes, and not only is He Jehovah of hosts concerning the companies of His saints; Jehovah is the Lord of all hosts and of all the hosts of men. He is the Lord of all the armies in the world. Let no man misunderstand me for a moment. Let me say to you bluntly what is in my deepest soul. I hate all war as I hate hell, and I believe you can never justify it by Christian standards under any circumstances whatever. But if men will fight, God is the God of battles. He does not inspire the battle, but He governs its goings, and remember this, that no army ever marches across any path of this earth but in the check of His strong hand. It may be a little difficult sometimes to understand what God is doing. I suppose there have been moments in the lives of all of us who know anything of what it is to love and serve Him when we have grumbled with Carlyle, "Yes, God is in His heaven, but doing nothing." He is always doing something.

You say, "What has this to do with me?" He will compel the march of men to contribute to the making of men. He will press into the service of turning Jacob into Israel whole armies as they come and go. Hosts of stars, hosts of angels, hosts of men, and the Lord of all of them is with us.

Oh, take heart, my brothers, my sisters! Is the burden pressing heavily, is the toil almost too great to be borne? Do you stand upon the brink of great enterprises, afraid because of the vested interests, because of the hosts of wickedness? I bring you a message full of heart, hope, and courage. God, by His Spirit, sing it as an anthem in your heart. "The Lord of hosts is with us,..." and while its music thrills my soul I dare go back to battle and suffering and to the defeat of half an hour because I know at last the victory will be won, and the Lord of hosts cannot be defeated.

A final word about the other fact—"... the God of Jacob is our refuge." What did He do for Jacob? Think of his history. See at what infinite pains God was to make something out of him. Oh, the patience of God! oh, the waiting! oh, the forces pressed into the making of a man! oh, the opened heavens and the ascending and descending angels! oh, the glimpse of hosts He gave him one day! He called the name of one place Mahanaim which means the place of hosts. He said, "With my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two companies." Jacob, you have to learn that none of them are your own, that the Lord of hosts possesses every last skin of your cattle, and there are other hosts besides. There is Esau's host. He is coming to meet you with armed men. Jacob, you have yet to learn that a man may march against you with armed men all to no purpose if God is on your side; It was in that day that he saw God's host. What he saw, who shall tell? The host of God passed him, and he said, "Mahanaim," it is the place of hosts.

And he went down over the Jabbok, and God met with him and crippled him to make him. It was a wonderful night, only do not let us misinterpret it. I beseech you, do not talk as though Jacob wrestled with God and overcame Him. It is not true. Do not recite Jacob's words in the wrong tone. You know perfectly well that you may say correct words so that the tone gives a lie to the meaning of the words you recite. Do not imagine he said, "... I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." If you want to know all go to the prophecy of Hosea. It is declared he was heard when with strong crying and tears, he said, "... I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." It

was a voice choked with sorrow, the voice of a man being beaten, being crippled in the last agony of despair as he went down beneath the pressure of that mysterious hand. He won when he was beaten; he triumphed when he yielded; and God never let him alone until that night by crippling him He broke him.

And the day broke, and the people over the Jabbok saw him coming back again. Let us go and meet him. "Jacob, where have you been?" "Do not call me Jacob. My name is not Jacob. I was Jacob, a mere supplanter; but I am Israel, God-governed. Do not call me Jacob any more." I think I would have said, "Man, tell me, what is the matter? When I saw you last night, dividing up those bands to mollify Esau, you were erect, but now you are lame." "That limp will follow me to the end. It is the patent of my nobility; it is evidence of the fact that God has won at last." "... the God of Jacob is our refuge."

Oh, man, conscious of your own weakness! oh, brother, conscious of the evil within you, which baffles, beats and spoils you, "... the God of Jacob is our refuge." When the only pillow we have is a stone—a hard, unkind, unsympathetic stone—then will He open His heaven, so that His hosts may teach us that they with us are more than they that be against us; and if the God of Jacob be our refuge He will put His hands upon us, and, it may be, wound us, but the wounding is only for the deeper healing; it may be, cripple us, but the crippling is only for the stronger work that lies beyond; it may be, shatter all our cherished dreams, smiting the light of the mirage into nothingness; but it is in order that He may light the truer light and give to us the very nature of the sons of God.

I do not think any of us become Israels until we have been at the Jabbok. We never get to power until His hands have been upon us, and sometimes today as in the dim and distant past, God has to put the scar on the flesh and crippling on the life before He can do very much with us. Oh, dear heart, tried as by fire, sing while the fire burns, sing while the pain is hot. If you are trusting Him, He breaks to make, He cripples to crown. Then by God's grace we are going on; we are not thinking of resigning; we are not going to give this fight up, or anything up, except sin. "The Lord of hosts,..." marshaling all for our making, "... is with us; the God of Jacob,..." patient and strong and purposeful, "... is our refuge." We will follow, we will trust, we will fight—God helping us.

"... the God of Jacob is our refuge." Another word will convey the true meaning of this. The God of Jacob is "our high place"; "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, The righteous runneth into it and is set on high (and is safe). Such is the real word: The God of Jacob is "our high place." What means it? We have come down from immensity to localized position, from hosts to individuality, from the magnificent outlook of the Divine movements to personal life. And what is the promise about the God of Jacob? That He will be our "high place"; that we may be set in Him above circumstances, above enemies, above self, and so we look to the future with all confidence and security, because "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

If this announcement engender within us confidence, rest, assurance, it must also produce consecration. If looking on at our work with its light and its possibilities of sorrow and joy, we are confident and glad and the tone of our voice has in it the ring of the triumphant hosanna, if we are confident by reason of these words, then let it be remembered they must also produce consecration.

How will the fact of the Divine presence be manifested to the world? By the effect it produces upon us. So. while we take our joy and comfort out of the blessed thought that: "the Lord of hosts is with us,..." we must not forget that: the eyes of men are fixed upon us to discover Him of Whom we speak, and they will not see Him in shining glory; but if "the Lord of hosts is with us," and "the God of Jacob is our refuge," in the quiet calm of our spirit, in the tenderness of our love, in the straightness of our dealings with each other, in all the growing beauty of our lives, men will see that the: Lord of hosts—of order, of precision, and magnificence—and the God of Jacob—of love, of care, and sympathy—is with us. Ours is the blessing, but ours is also the responsibility. Let us remember that the effects produced will be in proportion to our realization of the Divine presence, and our realization of the Divine presence will be in proportion to our yielding of ourselves to the will that is known, to the word that is spoken, that doing the will we may know the doctrine and may pass from glory into glory, the light and beauty of the Divine shining evermore upon our faces, and in our lives, that others, too, may come to see the glory of the Lord of hosts, the patience of the God of Jacob.

033 - Psalm 77:10 - The True Focus

And I said, This is my infirmity... the years of the right hand of the Most High. Psalm 77:10

True focus is all important. This is known to every person who has looked upon a landscape through a field-glass or has seen its beauties gathered up in a camera. When the instrument is improperly adjusted, the images which it shows are blurred and indistinct; but when, by proper manipulation, the right focus is obtained, how clear, or, to use the technical word, how sharp the picture becomes, with every point clearly and properly defined! So is it with our survey of life. We must view our years from the proper point of vision, or mist and doubt will deceive us.

Reviewing our life, we may look at it in varied ways; but there is only one correct standpoint from which we may do so, and unless we find it there is no explanation of the enigma of life, no vision of things in their true proportion and perspective, nothing is sharp, true, and clearly defined. The life of any man, as he looks back upon it, is perhaps the greatest puzzle which his experience can furnish. His neighbor's life is not so bewildering to him as is his own until he has the right point of vision from which to view it.

Sorrows and perplexities, the dispensations of Providence, the new and subtle forms of temptation perpetually appearing, the grief, the anguish, the agony of life, who shall explain these things? What explanation can be found for the mystery of pain, the problem of suffering, and the other dark enigmas which encompass us?

If I can say a word to help some soul who, looking back upon life, finds it shrouded in mist, unshapen and unmeaning; if I can lead that man to a point of vision from which everything shall be sharp, clear, and well defined—the purpose of this sermon will have been answered. In order to do that let me at once say that I believe the one true point of vision is that given in our text: "The years of the right hand of the Most High." For elucidation of this thought we must deal with the text in its context.

This psalm, written by Asaph, is a very remarkable one, and is most clearly divided, as I think the casual observer will have noticed, by the words of my text. The first part of the psalm is of an absolutely different character from the second. When the Psalmist reaches the point where he says, "This is my infirmity; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High," the picture is changed completely. The same man is looking at it, but he has suddenly found an adjustment of the lens by which everything comes into focus, and he sees things as they really are. We shall discover how this comes about if we examine the psalm more closely.

The first ten verses contain twenty-two personal references and eleven allusions to God. The personal pronoun I occurs ten times, my nine times, me once, mine twice—twenty-two personal references in all. The Divine name, or pronouns having reference to the Divine, occur eleven times, namely, God four times, Jehovah twice, Thou once, He twice, and His twice.

This is not an unfair analysis of the psalm. A man's true condition of heart, mind, character, and position is never revealed by the creed (written by someone else) which he recites, but by his ordinary conversation, by the unmeasured words that pass over his lips. A man's real life is not revealed in carefully prepared utterances, but in those which fall from him without his knowledge, and upon which he would have put a check if he could. Thus doth Asaph, in the depth of a grief which is both personal and relative, pour out his complaint. As I hear him I wait for the little words of the speech, disregarding for the moment the great words that tell of his agony and pain, and, lo, personal pronouns come tumbling over each other until they double in number his reference to the Divine.

While the man is in this condition I notice also some of the phrases that fall from his lips. He says, "I will cry unto God with my voice; even unto God with my voice, and He will give ear unto me." Then the first nine verses contain a story of anguish without healing. "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord. My hand was stretched out in the night, and slacked not; my soul refused to be comforted." He sought God in some way which brought no comfort to him. "I remember God, and am disquieted." The memory of God brought him no peace. "I complain, my spirit is overwhelmed." Complaint brings no relief. "Thou holdest mine eyes watching: I am so troubled that I cannot speak." He charges even his sleeplessness upon God. "I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart; and my spirit made diligent search." Thus he goes back to past experiences; but even out of them he can get no comfort. This contemplation of his need issues in a series of questions which is almost a wail of despair. "Will the Lord cast off for ever? And will He be favourable no more? Is His mercy clean gone for ever? Doth His promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?"

This is a picture of actual things, but it is out of focus. Asaph has not reached the true point of vision. He is trying to examine his sorrow by taking his stand in the midst of it. He is looking into the bitterness of his own heart, and from his own history he is recalling happy days, only to have the misery of present experience accentuated by the memory of past joyousness and brightness. Sorrow is overwhelming him; and he imagines, in the darkness of his present condition, that God has forgotten him. He asks in the bitterness of his spirit, "Is His mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore?"

Suddenly there is an adjustment of the lens, and how great is the difference! "I said, This is my infirmity," this condition of mind. The words, "But I will remember," do not occur in the original. The Psalmist really said, "This is my infirmity—the years of the right hand of the Most High!" He does not announce his intention to dwell upon them, but he announces the character of the years themselves. It is the suddenness of a quick appreciation of the true view of things.

Do you not know what it is suddenly to adjust a picture, by the slightest touch of the hand, so that the whole thing is seen in its true focus? Yes, you have gained the real point of view. So it is here. From the midst of a God-questioning disposition, in which hope is lost, he suddenly says, "This is my infirmity—the years of the right hand of the Most High!" Now what do you find? The second half of the psalm is the same picture in focus. Apply to it the same test that we used for the first half. How many personal references are found in the last half of the psalm? Three only: the pronoun I thrice. How many references to God? Four and twenty: Jehovah once, Thy eleven times, the word God five times, Thou four times, Thee twice, and Thine once. In the first half the Divine is acknowledged, revered, believed in; but the man is overwhelmed with a sense of self and of present grief. In the second half God is the supreme thought in the mind of this man, and self has dropped into insignificance. In the second half of the psalm eight is the multiple of the man's speech concerning God as compared with his words about himself. I do not propose to enter upon a detailed comparison of the expressions in the second half with those of the first, but there is a remarkable change. In the beginning he said, "Hath God forgotten?" Now he says, "Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is a great god like unto God? Thou art the God that doest

wonders: Thou hast made known Thy strength among the peoples." This is the man who a moment ago was asking if God had ceased to be gracious, and if there were no more deliverance! You cannot take these two parts of the psalm and put them side by side without noticing the marvelous difference between them. One is all darkness, the other is all light; one is blurred and indistinct, the other is clear and sharp. One is characterized by disappointment, by the experience of a man who has almost lost his hold upon God; the other is the song of a man marching with God to victory against all opposition. How comes the difference? Everything depends upon our text. Suddenly in the midst of Asaph's wailing he is reminded, as we believe by the Holy Spirit, that "this is my infirmity—the years of the right hand of the Most High." Bearing in mind the necessity for omitting the words, "I will remember," we have, as I have said, a sudden adjustment of the picture of a man's life and condition; and that adjustment is brought about by his seeing that the years are from the right hand of the Most High.

The years are not the years of God—God has no years; but they are the years of man's own life. We necessarily and rightly mark off days into weeks, weeks into months, and months into years; but when you speak of God you speak of Him who is and has no years. He teaches us this by the words of inspiration. With Him a thousand of our years are as a day; and one day with Him is, in its infinite possibility, as a thousand years. God has no time.

The Psalmist, then, is here speaking of his own years, the measured portions of his existence. He counts them as they come—one, two, three, four, and on. What are these years? They are the years of the right hand of the Most High, the years that are held within the hand of God, the years that are molded, conditioned, and made by that hand. Nothing in the years of the Psalmist's own life is outside the hand of God. That is the force of the figure, which does not appear upon a first reading or upon the reading of the text in its isolation.

The old Hebrew thought concerning the right hand of God is full of meaning. In the song of Moses at the end of his life, as chronicled in Deu_33:2, he speaks of the right hand of God, saying, "From His right hand went a fiery law for the people," showing that the Hebrew mind thought of the right hand of God as a hand of law, of arrangement. In Psa_48:10 the right hand of God is spoken of as being full of righteousness, so that here we have not merely law, but equity, law based upon that which is just and true. In Psa_17:7 the psalmist refers to the right hand of God as a right hand of salvation. In Psa_20:6 the right hand of God is spoken of as His right hand of strength. In Psa_118:16 the right hand of God is spoken of as His right hand of action. When you come to the Song of Solomon (2:6), God's right hand is spoken of as an emblem of caressing and tender love. And in Psa_16:11 you have that magnificent declaration, "In Thy presence is fulness of joy; in Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

The right hand is a symbol peculiar to Hebrew thought and literature, and is used perpetually to mark some great fact in the character and person of God. Law and righteousness, salvation and strength, action and love, and the deep, full satisfaction of every necessity of human life, in pleasures forevermore—all these things, to the mind of the Hebrew, were wrapped up in that magnificent figure of the right hand of the Most High. The years of my life, now says the Psalmist, are years conditioned in law and righteousness—years in which there is the perpetual outworking of salvation and the unceasing manifestation of strength; they are years in which God is active for me, years in which I am perpetually caressed by the love and tenderness of the Divine heart, years which, because they come from the hand of God, are years of the making of eternal and undying pleasure. It was a new light upon his own life, a new point of vision, a new outlook. From this new point of vision the things which had issued in his dirge of wailing and sorrow were suddenly seen to be working together for his good, thus giving a forecast of the New Testament statement. The man had caught a glimpse of the explanation of the mystery of today, a glimpse of the outworking into perfect patterns and absolute completeness of the intricacies of the present moment; he had heard his own wail ending in a song of triumph; and all this because he had discovered the fact that his years are from the right hand of the Most High.

Falling back upon our previous statement, that the first half of the psalm and the second are different, and that the difference is wrought by a new vision of life, may we not ask, Wherein does the difference consist?

First of all, self-consciousness is overwhelmed in the sense of God; again, personal suffering is forgotten in view of the divine achievements; and, yet once again, personality is lost in the sense of a God-redeemed society.

Self-consciousness is overwhelmed in a sense of God. One of the most tender, comforting, compassionate methods of God is that which I venture to say you and I never make use of for the comfort of a single broken heart, namely, the exhibition by God of His own overwhelming power and majesty. Again and again is this the way by which God comes with tenderest touch of healing upon broken and bruised hearts. When Job was at the utmost extremity of his pain and desolation God came to him with no word such as I would have attempted to give him, with no word which appeared to have in it the element of explanation or soothing. God came with a display of His own glory. He made His might and majesty to pass before the astonished gaze of the man who sat in the dust; and in that might and majesty of the Most High was the healing which Job so sorely needed. So here Asaph finds his healing and the forgetfulness of himself in a vision of the majesty of God.

Notice the marvelous figurative splendor of the description of the movements of God which you have in the closing verses of the psalm: thunder and lightning, the waters pained, as the Hebrew word expresses it, smitten into agony by the presence of God. This

is a graphic picture of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt's bondage and from the waters of the Red Sea. It is the movement of God, the majesty of His march, the magnificence of His power; and as the wounded, broken spirit of Asaph comes face to face with that revelation of power his wounds are forgotten, his sorrow passes away, he is caught up into the excellent and healing glory of the majesty of the great King, and self-consciousness is overwhelmed in a sense of God. If we may but get this vision of the years that have passed from us there will be healing for wounds and solace for sorrow in the forgetfulness of self because of an enlarged conception of the majesty of the Most High.

The mightiest influences of God are the most gentle in their touch, and the forces which are most full of majesty and power are the forces that come into contact with wounds and pain in order to heal them. In your knowledge and in mine there is nothing mightier than the sun. The old poetry we learned at school, so simple and quaint, told how the wind and the sun fought for mastery over man. That story of the sun gaining a victory which the wind could not gain has its perpetual philosophy and its undying meaning for the sons of men. The sun, presently smiting the earth upon which the rain and the snow have fallen, will be answered by the hoarded wealth which shall prove that same sun to be the most wondrous of natural forces. Into its light you bring the crushed and faded child which is being nursed back to life, and the kiss of the great sun upon the cheek of the little one makes it also blossom and bloom with beauty. Wounded men and women should not dwell upon their wounds and try to heal them, but should carry them into the sunlight of the majesty of God. They should say of the broken years, the years which are full of pain, the strange, mysterious years. These are the years of the Most High, and upon them shall come the healing of God's uprising in glory.

Notice also how personality is lost in the sense of a God-redeemed society. How different is the last verse of this psalm from the first! The first verse, what is it? "I will cry unto God with my voice; even unto God with my voice, and He will give ear unto me." It is a personal cry. The last verse, what is it? "Thou leddest Thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron." To quote once more from the book of Job, "The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends." How many an individual wound has been healed in this larger outlook upon life, which can come only as we learn that our years are the years of the right hand of the Most High! We look back upon a year that is past, and what is the picture? I cannot answer for you, nor can you do so for me. Shall we not, each for himself and for herself, think of it?

Are there not moments when, looking back upon the year and thinking of your own part in it, you are almost driven to cry out, "Will the Lord cast off for ever? And will He be favourable no more? Is His mercy clean gone for ever? Doth His promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath He, in anger, shut up His tender mercies?" How many are saying these things in their hearts, if not with their lips! It is a source of great joy and comfort to know that if we feel these things we need not try to hide them from God. There are expressions with regard to your life which would appear almost blasphemous in the ears of your fellow Christian, but God understands them. I would not say a word to rebuke the anguish and grief that are swelling up in these verses. I dare not. I have no rebuke for such a man or woman, for the soul that has confessed to some awful anguish from which it cannot get away, and is asking, "Has God forgotten?" We must remember that the words of the Psalmist are questions, not affirmations. These words are the cry of a wounded, buffeted, and broken spirit, almost driven to despair by the perplexing facts and forces of life.

But there is something better than this, something beyond it. "The years of the right hand of the Most High." There is a point of vision from which we may look upon the selfsame things, and may catch on them already the light and gleam of morning, an overwhelming sorrow, saying, Yes, that happened, not upon such a day of such a month in such a year, but in one of the years of the right hand of the Most High. It was a part of the fiery law, a method of the divine righteousness, a ministry of the divine love; it had within it the creation of joy forevermore. To-day we can say these things only by faith, not yet by sight, not yet by personal realization, but by faith. There is no agony of heart that we endure, if we know how to take it, that has not in it the element that shall make heaven.

"The years of the right hand of the Most High." I do not see the hand, I have only the years; but I know the hand is there. I know that somewhere beyond this, when the mists have rolled aside, and the life I am conscious of today shall have passed into fuller realization, then out of the darkness will the light come, and out of the agony of the moment will heaven's pleasure have been evolved. I hardly like to suggest how this comes about; but some of us are already doing so:

Ah, then what raptured greetings
On Canaan's happy shore!
What knitting severed friendships up,
Where partings are no more!

There is a sense in which, today I begin to spell this out, lisping the truth with stammering tongue.

This is but an illustration, but follow me patiently. The year 1894 was a year of His right hand, and there will be more than compensation in the morning of meeting for all the agony of waiting, for I shall see her again, not as a child, but as a fair maiden, in the Father's mansion, grown like Him; and in that transformation there will be all the sweetness which I have lost and missed through the years. The year 1907 was a year of His right hand. I shall see him again, and then the touch of old age will not be upon the brow, but the abiding strength of the age-abiding life. I can only believe it now; but I do believe it. All the years are "the years of the right

hand of the Most High." Accidents? There are none. Catastrophes? The word is canceled in the vocabulary of faith. God's covenant is "ordered in all things, and sure." Oh, strange covenant: perplexing mystery of infinite love wrought out through the more perplexing mystery of pain.

May God teach us His lesson of being still and waiting amid the sorrow. All your affliction, all your sorrow, all your disappointment, in God's hand. Oh, the light of it, the glory of it! We do believe; God help our unbelief, teaching us to wait quietly amid the stress and strain of the darkness.

I cannot see His skies, above,
For autumn mists obscure the west;
But in the shelter of His love,
I fain would hush my heart to rest;
Though some bright hopes have tenderly
Been gathered to their last repose,
This sweet remembrance comforts me—
He knows.

For why the summer came—and went,
He shows not yet to me, His child;
But patience, richer than content,
Broods softly where the summer smiled;
And where the last bright leaf shall fall,
The last pale blossom find repose,
Is safe with Him Who loveth all—
He knows.

Amid the hush of finished things
He hears His children's feeblest prayer,
The tender shadowing of His wings
Extends beyond their utmost care;
And loss that ne'er on earth grows less,
With deep and holy meaning glows,
Since loss, and pain, and homelessness—
He knows.

I cannot tell if cross or crown
Lies next within His thought for me;
It matters not, since faith hath grown
So strong in His dear sympathy;
The clouds that o'er my pathway move,
The joys beyond its final close,
All rise from His deep heart of love—
He knows.

So farewell 1907, and let this 1908 bring with it what it may, two years among the many, which with all the rest are "the years of the right hand of the Most High."

034 - Psalm 96:9 - Worship, Beauty, Holiness

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Psalm 96:9

The word that attracts our attention in this text is the word "beauty." "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." Whether in application this word is of supreme importance may be another question. The very fact of its attractiveness compels us to consider its setting. In that consideration we shall discover its suggestiveness and importance.

The particular word translated "beauty" here is used only five times in the Scriptures: once in Pro_14:28, where it is translated in the Authorized Version "honour," and in the Revised Version "glory"; again in 1Ch_16:29; in the psalm which was sung when the ark was brought from the house of Obed-edom to its resting-place in the tent or tabernacle; again in II Chronicles, in the story of Jehoshaphat's arrangement of the singers who were to precede the army, who were charged in their singing to "praise the beauty of holiness"; again in Psalms 29, and in the text.

It is a somewhat rare word therefore. Our English word "beauty" does most perfectly express the real meaning of the word, of which

it is a translation. It suggests honor, or glory, or beauty, not as a decoration, but as an intrinsic value, an inherent quality. The Revised Version suggests in its marginal reading in each case that we should read, "Worship the Lord in holy array." But this does not for a single moment interfere with the essential thought of the passage, for it cannot refer merely to material clothing, but to that outshining of inner character which is the true array of the soul in its approach to God in worship, that outshining of inner character which makes even sackcloth beautiful, and homespun a thing of ineffable glory. We do not forget that when our Lord was transfigured, that transfiguration was not the shining upon Him of a light from heaven, nor even, as I venture to believe, the outshining of His Deity, but rather the shining through of the essential glory and perfection of His human nature. Eye-witnesses tell us that His very raiment became white and glistening, and yet as we read the story we know that it was the appearance of the glory of a raiment due to the essential glory of His own character there manifested to them for their sakes rather than for His.

And so with our word "beauty" here the thought is that of an inherent quality, not a decoration, not something put on as from without, but something manifest to the eye, and appealing to the emotion and the mind, as being in itself glorious and beautiful, and yet belonging essentially to the fact with which we are brought into contact. The text is a cry, calling upon men to worship, and declaring what is the true condition of worship, and so incidentally revealing the true nature of worship. Only once does this particular word occur apart from the same kind of setting—in the book of Proverbs. Everywhere else it is associated with worship, holiness. "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

These words lie in the midst of language in which the psalmist is appealing to men to praise God, calling them to recognize His greatness, calling them to recognize His glory, calling them to think of His power and His majesty, and urging them to answer the things their eyes see, and their hearts feel, by offering praise to Him.

In this call so poetic and full of beauty there is a revelation of the deep meaning of worship, of its abiding condition, and glory. "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." The supreme thing is worship. But how is worship to be rendered? "In the beauty of holiness." Wherever you find beauty, it is the outcome of holiness. Wherever you find beauty as the outcome of holiness that beauty in itself is incense, is worship. To attempt to worship in any other way is to fail. To live the life of holiness is to live the life of beauty, and that is to worship.

What is worship? The essential and simple meaning of the word, and therefore the fundamental thought is that of prostration, of bowing down. Worship suggests that attitude which recognizes the throne, which recognizes superiority; that attitude of the life which takes the low place of absolute reverence in the presence of that which takes hold upon the life and compels it. It is a word full of force, which constrains us, and compels us to the attitude of reverence.

The word "worship" runs through the Bible, and the thought of worship is to be found from beginning to end. The thought of worship is on the part of man, the recognition of Divine sufficiency, the recognition of his absolute dependence upon the Divine sufficiency, the confession that all he needs in his own life he finds in the life of God. And the spoken answer to that conviction of the abandonment and surrender of the whole of man to God is worship. I worship in the presence of God as I recognize that in Him I find everything that my life demands, as I find that in myself I am incomplete everywhere, save as I am brought into relationship with Him. A sense of my need and His resource, a sense that all my life finds only its highest and its best, and fulfils itself in relation to Him, produces the act and the attitude of worship. The attitude of worship is the attitude of a subject bent before the King. The attitude of worship is the attitude of a child yielding all its love to its Father. The attitude of worship is the attitude of the sheep that follows the leading of the Shepherd, and is content in all that pasturage which He appoints. It is the attitude of saying Yes to everything that God says.

The height of worship is realized in expression in the use of two words which have never been translated, which remain upon the page of Holy Scripture, and in the common language of the Church, as they were in the language where they originated: "Hallelujah," and "Amen." When I have learned to say those two words with all my mind, and heart, and soul, and being, I have at once found the highest place of worship, and the fullest realization of my own life. "Let all the people praise the Lord, Let all the people say, Amen." And when I pass on presently to the end of the Divine Library, I hear in heaven, "a great multitude... saying, Hallelujah.... And a second time they say, Hallelujah"; and the great responsive answer is Amen. Amen to His will, and Hallelujah the offering of praise. I know it is but a simple symbol. I know it is but the saying of an old thing, but I address my own heart as much as any of you, my brethren, and I say, Oh, soul of mine, hast thou learned to say Amen to Him, and that upon the basis of a deep and profound conviction of all His absolute perfection in government, and method and providence? Canst thou say, not as the boisterous shout of an unenlightened soul, but as the quiet expression of a heart resting in the perfection of God, Hallelujah and Amen? Then that is worship, that is life.

I am not going to stay to speak at all upon secondary worship, save to refer to it and recognize it. The outward acts are sacred. The songs of praise that tell of the goodness and the grace and the sufficiency of God, the prayer that pours out its burden because it is confident in God's resource to meet all human need, the quiet attention to the Word of God as we meditate upon it: these are the outward acts of worship, and behind the praise and the prayer, and the meditation upon His Word is this great consciousness that all

I need is in Him, and that in proportion as my whole life is abandoned to Him, in that proportion my need will be met, and so my life itself, restful in God, powerful because of my relationship to Him, will be a song, a psalm, an anthem; or if I may go back and borrow the words, God's own poetry, God's own poem, the music that glorifies Him.

So, brethren, the outward acts are the least important parts of our worship. If I have not been worshiping God for the last six days, I cannot worship Him this morning. If there has been no song through my life to God, I am not prepared to sing His praise, and the reason why so often

Hosannas languish on our tongues

is because "our devotion dies." This is a pause in worship, and expresses a perpetual attitude. The worship of the sanctuary is wholly meaningless and valueless save as it is preceded by and prepared for by the worship of the life.

We may now press on to ask the meaning of the psalmist when he says, "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." Let us fix our attention in the most simple way upon the word "beauty," in our common use of it.

When Charles Kingsley lay dying, he said, among other things, "How beautiful God is!" We are almost startled by the word. We do not often think of it in that connection. We speak of His majesty. We speak of His might. We speak of His mercy. We speak of His holiness. We speak of His love. And yet, brethren, there is nothing of God which He has made more patent to men than the fact of His beauty. Every ultimate thought of God is beautiful. Every manifestation of God is full of beauty. I recently came across some old verses of Tupper's. They are quaint, and somewhat curious. He says:

For beauty hideth everywhere, that Reason's child may seek her,
And having found the gem of price, may set it in God's crown.
Beauty nestleth in the rosebud, or walketh the firmament with planets;
She is heard in the beetle's evening hymn, and shouteth in the matins of the sun;
The cheek of the peach is glowing with her smile, her splendor blazeth in the lightning;
She is the dryad of the woods, the naiad of the streams.
Her golden hair hath tapestried the silkworm's silent chamber,
And to her measured harmonies the wild waves beat in time;
With tinkling feet at eventide she danceth in the meadows,
Or, like a Titan, lieth stretched athwart the ridgy Alps;
She is rising in her veil of mist a Venus from the waters,—
Men gaze upon the loveliness,—and, lo, it is beautiful exceedingly:
She, with the might of a Briarens, is dragging down the clouds upon the mountains,—
Men look upon the grandeur,—and, lo, it is excellent in glory.
There is beauty in the rolling clouds, and placid shingle beach,
In feathery snows, and whistling winds, and dun electric skies;
There is beauty in the rounded woods, dank with heavy foliage,
In laughing fields, and dented hills, the valley and its lake;
There is beauty in the gullies, beauty on the cliffs, beauty in sun and shade,
In rocks and rivers, seas and plains,—the earth is drowned in beauty.
Beauty coileth with the water snake, and is cradled in the shrew-mouse's nest,
She flitteth out with evening bats, and the soft mole hid her in his tunnel;
The limpet is encamped upon the shore, and beauty not a stranger to his tent;
The silvery dace, and golden carp, thread the rushes with her;
She saileth into clouds with an eagle, she fluttereth into tulips with a hummingbird;
The pasturing kine are of her company, and she prowleth with the leopard in his jungle.
Go back to the first lines of it with me for a moment—
For beauty hideth everywhere, that Reason's child may seek her,
And having found the gem of price, may set it in God's crown.

That is the key to it. Tupper saw beauty in all these things. We are so blind, and seldom see beauty, but he saw God's handiwork, evidences of God's presence and God's power, and God's law operating in the blossom of a perfect beauty.

My brethren, these are commonplaces to us. Yet how often do we see them? I am not here to remind you of these things. I am here to take you back to the thought of the beauty of God, blossoming in the daisy on the sod, blazing in the starry heavens, to bring you back to my text, "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness," to remind you of the fact that every ultimate thought of God is beautiful, and that ugliness and deformity are never of God. All the beauty of flowers in form and color and perfume are of God. All the beauty of the seasons as they pass: spring and summer and autumn and winter, all that is beautiful in man physically, mentally,

spiritually, and all that is beautiful in the interrelation between man and man, is of God.

To put this same truth for one moment from another standpoint, everything which is of God is beautiful. The marring of a flower which makes it ugly is not of God. That in a man which is repulsive is not of God. God is a God of might. God is a God of glory. God is a God of love. But He is also the God of beauty. It is well for us to think of it for a moment and remember it.

I remember staying, some years ago, while conducting some special services, with a friend in Devonshire. There came by the morning mail to him some roses wrought in silk by deft fingers here in London. And he put some of these roses wrought in silk by me, and said, "They are very beautiful." And holding them up in my folly and short-sightedness, I said, "They are perfect." He replied, "Are they, really?" And he brought his microscope, and put the rose beneath it, and the very silk itself became coarse as sackcloth. Then he brought from his greenhouse a spray of God's roses, and put them under the microscope, and the more closely I looked, the more perfect they were. The beauty of God as manifest in the tiniest cell of the flower as in its completion is manifest in the blossoming of the flower, as in the rhythmic order of the heavens about me. Brethren, God is very beautiful, and everything which is of God is essentially beautiful.

Therefore, do not let us be afraid of our text when we come to the subject of holiness. "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." In God's works beauty is the expression of holiness.

The Beauty is His handiwork,
The Light glows from His face,
The perfume is His sweetness,
All Earth's beauty is His grace.

If God's ultimate thought is realized only along the line of His law, then the law is that which creates the beauty; and everywhere beauty is marred by the breaking of law. Holiness, then, is rectitude of character, the condition of beauty. What is "the beauty of holiness"? The realization of a Divine thought by abiding in the Divine law. That is the one and only condition of worship.

Let me illustrate again. The flowers that blossom on the sod are worshiping God. But how are they worshiping? They are worshiping by their beauty. And what is their beauty? The beauty is the result of the operation of the law of God; and in answer to the laws of their life, not by effort, not by garments other than the garments of essential glory wrought out from their inner life, they worship. They worship in beauty because they worship in holiness. They worship within the realm of law. "The trees of the Lord," said one of the ancient writers, "are full," and I often regret the addition in translation which imagines that the Hebrew method of expression is so imperfect that we must add to it to complete it. Our translators have written, "The trees of the Lord are full of sap." They thought it was poetic. I think it was prosaic. I think they had been looking at a tree, and they thought there was nothing but sap. The Hebrew word is "full." Change the word "sap" to "beauty," and that would still be incomplete. There are things which are subtracted from by adding to. "The trees of the Lord are full," full of sap, full of beauty, full of health, full of poetry.

But let me introduce the word "beauty" here. "The trees of the Lord are full of beauty," and are they not? Oh, it is good to get away and stand among the trees. "The trees of the Lord are full." "The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars." What did the psalmist mean? He says, "The God of glory thundereth... the Lord breaketh in pieces the cedars of Lebanon." The Word of God, the enunciation of law is upon them, and they have heard, and have answered, and in the uprising of their life, they have blossomed into fulness of form and beauty. Did you ever see an ugly tree? I have, but it was a tree some fool of a man had tried to cut into the shape of a bird. But a tree is full of beauty. What is its beauty? It is the beauty of law. You spoil the law of the tree, and you will rob it of its beauty, and you will rob God of His worship.

You may climb higher. The cloud rises in the sky, and you with your incipient infidelity grumble because the sun is shut out from your patch of earth. Presently the cloud is giving itself away, flinging itself out upon the earth; and gradually it exhausts itself, and ceases to be. Every rain shower is the worshiping of a cloud, its fulfilment of the purpose of its being. It is its answer to the movement of God in the economy of life. And as the cloud pours itself out it worships, it worships in the beauty of holiness. The tides that come and go worship, and worship in beauty, worship in majesty, the deep diapason of their voice roaring around us, until we are deafened, but it is all an anthem of worship. But what is their beauty? The answer to law, the fulfilling of the purpose of God.

So we climb by these illustrations to man. When does a man worship. A man worships when he is what God meant him to be. I may sing every song in the hymnbook, and never worship. I may recite every creed that was ever prepared, and never worship. I may inflict all manner of scourging upon this body of mine, and never worship. I may kneel in long lonely vigils of the night, and never worship; and the song, and the sacrifice, and the prayer are nothing unless I am, in this one lonely individual life of mine, what God Almighty meant me to be. When I am that my whole life worships.

How can I be that? Only as I discover His law, only as I walk in His ways; and here is the difference between the flower and man. The supreme dignity, the tremendous and overwhelming majesty of your life and mine is that of our power to choose, to elect, to decide, to will. Consequently the worship of the soul that can choose and decide and elect and will is profounder, mightier, greater

than any other worship could be. It is not in the antiphonal song of choirs, or in the chanting of music to which we listen, or even in our own singing; it is in taking hold of our individual life, and the putting of it into such relationship with God that it becomes what He means it should be.

I do not worship God by going to China as a missionary if God wants me to stay at home and do the work of a carpenter. I do not worship God by aspiring to some mighty and heroic thing for Him if the capacity He has given me is for doing the quiet thing, and the simple thing, and the hidden thing, and the unknown thing. It would be very foolish for the hummingbird, instead of entering the tulip, to try to beat back the air and combat with the eagle. It worships by staying where God puts it. It would be very wicked for the eagle to cultivate a mock modesty, and say that it preferred to remain among the tulips when it ought to be soaring sunwards.

So that if I have spoken to you about the fact that God has foreordained works, that we should walk in them, I now remind you that if you worship when you find God's appointment, and when you walk in the way God has appointed, you realize your own life. Worship consists in the finding of my own life, and the yielding of it wholly to God for the fulfilment of His purpose. That is worship! You say, Would you tell us to find our life? Did not Jesus say we must lose it? Yes, "He that findeth his life shall lose it," but He did not finish there: "He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it," not another life, not a new life, not a new order of life, not an angel's life, for instance, but his own life. The Cross is necessary, restraint is necessary, sacrifice is necessary, self-denial is necessary; but these things are all preliminary, and when Paul describes the Christian life at its fullest, he does not say, I am crucified. That is the wicket gate, that is the pathway that leads out, that is the beginning. "I have been crucified with Christ: yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God."

Or again, he says, speaking of Christ Himself, "It is Christ that died," but that is not the last thing, nor the final thing, "yea rather, that was raised from the dead." And so if the Cross be absolutely necessary, and it is—your cross, my cross, my individual dying to the ambitions of selfish desire, all that is necessary; but beyond it, life. What life? My life. The new birth is but the passing into the possibility of the first birth. The new creation is but the finding of the meaning of, and the fulfilment of the purposes of the first creation. "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." Discover His law, answer His law, walk in the way of His appointing. Let Him Who made you lead out all the facts of your life to the fulfilment of His purpose, and then your whole life is worship.

Then, brethren, you will see that worship does not begin when you come here. This is a very valuable part of worship, but it is secondary worship, symbolic worship. This is the day in which we cease the worship that perfectly glorifies Him in order that in song and praise and prayer we may remind ourselves of the perpetual and unending truth that life lived within His will, and according to His law, the life of holiness is the beauty that glorifies God. This service is but a pause in which in word and attitude we give expression to life's inner song. And if there be no such inner song, there is no worship here. Worship is the perpetual poetry of Divine power and Divine love expressed in human life.

Angels worship not merely when veiling their faces they sing of His holiness, but when ceasing their singing at His bidding, they fly to catch the live coal from the altar, and touch the lips of a penitent soul who sighs. It is true "they also serve who only stand and wait." But it is equally true that they also worship who serve, and serve perpetually. And it is in the service of a life, not specific acts done as apart from the life, not because I teach in the Sabbath school, or preach here, that I worship. I may preach here today, and never worship. But because my life is found in His law, is answering His call, responsive to His provision and arrangement, so almost, without knowing it, my life has become a song, a praise, an anthem. So I worship! I join the angels, and all Nature, in worship when I become what God intends I should be. And in that blossoming of His ideal we sing the song of His greatness and His love.

Our midnight is Thy smile withdrawn;
Our noontide is Thy gracious dawn;
Our rainbow arch, Thy mercy's sign;
All save the clouds of sin are Thine.
Grant us Thy Truth to make us free,
And kindling hearts that burn for Thee,
Till all Thy living altars claim
One holy Light, one heavenly flame.

And so I pray that when the service is over, and the Sabbath day has passed, we may go back to know that in the shop, in the office, in the home and market place, in all the toil of the commonplaces, we can worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Where there is holiness there is beauty. Where there is beauty there is worship. However ornate the worship may be in external things, if it lacks the beauty of holiness, it never reaches the inner sanctuary, and never glorifies God.

Thou wilt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: For it is time to have pity upon her: yea, the set time is come. For Thy servants take pleasure in her stones, And have pity upon her dust. Psalm 102:13-14

This psalm is peculiar, in that in the inscription to be found at its head we have a declaration of its character, and a revelation of the circumstances under which it may be used. That inscription reads thus:

A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord.

It is a prayer of the afflicted when he is overwhelmed. It is a prayer that is to be used when the afflicted and overwhelmed soul is in the presence of Jehovah. It is a psalm, therefore, which sets affliction in the light of the government of God.

It is impossible and unnecessary to find the date of the writing of this psalm. Hengstenberg earnestly maintained that it was Davidic, whereas Perowne shares the general opinion that it was written in exile, and that the set time referred to the end of Jeremiah's seventy years, when the exiled people were hoping for the dawn of a better day.

These are opinions only. The far more interesting fact is that the author of the letter to the Hebrews ignores altogether the question of human dating and human authorship, and ascribes some of the words of the psalm to Jehovah Himself. In the opening chapter of that letter he declares that God says of His Son,

Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth,
And the heavens are the work of Thy hands:
They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure,

all of which is direct quotation from the latter part of this psalm.

Consequently, the New Testament would lead us to understand that the fulfilment of the psalm—that is, the filling to the full of its spiritual significance—is only discovered as it is interpreted by the experiences of our blessed Lord Himself. According to the writer of the letter to the Hebrews, the psalm is pre-eminently and finally Messianic.

If that be accepted, let us at least pause long enough to notice the fact that it falls into three parts. In the first eleven verses we have nothing but the expression of overwhelming and desolating sorrow. At verse twenty-three the strain, broken in upon at verse eleven, is taken up again: "He weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days. I said: O, my God, take me not away in the midst of my days." Again it is the plaintive note of an overwhelming grief. In the middle of that verse the tone changes, and we read, "Thy years are throughout all generations"; and we should certainly have read that as though it were still the appeal of the suffering one to God, were it not that the writer of the letter to the Hebrews says that these are words in which God answers the cry of His suffering servant. When out of the midst of sorrow he cries, the answer of the Father is this: "Thy years are throughout all generations. Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth." Therein, we have revealed the secret of the Messiah's strength and victory.

But in the paragraph which I have omitted, verses twelve to twenty-two, we have the great song of Zion—Zion personified, Zion afflicted, Zion expecting deliverance. And the text that I have chosen this morning lies at the center of that central section of this wonderful psalm. Its immediate application is to Zion:

Thou wilt arise, and have mercy upon Zion:
For it is time to have pity upon her: yea, the set time is come.
Because thy servants take pleasure in her stones,
And have pity upon her dust.

That is, upon her very rubbish.

But if the immediate application, when the singer wrote his song, was an application to Zion, its principles are of much wider application. There is no solution suggested here of the problem of pain, or, to use the larger word, which indicates both cause and effect, there is no solution here of the universal problem of evil; but there is a revelation of the place of affliction in the economy of God for the men of faith. I am quite conscious that all about this text there is the atmosphere of Hebrew hope and expectation. I am quite conscious of how much there is in it that seems to belong wholly to the past; but I propose to turn aside from such things in order that we may discover two or three matters of supreme importance as they cast their light upon the afflictions of the men of faith. There is, I repeat therefore, a revelation here of the place of affliction in the economy of God. And I crave your patience while I tarry a moment longer, by way of introduction, to speak of the word affliction. I am not speaking here, neither is this the thought of the psalm, or the common thought of that word affliction, of certain phases of personal grief and sorrow, for the coming of which there is no responsibility resting upon the sufferers. That is an entirely different matter. Affliction here is chastisement, the dealing of God with a sinning people. Whether individually or nationally, or in a Church application, the principles are the same. And so I repeat, that in these wonderful verses of the ancient psalm, light is flung upon the economy of God in His method of afflicting His people on account of their sin.

I will first of all summarize these matters in three statements, which I shall then endeavor to lay before you by way of illustration and application.

These words, in the song of the psalmist, remind us first of all that there is a set time, a set time for deliverance out of affliction. "Thou wilt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: For it is time to have pity upon her: yea, the set time is come."

In the second place, this quotation from the song of the psalmist makes it perfectly evident that the set time for deliverance arrives when God arises. "Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion."

Finally, the song teaches us that the attitude of His people in affliction determines the set time of His arising to deliver. The set time is come because, "Thy servants take pleasure in her stones, And have pity upon her dust."

Let me repeat even more briefly the threefold thought. First, there is a set time in the economy of God for deliverance out of affliction. Secondly, the set time arrives when God arises. Finally, God arises when His people have gained the value of affliction.

Perhaps now I ought to pause long enough to say, in the presence of this congregation, that which is especially upon my heart. During the past week, I have been present at a very remarkable meeting in London. On Friday evening last, it was my privilege to speak at St. James's Hall in company with Canon Hay Aitken and Mr. John McNeill at a meeting called for the purpose of praise and thanksgiving for the Revival of Religion fifty years ago. And I am bound to say to you this morning, speaking as I now do to my own people, and in the home of my own service, that I was variously impressed by that gathering. That it was a very remarkable one, no one who was present can possibly deny. To sit surrounded by so many of these men was to feel glad that so many of them tarried until this hour. To hear the story of what God then wrought was to fill the soul, even at this distance, with a great joy and a great gladness. But to be in that meeting was to be conscious of a grave peril, a peril that I think characterizes this hour peculiarly—the peril of persistent looking back instead of confident looking up. And growing out of that is another peril—that of desiring to imitate the methods of the past, to adopt the phrasing of the past, to compel this age to forgetfulness of the freedom and the freshness of the Spirit's activity, and to crowd it back into the methods of fifty years ago.

I was impressed, moreover, with the more insidious and graver peril of an undue haste to be away from the time of affliction. That this is a time of affliction in spiritual things, I suppose we are all ready to admit. There is a sense in which we do sigh for manifestations of bygone days, a sense in which we cannot help being appalled, first of all, at the apparent carelessness and overwhelming indifference of the masses of the people to spiritual things; and, secondly, at the growing selfishness of the most spiritually minded people in the Christian Church. First, I say at the carelessness and indifference of vast multitudes of men and women by whom we are surrounded. We need look no further afield than our own city. We need take in no wider period than that of this morning's service. We have but to remind ourselves of facts with which we are so familiar that they fail to appeal to us, that at this very hour the vast mass of London's population has no thought of God and no care for religion.

We have also to confess that there is a grave danger in this hour, that we should be guilty of that which James described, as asking in order that we may spend upon our own lusts. Remember, brethren, that passage has an application to us, and its profoundest application is not that which we usually make. The lust of spiritual selfishness is more devilish than the animal lust of the street. When a Christian man forever prays that God will bless him, and loses his passion for the lost and the ruined, he is denying Christ far more forcibly than the man who profanes openly upon the public highway; and the peril of all our Bible conferences and conventions is this, that vast crowds come together for their own spiritual enrichment.

I know that this is a day of dearth, a day of drought, a day of affliction; but I am growingly convinced that the thing we need to do is to discover, and yield to the principle revealed in this passage in the Psalms, the principle revealed through all the teaching of the Bible. We need to come to an understanding of the fact, that when we pray that God will end this state of things we may be very sincere; but we may be making a profound mistake, and God may be saying to us, in answer to our praying: "Wherefore criest thou unto Me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." While we may be absolutely sincere as we cry, "Awake, awake; put on strength, O arm of the Lord," He may answer us as He answered His people in the ancient days: "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem." It is as though, in answer to our cry to God for revival, He should say to us, I have never slept or slumbered. It is you who have slept and slumbered. In order that we may understand this matter, let us here consider these things in quiet and solemn meditation. I bring you this morning the message which God has spoken to my heart, a message not to you, beloved, first, but to me; and to be shared with you, because I believe it is the thing we need to hear in the presence of the widespread drought in spiritual things that characterizes our outlook.

Let us, then, remember that there is a set time, and mark the significance of the word—an appointed time, a set time for deliverance out of affliction. This is in itself a message full of comfort, full of encouragement. We must, however, consider it in its relationship to the other things to be said; but let us dwell upon the simple fact itself for two or three minutes. The people of God in the day of affliction are not abandoned by God. The verse preceding that which I have chosen as text has these words: "But Thou, O Lord,

shalt abide forever." The marginal reading of the Revision surely helps us here. "But Thou, O Jehovah, sittest as King forever, And Thy memorial unto all generations." This was the consciousness out of which the song of the psalmist's confidence was born. God has not abandoned His people in the day that seems to be a day of drought, and a day of darkness, and a day of affliction. He is nigh when He seems absent. He is watching when He seems blind. He is active when He seems idle. Said Habbakuk, mystified by the drought and darkness, and the dread of the day in which he lived: "What is God doing? 'I cry out unto Thee of violence, and Thou wilt not save.'" He complained because of the sin of his age, and God seemed to make no response. In answer to that complaint, Jehovah declared: "I work a work in your days, which ye will not believe though it be told you." And then He told him—told him that He was girding Cyrus, a man outside the covenant, to do the work which was not being done by the people within the covenant. And Habbakuk, more amazed than ever, said: "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will look forth to see what He will speak with me;" and the result of that patient waiting for God was that the prophecy ended with a great song:

For though the fig tree shall not blossom,
Neither shall fruit be in the vines;
The labour of the olive shall fail,
And the fields shall yield no meat;
The flocks shall be cut off from the fold,
And there shall be no herd in the stalls;
Yet I will rejoice in the Lord.

That is the true attitude of faith today. In the midst of the drought, in the midst of the failure, we dishonour God when we allow ourselves to give way to panic: "Thou, O Lord, sittest as King forever."

We are to remember also that deliverance is always closely related to affliction in the economy of God. Deliverance is the reason of affliction. He doth not willingly afflict. And wherever affliction comes, His purpose is deliverance; not from the affliction, but from that which was the reason of the coming of the affliction. Why does God afflict, withhold the evidences of His power, suffer the deadly drought to settle upon His people, until there is no flower and no fruit, and no realization of spiritual things? In order to correct some underlying evil, and therefore deliverance is the reason of the affliction. He afflicts in order to bring a deeper and profounder deliverance. We cry too often to be delivered from the punishment, instead of the sin that lies behind it. We are anxious to escape from the things that cause us pain rather than from the things that cause God pain. Deliverance is the reason of affliction, and deliverance, therefore, is the issue of affliction. And when it comes, it is the explanation of affliction. The Church of God has never yet passed through a period of affliction, but that, looking back, it has seen the reason of it; and the wonderful deliverance wrought has explained all the process of chastisement and of darkness.

And once again, therefore, affliction in the economy of God is beneficent. Read the song of Zion in this central paragraph to the end, and what do you find? "That men may declare the name of the Lord in Zion, And His praise in Jerusalem." The result, then, of affliction in the experience of the men of faith is the blessing of others.

All the days of darkness are in His economy. These principles have application to the individual; they have application to the nation; they have application to the Church of God.

I turn over in this wonderful Book of Psalms to the one hundred and nineteenth, and I find the value of affliction in the life of the individual recognized in these words. In verse sixty-seven: "Before I was afflicted I went astray; But now I observe Thy word." In verse seventy-one: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted That I may learn Thy statutes." In verse seventy-five: "I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are righteous, And that in faithfulness Thou hast afflicted me." How many saints there are in this congregation this morning who could add their testimony to the truth of these words! Delivered from affliction we see its infinite value, and we are able to say, It was good for us that we have been afflicted.

That also is true in national life. Without turning to it now, I pray you read most carefully at your leisure that awe-inspiring passage, the first chapter of Isaiah, in which all the bruising and wounding and affliction of Israel is revealed to be God's necessary method of restoring the nation to Himself.

Or, in illustration of the application of the principle to the Church, remember the words of the writer of the letter to the Hebrews, which we read in our lesson: "All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous, but grievous: yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness."

By so much as the present darkness and the present drought is the act of God—and it must be His act, for He withholds—it is part of a process by which He is preparing for a great deliverance. Decreases! I am weary of the lament over them. They may most assuredly be evidences that God is at work, sifting among His people. I pick up all kinds of religious newspapers, and I read of decrease and of consequent lamentation. Nay, rather thank God if He will but sift our ranks, and make our numbers less, in order to make our forces greater, for then deliverance is at the doors. All the afflictions of God, if we set affliction in the light of His Throne of

government, are beneficent.

But now mark the second thought. The set time of deliverance arrives when God arises. "Thou wilt arise, and have mercy upon Zion," and that takes us back to the initial word, "But Thou, O Lord, sittest as King forever." There is no limitation of His knowledge. He understands the causes, watches the processes, and proceeds toward the issues. There is no limitation of His power, and mark how the psalmist explains this: "Thy memorial, Thy remembrance unto all generations." That is to declare that God's attitude always takes posterity into account; that whatever He does today, He is doing not only in the interest of today, but in the interest of tomorrow. His remembrance of the generations is a principle that we often forget when we revolt against Divine judgments; that when God visits in judgment it is not merely the moment of His visitation which is within His own infinite mind, but the next moment, and the following day, and the years that lie ahead, and the centuries and millenniums and ages of the future. The King Who sitteth enthroned forever is not acting in your life in the interest of the half-hour in which He acts, but in the interest of all the generations that lie ahead. Why should we attempt to hasten His movements? Why should we pray as though He had forgotten? Why should we express the agony of our hearts in the presence of present failure as though the blame of it lay upon God? He will arise, said the psalmist. When? At the right moment, at the set time, when trouble has done its work He ends it. When wrath has praised Him, He restrains it. When the forsaking for a season has resulted in a sense of need, He returns. Nothing can prevent Him; His remembrance never fails. It is not necessary that we should remind Him. His purpose never changes. It is useless that we should attempt to change it. His throne never trembles. It is not necessary that we should endeavor to hold it up. I speak out of my own heart when I say to you that I am convinced that what we need is a new vision of God and a new vision of His throne, in order to be delivered from the panic that fills our hearts within the Church about spiritual things, and within the nation about national things. These restless, feverish, godless, narrow thoughts sweeping over us are born of a dim vision of the throne of God, and of the God Who sits upon it.

Thou, O Jehovah, sittest as King forever,
And Thy memorial unto all generations.
Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion;

and the heart that comes to consciousness of this twofold fact is delivered from panic, and is kept firm and steady.

But once again and finally, and this is the point of importance to us. The attitude of God's own people determines the set time of His arising to deliver.

Thou wilt arise, and have mercy upon Zion:
For it is time to have pity upon her: yea, the set time is come.
Because Thy servants take pleasure in her stones,
And have pity upon her dust.

Place the psalm where you will in the history of the ancient people, it matters not: the principle is the same. Jerusalem in ruins, her stones in heaps, her beautiful places piles of rubbish; and the people have been careless and indifferent. But at last there comes a sense of shame and a sense of repentance and contrition, and they begin to mourn over the ruin. In that hour the set time is come. Not when amid the ruin the nation flings the blame of it upon God, but when amid the ruin the nation takes the shame of it into its own heart, and gets down in humiliation before God; that is the hour of hope. These are the tears which He gilds with the glory of a new day. This is the hour for God's arising. When the lesson is learned, and the wayward heart weeps over the ruin, the set time for deliverance has come. When—it may be through blood and desolation—the nation learns the value of righteousness, then the set time for deliverance is come.

Or, finally—and that is the main point of application now—when within the Christian Church the ineffectiveness of everything in the absence of God makes us pity the dust of Zion, the day of revival is dawning. The interpretation of that thought is to be found in the words of Christ to Laodicea. What Laodicea said, the Church is in danger of saying today: "I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing." The Divine estimate is otherwise: "Thou art the wretched one, and miserable and poor and blind and naked." When the Church realizes the truth of that, and comes to the realization of the ineffectiveness of all she has, while Christ is excluded, having to seek admission to His own home, then the day is dawning, and the first breath of the wind of renewal may be felt sweeping over the garden of God.

I say to you solemnly this morning, it is utterly useless to meet and pray for revival. Let us rather humble ourselves before God, repent in dust and ashes, confess that numbers and wealth and statistics are nothing, that what we supremely need to recognize is our ruin and our rubbish. When we pity these, God will pity us. The set time of deliverance is determined by the attitude of His people.

This meditation, beloved, should produce two results. It should cure all panic, if our hearts are right with God. "He sitteth as King forever," and He will arise. And, strange and contradictory as this affirmation may seem, a paradox indeed, if this meditation should

issue in the cure of panic, it will also become the inspiration of anxiety—anxiety to learn the lessons of our affliction, and anxiety to right the wrongs that exist within our own borders. We must be patient with God because He is patient with us. We must be impatient, not with Him, but with ourselves. The day of revival, the day of visitation, the day of new blessing, manifested perchance in a new way, entirely different from anything the past has ever seen, comes to the individual, to the nation, to the Church in that hour when he or it or she has learned the lessons of affliction.

We wait beneath the furnace blast
The pangs of transformation;
Not painlessly doth God recast,
And mould anew the nation
Where wrongs expire;
Nor spares the hand
That from the land
Uproots the ancient evil.
Then let the selfish lips be dumb,
And hushed the breath of sighing;
Before the joy of peace must come
The pains of purifying.
God give us grace, each in his place
To bear his lot;
And, murmuring not,
Endure and wait the labour.

In the midst of affliction, therefore, let us remember that God needs no persuasion to act, and that our anxiety should be that we come to such an attitude as will enable Him to do so.

036 - Psalm 112:7 - The Fixed Heart in the Day of Frightfulness

He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. Psalm 112:7

The first part of the text describes a most desirable state of mind, that of being able to hear evil tidings without trembling and without panic. The second part of the text reveals the secret of such fearlessness. It is that of the fixed heart, and of the heart fixed because it has confidence in God.

This is supremely a day of evil tidings. Our newspapers are full of them. They contain nothing else. Their good news, the good news for which we look, and which comes to us ever and anon, is always laden with anguish. Battles won mean hearts broken. The tide of sorrow is rising higher and higher in the national life, and its dark waters are overflowing into every hamlet and every home. But they are especially emphatic, these newspapers of ours, about the tidings which are wholly evil. They tell us that the Government is incapable and weak, that politicians are blind, that generals are incapable, or, to summarize, that all the wise men are out of office. These are evil tidings, because for the most part they are untrue.

But there are other tidings coming to us day by day. The situation in the Balkans is critical, the position in Mesopotamia is uncertain, the peril of the sea is not over—perchance Germany is arming every ship in her fleet with seventeen-inch guns, and building submarine monitors; and the summer is to bring the Zeppelins perpetually! Well, these tidings are evil, because there is an element of truth, perchance, in the whole of them. These are the tidings that assault the soul, the mind, the heart, day by day.

Is it possible under such circumstances to be free from panic? Can broken hearts still be courageous? Can minds assaulted by panic-stricken rumor still be fearless? Can wills be dauntless in the presence of great perils? The answer of the text to these inquiries is that there is a man who is unafraid of evil tidings, and that the secret of that man's quietness is that "his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." Let us, first, look at his man; and then let us consider the secret of his fearlessness in the midst of circumstances that make for fear.

The whole of the psalm from which the text is taken is in celebration of this man; and it is closely related to the preceding one. Both are acrostic psalms in the Hebrew Bible; each has twenty-two lines, and each line in every case commences with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Their relationship is patent. Psalm 111 celebrates Jehovah. Psalm 112 celebrates the man who trusteth in Jehovah. A most interesting exercise is to read them together, that is, to read verse one of Psalm 111, then verse one in 112, and so on throughout. Such a reading will reveal that all the things of excellence and glory and beauty celebrated in Jehovah are found also in the man who trusts in Him, and is obedient to Him. Observe the closing of the first of these psalms and the opening of the second; for there we have an immediate indication of relationship. The psalm that celebrates the glory of Jehovah ends in these words:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
A good understanding have all they that do thereafter;
His praise endureth forever.

And the next psalm opens:

Praise ye the Lord.
Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord,
That delighteth greatly in His commandments.

Psalms 112, then, is a character sketch; it is the revelation of a man. It is as beautiful as anything in literature. One wonders whether the writer knew some one man of whom he was thinking. Be that as it may, a man is in view, whether actual or ideal, and it is of this man that the words of our text are employed:

He shall not be afraid of evil tidings;
His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

Now, we must see this man. Let me try to describe him as he is here described by the psalmist, but in other words.

The first thing I notice about him is the fact with which the singer opens. He is a God-fearing man.

Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord,
That delighteth greatly in His commandments.

So reads the first verse of the psalm. My phrase is a much more modern one: he is a God-fearing man. He is a man whose first thought is Godward, a man whose whole life is lived under the mastery of the supreme and fundamental fact that he believes in God. This man may regularly, once or twice a week, or more often, say: "I believe in God the Father Almighty"; or he may hardly ever recite the creed in that particular form, but that is the truth about him. He is a God-fearing man.

The next thing I observe about him is that he is a home-making man.

His children shall be mighty upon earth:
The generation of the upright shall be blessed.
Wealth and riches are in his house,

(Remember these qualities are often found, in the high sense of the words, in the cottage as well as in the castle.)

And his righteousness endureth forever.

His seed mighty in the earth, his generation blessed among the sons of men—wealth and riches in his house are set in relationship to righteousness. He is the home-making man, the man who, first believing in God, has realized, in the deepest of life, though it may be that he does not often talk about it, that God's first circle of human society is the home and the family. He is a home-making man.

The next thing I observe is that he is a helping man:

Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.

Let me say at once that this translation misses the point of the declaration, which really is that this man ariseth unto the upright as light in the darkness. He is a center from which light flashes out on the way of other men. Notice what follows: "He is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous." "He dealeth graciously and lendeth"; and yet again, presently,

He hath dispersed, he hath given to the needy;
His righteousness endureth forever.

He is a man who is helping other men.

Finally, I observe one other thing about him. He is a hated man:

The wicked shall see it, and be grieved;
He shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away.

This, then, is the man; he is a God-fearing man, a home-making man, a man who is always helping other people, a man who is hated by wicked men. Of that man the psalmist says:

He shall not be afraid of evil tidings,
His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

Let us watch him in the day of evil tidings. What will he do? He gets the news of battle and of death! His heart is stricken, but he does not tremble. He reads his newspaper, and then puts it down, and goes on with his duty. If that man should be destroyed in an air raid, it will be at his post, and he will meet death cheerfully. "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed."

Whether this man was a man in the olden time on whom the psalmist looked, or whether he is the man you know, your father, perchance, he is a strong man, and all men know it. How is his strength to be accounted for?

And so we pass to consider the second part of the text, the revelation of the secret of this man's fearlessness:

His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

First, "His heart is fixed." Men who are strong are always men who are fixed somewhere, who have a conviction from which they cannot be separated by argument, which cannot be changed, whatever the circumstances in the midst of which they live. Sometimes these men are very narrow, but they are wonderfully strong; they are singularly obstinate, but they are splendidly dependable. Sometimes their convictions resolve themselves into two or three great fundamental truths, and they are never moved from them. Consequently, we always know where to find those men. The fixed heart is the secret of courage. Courage is an affair of the heart; courage is the consciousness of the heart that is fixed. The positive is sometimes best illuminated by the negative. Therefore, let me say that men not so fixed are weak men, however strong they may be. I cannot better illustrate here than by a quotation from old Jacob. When Jacob was dying, he looked out on all his sons, and described them. Mark particularly his description of Reuben, and do not begin where people generally begin, "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." We must go further back. "Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength; the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power. Unstable as water, thou shalt not have the excellency." Was there ever a more graphic picture of the failure of a strong man than that? Reuben, thou art the excellency of dignity, thou art the excellency of power, thou art the beginning of my strength; thou shalt not have the excellency, thou shalt not enter into the inheritance of thine own possession! Why? Thou art unstable as water! The man, who potentially was a great man, was weak, vacillating, because his heart was not fixed, he had laid hold on nothing that was eternal and positive! Such a man drifts, is moved by every wind that sweeps over the surface of the sea, is unstable as water. That man is afraid in the day of evil tidings; that man leaves his post of duty when he expects an air raid; that man talks in the railway train, and everywhere, about the failure of the Government and the failure of the politicians and the failure of the generals! Such a man is a menace to the State, and a hindrance to the purposes of God. His heart is not fixed; he has no central secret of power. He is dynamic, he is kinetic, but he is not static. He is full of power, full of activity in certain directions, but he lacks that secret strength that enables his power to operate to purpose and to victory, and that keeps him strong in the shock of battle, in tempest and hurricane.

We leave him, and by the contrast we see more clearly this old-fashioned man, this God-fearing man, this home-making man, this man who is always willing to help someone else, this man who is hated by evil men, and so is highly complimented. This man is not afraid of evil tidings, because his heart is fixed.

The supreme value of this declaration, however, is that the psalmist has defined the fixity, "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." This man finds his strength in the fact that at all times he maintains in his thinking the central and fundamental relationships of his life; he is trusting in the Lord. Again, to use the negative method of illustration, his heart is not fixed, trusting in himself, but is fixed, trusting in the God Who explains what he is within himself, the God to Whom he himself is related. In a certain way this man has no confidence in himself at all. In another way this man is perfectly confident of his ability to do the thing that God has appointed he should do; and he will do it, whatever storms may sweep, yea, though the mountains be removed and cast into the midst of the sea. He will not go on tour to watch them falling in the sea. He will stay where he is, and do his duty in the midst of the clash. He is trusting in the Lord, not in himself. And yet again, the fixity that characterizes the man described by the psalmist is not of confidence in circumstances. A man who is not confident in circumstances is careless about them. If a man sees only the things that are happening, then, if they are not going according to his idea, he is perturbed, filled with fear—evil tidings render him hopeless. But if a man sees that there is a God controlling all circumstances, then, if circumstances are characterized by turmoil, so that nothing seems in place or in order, he is still unafraid, because he knows that circumstances are the arrangement of God. Therefore this man, trusting in God, knows that while he abides at his post, in the midst of the turmoil, the last word is not the word turmoil, but the word of the God Who is presiding over it. "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."

And so one is driven to inquire: Who is this Lord in Whom this man trusts? Who is the God Whom this man fears, and in the fear of Whom he makes strong his own home, holds out helping hands to all who need his help, and because of these things is hated of wickedness? We go back again to Psalms 111, and there we find no doctrine of God, so far as a declaration of the mystery of His Being is concerned, but He is celebrated in the things He does, and by these things He is made known. The psalmist says of Him,

"The works of the Lord are great," and "His work is honor and majesty." Here are two words, the light and shadow of which we miss in our reading. Great are the things done! Majestic and honorable is the thing made! The psalmist says of Him that He "is gracious and full of compassion," that He is faithful to His covenants with His people; that He is true and just in all His deeds. Evil tidings come to the man who trusts in his God, tidings of death, tidings of disaster, tidings of difficulty; but the man knows by what he knows of God, not so much in character as in history, that God is overruling. The man knows that God is great in His doing, that He is majestic and stately in the things that He makes to be, that He is in Himself gracious and compassionate, that He is faithful to His covenants, that He is true and just in His deeds, and, therefore, the man is not afraid.

Come back again to the second of these psalms, and observe the effect of this knowledge on the character of the man. This fixity of heart results in fixity of character, and that fixity may be expressed in the two simplest phrases possible. This man is a man in whom there burns persistently a passion for righteousness and a pity for all need. "Holy and reverend is His name," sings the psalmist of the God in Whom the man trusts, and when he comes to write of the man who trusts in the Lord, the references to the righteousness of the man run throughout. The God in Whom this man believes is the God of unsullied and undeviating holiness, and, therefore, the passion of this man's life is a passion for truth, for righteousness. But the God in Whom this man believes is also a God full of compassion and tender mercy, and, therefore, the man who believes in Him becomes God's distributing center: he scattereth, distributeth, helpeth. His own heart fixed in the God of holiness, he stands for righteousness in human affairs. His own heart homed in the infinite compassion of Deity, he stands for pity and grace and tenderness in the sons of men. Consequently, he is not afraid of evil tidings.

Mark the reasonableness of his quietness, and observe the expression of it. There comes to that man the tidings of death. His own boy is gone! He is not callous. The wound is full of pain, but there is no panic, there is no trembling, there is no whining. He is not afraid, because he knows that death is not the final news, that beyond death, even in that tragic form, all the meaning of life is discovered. He will fold his arms for a moment, perchance ceasing his work while his bosom heaves, but he will say, "He shall not return to me, but I shall go to him." His heart is not afraid of evil tidings.

He also knows that the tidings of incompetence is not the last word. God has always had to deal with human incompetence, and he overrules it in order to arrive at His own goal, to realize the destiny He purposes for humanity. Where have we as a nation ever arrived as the result of our own competence, tell me? We have arrived at wonderful places of power, and influence, and responsibility. What marvels our eyes have seen through these past nineteen months of the sons of the far-flung places of our empire coming to us in the hour of our anguish and travail! Have we won them by our competence? I hear that it is so, that we are a wonderful people for colonizing purposes. Yes, but if the Lord had not been on our side, now may Israel say we should have failed! If we will but read our history aright, we shall find it to be a story of the overruling of incompetence by God; and that it is this that has brought us to the position of power and influence we have occupied in the world, and shall still occupy if our feet are but turned back to the way of His commandments, and our heart becomes fixed, trusting in the Lord. This man says, there may be much incompetence, but the last word is God. His heart is not afraid of evil tidings.

And so, finally, to this man the tidings of danger is not the only tidings. Like the ancient prophet, he has heard other tidings. Do you remember how Obadiah began that weird prophecy of the doom of Edom, the doom of the nation that trusted in its might and its frightfulness? Listen to this: "We have heard tidings from the Lord." Tidings from the Lord! These are the tidings which this man hears every morning. He read something before he read his newspaper—he has read his Bible. The man who is reading his newspaper and listening to the clamor of the voices speaking of failure and disaster and incapacity, and is not afraid is the man who listens in the morning for another Voice, and goes to his work in the halls of legislature, in the mine, in the training camp drilling, in the home toiling, in the battle fighting, and as he goes he says, "We have heard tidings from the Lord."

What are the tidings from the Lord? Well, this is what God said concerning Edom:

Behold, I have made thee small among the nations: thou art greatly despised. The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, O thou that dwellest in the cleft of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou mount on high as the eagle, and though thy nest be set among the stars, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the Lord.

The man who has heard those tidings from the Lord goes out and does his work, and is not afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

Now, let us take up our newspapers again, and what do we see? We see a combination of words that I hardly know how to read! The Casualty List. By a wonderful spiritual instinct, hardly conscious, but coming up out of the subconsciousness of our national life, even our newspapers are putting something else; instead of Casualty List, we read Roll of Honor. They fall, our sons, our brothers, our lovers, our friends! We mourn, we grieve, we sorrow. We read these evil rumors, but we have heard tidings from the Lord, and, consequently, we are not afraid. We hear of grave situations, of peoples still halted, not knowing whether to pass to the right or to the left, to take this side or that side. We hear of diplomacies attempting to capture them for one side or the other. But, in spite of all, we are not afraid. And why not? We can best express it in the language of Julia Ward Howe:

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord...
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat.

That, verily, is what He is doing. I am no prophet or the son of a prophet in the sense of predicting things to come; but I declare that when presently the war is over, and the conflict is done, we shall sit down quietly and see how these nations dropped into line, howsoever they may go, by virtue of what they were in their own heart and soul. God is compelling them to express themselves, and will do so to the end. If the only thing I see is what the diplomatists are doing, or not doing, then my heart is filled with fear; but when I see God sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat, then I continue with Julia Ward Howe, and I say:

Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him!
Be jubilant my feet!
Our God is marching on.

What, then, shall we do in the day of frightfulness? We will do our duty, the thing that lies nearest, the thing we have to do tomorrow morning. We will do that, and do it well, and do it cheerfully. We will leave the rest to God, the sorrow, the suffering, and the issues. What this nation needs just now as much as, and perhaps more than, anything else is the multiplication of strong, quiet souls who are not afraid of evil tidings, who will go quietly to rest, even though the Zeppelins may be coming, and will not add to the panic that demoralizes, but will do their work. The men and women who can do that on such a day are the men and women who have hearts fixed, trusting in Jehovah. May God make us such men and such women.

037 - Psalm 115:8; 1 John 3:2 - Like Gods or Godlike

They that make them shall be like unto them. Psalm 115:8

We shall be like Him. 1 John 3:2

In the Chapter of "Conformity to Type" in his "Natural Law in the Spiritual World," Henry Drummond wrote:

The protoplasm in man has a something in addition to its instincts or its habits. It has a capacity for God. In this capacity for God lies its receptivity, for it is the very protoplasm that was necessary. The chamber is not only ready to receive the new Life, but the Guest is expected, and, till He comes, is missed. Till then the soul longs and yearns, wastes and pines, waving its tentacles piteously in the empty air feeling after God if so be that it may find Him. This is not peculiar to the protoplasm of the Christian's soul. In every land and in every age there have been altars to the Known or Unknown God. It is now agreed upon as a mere question of anthropology that the universal language of the human soul has always been "I perish with hunger."

What Drummond declared in that remarkable passage as "now agreed upon as a mere question of anthropology" I desire to emphasize in order that we may consider in the light of it these two passages of Scripture, which immediately suggest a somewhat remarkable and startling contrast.

There is a master passion in every human life, some one principle which at least professes to render the life consistent and cohesive, and drives it in some given direction. That truth may be stated in another form. Man cannot live without a God. The origin of the word "God" is etymologically obscure. The simplest use of the word, so far as we are able to trace it, is one which suggests a Supreme Being, and, consequently, a Supreme Authority over human life.

The term "God" has been applied to erroneous conceptions of Deity, as to nature, interest, power, and activity; but underneath all the mistakes the word "God" suggests a Being superior to men, a Supreme Being, who, therefore, whether His authority be exercised righteously or unrighteously, mercifully or cruelly, beneficently or tyrannically, yet has power over men.

The recognition of that essential and simple thought concerning God has produced very many different attitudes on the part of men toward God, attitudes depending on the conception of the character of God which they may have entertained.

There is no living man or woman or child who has come to years of understanding but that has, in some form, in some fashion, a God. They may decline to use the word "God"; but the fact remains, no human life can continue without some conception of a Supreme—we need not say "Being." We may say force, or power, or motive; but the supremacy is the quality of importance.

In the passage quoted, Drummond declared that this is because human nature is made from its very beginning with a capacity for a God, and consequently lives in the experience of a clamant cry after God. That I take to be the statement of a simple truth from which there can be no escape.

Out of that conscious necessity for God has arisen all forms of worship. If we go back to the old days of widespread idolatry, or if we examine the great systems of idolatry which still exist; though we have a thousand and one varied expressions of idolatry, we find on examination that they fall into three main divisions, which our Old Testament Scriptures deal with: the worship of Baal, the worship of

Moloch, the worship of Mammon. We today may affect to smile at those old ideas, but they still exist. There are thousands of men worshipping Baal in London, thousands of people bowing at the shrine of Moloch in this city at this hour, and how many are worshipping Mammon?

What does it mean when a man worships Baal? It means that he must worship something. What does it mean when a man offers his sacrifice on the shrine of Moloch? It means that there is that in his nature which drives him to the activity of sacrifice. What does it mean when a man worships Mammon with all his heart and all his soul and all his mind and all his strength? It means that he must exercise heart and soul and mind and strength in one supreme and all-inclusive act of worship in some form. Man is by nature and instinctively, whether he will or not, religious. I did not say good. I did not say pious. I did not say holy. I did not say righteous. I said religious.

Religion is that which binds a man. Every man is bound somewhere, somehow, to a throne, to a government, to an authority, to something that is supreme, to something to which he offers sacrifice, and burns incense, and bends the knee. I glance back for a moment to those old systems, and I see men worshipping Baal, the god of nature; Moloch, the master of the emotions; Mammon, the deity of will power. Though the method of the worship has changed, and though the faces of the worshipers are others than those of old, and though the language of the worship is not what it was, the essence is the same, and the common fact of worship comes thrilling and thundering, vibrating and sounding through the ages, expressing itself in a thousand new ways with every new-born generation. Through all the long history of the human race men have worshiped. The common principle throughout all this great fact is that man has capacity for God, must have a god, must bow the knee in some form at the altar of his god.

In the light of that great underlying truth I return to our two passages of Scripture.

The psalmist was dealing with idolatry, boasting and vaunting in holy joy in the fact that Israel trusted Jehovah, and putting into contrast to that trust of Israel in Jehovah the trust of men in the idols that they had created for themselves. In a passage of fine scorn he spoke of these idols: mouths that speak not, eyes that never see, ears that hear nothing, noses that smell not, hands that never handle, feet that never travel, throats through which no speech comes. He was describing idolatry as it manifested itself in his day and in his age; and having described it, he said these idols were made by men, and they that made them were like them.

John was speaking in exquisite tenderness of the new relation between man and God, which is the result of the mission of Jesus; and the music of the whole passage thrills through the mind of every child of God who knows it. "Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him."

"They that make them shall be like unto them." "We shall be like Him." These two statements constitute a great contrast, but they contain a common principle. The common principle is that every man becomes like his God. You must have a God. You have a God. You are growing like Him! If your god is false, you are becoming false; if your God is true, you are growing in truth; if your god is hard, you are becoming hard; if your God is tender, you are becoming compassionate. The principle is described in these two passages as working in two opposite directions to two opposite results. Insensate gods create insensate men. The one living and eternal and loving God makes men living and eternal and loving.

Let us look at these things carefully by taking these texts and examining them a little more closely. We will consider first, the men who become like their gods; and, second, the men who become Godlike.

First, then, the men who become like their gods. And here we need not refer to the idolatry of the past save as it reveals perpetual principles. I have no care to attack and denounce and combat the idolatry of Eastern lands. Henceforward I refer only to the idolatry described by the psalmist as manifest in his day, that we may discover that though the garb is changed and the language altered, the essence is the same in our day and in our land as it was in Syria. The very essentials of idolatry which expressed themselves in strange and crude forms in days long gone exist in our own days.

The worship of Baal was the worship of nature, and when man begins to worship nature he finally enters into the holy of holies of nature to its most mystic center, to its most mysterious realm; and consequently the worship of Baal in those olden days finally became a worship which expressed itself in ways that must be nameless in the congregation of the saints. We still have this deification of the intellect in the days in which we live. Men who own no allegiance to the throne of our God enthrone in His place human intellect, indulge in philosophies, follow speculations, are given, as the apostle said in writing to Timothy, to "fables and endless genealogies," consult together concerning the long-continued and perpetual emanation of life, attempt to knock at the door of the deepest heart of Nature and fathom its profoundest secret, ask for the solution of the riddle of the universe. That is idolatry. It is the deification of intellect, and when a man says, I will refuse to worship or believe or bow the knee in the presence of anything that does not come within the grasp of my own mind, and that cannot be encompassed in the reach of my own thinking, that is Baal worship.

There are other men who deify their emotional nature, and strange as it may be, the idolatry that deifies the emotional nature always

descends to a lower plane than the idolatry that deifies the intellect. Not that the emotional nature is lower than the intellect, but that it is higher, and the higher the faculty the lower its sweep if you degrade it. It has often been said, and I for one feel that it is true, that a woman is capable of a far deeper degradation than a man; and that is not to reflect upon womanhood but to say that the finer fabric, when once thickened and coarsened, becomes more vulgar than the texture of that which is coarser in itself. And what is true by way of illustration is true in this matter. When man burns incense to his emotional nature the outcome is lust, in the most debased sense of that word. Love is the true deity of the emotion; but if a man lets emotion master him lust is the result. And careful as I would be to make reference to such subjects here, there are times when the prophet must speak. On every street men are worshiping Moloch, and it eventuates in the most awful cruelty that it is possible for the heart of man to conceive. Love prostituted becomes hatred. Adoration debased becomes loathing. You have but to have eyes lit with God's love, and hearts tender with His compassion, to see the most awful and devilish cruelty being practiced in the glare of the London streets every day that you live.

There are also those who worship Mammon, moved by the passion for power that makes a man want to possess wealth. Men who desire to possess wealth simply for its own sake are very few and far between, and they are always men who have lost their reason. That is not the worship of Mammon. I have a pity for the man that piles up golden sovereigns and puts his fingers into them. But there is another man who grinds and drives and schemes and plans for the same gold, not in order that he may put his fingers into its yellow glitter, but that he may drive men and make them serve him and obey him. Infinitely more cruel than the worship of the intellect or the worship of the emotion is will worship. Jesus said once to men, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." The devil of the Middle Ages was painted with horns and hoofs and a tail and fire coming from his mouth. That devil is dead, because he never really existed. The devil today enthrones himself most often behind Mammon, the greed for power, the lust for possession that deadens and hardens every aspect of human life. The love of money is a more terrible thing than the drink traffic. Kill the love of money and you will sweep the drink traffic out in six months. This worship of Mammon is a more terrible thing than the awful prostitution of our streets. If only I could burn up the love of money in the hearts of landlords I would close all the houses of ill fame. It is not the girl on the street with whom I am angry. It is the man who is behind the business and makes possible the continuance of the vaunted and flaunting sin by reason of his damnable love of gold. That is the worship of Mammon. And it is everywhere. I never walk down London streets without seeing an altar besprinkled with blood, a worshiper debased and degraded!

Yet look again, oh, look again, and see this: the horror of the whole thing is due to the fact that the capacity which prostituted works ruin is a Divine capacity. The thing in the man that drives him to the deification of his intellect, to the enthronement of his own emotion, to the love of power, what is it? Oh, God, open our eyes to see it. It is the cry of the soul after God with parched lip, and breaking heart, and throbbing brow. Though he does not understand his own language, he is saying everywhere, "When shall I appear before God? Oh that I knew where I might find Him."

But pass on. When a man makes a god for himself he always constructs his god on the pattern of himself. Take the older forms of idolatry, or the more recent forms to which I have been referring, and what is man doing when he worships? He is making a god on the pattern of himself. You cannot find me a single idol in the world today but that if you will come back from that deity and narrow the lines that enclose it you will find the man who made it. Every deity that a man makes for himself he makes on the pattern of himself.

I will imagine that I am back among the old idolators whom the psalmist described. I must have a god, I must have something that represents to me the thought of authority, of supremacy. I will make my god of gold, of silver, or out of a tree; and I set to work with carving instruments to make my god. How shall I make it? I must give him a mouth. Why? Because I have one. I must give him ears. Why? Because I have ears and can hear. And so through all the gamut of the senses, whenever a man makes a god he makes it on the pattern of himself. "They that make them" make them on the pattern of their own personality.

So today. The moment you see a man deifying his intelligence you say, What does he know of intelligence? He knows that he knows, and he deifies the capacity for knowledge. He lifts a part of himself out of himself, and he says, That is supreme. I worship that. Or a man is deifying his emotion, and you say, What does he know of emotion? He says, I can love, I can hate. That is the greatest thing. I will worship love and hate. I will give free rein to the sweep and the thrill and the throb of myself. It is always himself enlarged that he worships. And when a man worships Mammon, what is it he worships? His own will power. He says, That is the thing, to be able to will, and see it done; to wish, and to achieve; to decide, and see it carried out. It is a true instinct, and it is part of the man, and he enlarges it and worships it. Every man makes his god on the pattern of himself. That is the first thing.

Look once again. Whenever a man makes a god on the pattern of himself he makes something less than himself. A man says, I will create a god. I will give to this god a mouth and eyes and ears and nose and hands and feet and throat, all greater than I. A mouth that can utter a more authoritative speech. Eyes that can see greater distances. Ears that can hear minuter sounds, more feeble vibrations. A nose that can scent with a more remarkable accuracy. Hands that can encompass more work. Feet that can travel greater distances and more swiftly. A throat out of which the thunders roll instead of the puny speech that is in my throat. And see, he says, now I have made something greater than myself.

Yet he has not done so! Let the psalmist interpret the result. Listen to his fine scorn. A mouth, greater? Infinitely less, it cannot speak. Eyes, greater? Infinitely less, they cannot see. When a man builds a god on the pattern of himself he makes something less than himself.

Bring the thought into our present age, and what have you? A man deifies intelligence, but what is this that man deifies? He deifies his own capacity, and he says the ultimate knowledge is the great thing. And where does he end? In agnosticism. And what is agnosticism? A confession of ignorance. I start to worship the ultimate knowledge, and when I have worshiped ultimate knowledge long enough I say, I cannot find it. I am an agnostic. I am ignorant. I went after the ultimate, and all I found was its hollow laugh of mockery as it evaded me through the mysterious door of the protoplasmic germ. That is the end of it.

Or a man deifies his emotion, and he says emotion is the great thing, a thrill, a throb, a passion, an excitement, and he worships it. How does it end? He built up something in himself that was real, and when he had constructed it, and went to worship it, he found what? Did I say lust? I will repeat it. What is lust? Hunger. A man set out along the line of the worship of an enlarged capacity for mere emotional satisfaction, and he found the opposite of satisfaction—hunger, panting desire, and no water; perpetual craving, and no bread. And here again I speak carefully, if you will bring down that one fearsome illustration of the worship of Moloch that I have more than once referred to, it is a patent commonplace, almost too shocking to mention, but awfully true, that the end is the same awful desire that can never be met, and that is hell begun ere hell is reached.

Or if a man shall deify Mammon because he would worship his will, what is he doing? Constructing something less than himself. He has a will. It is a divine power. He can choose, he can elect; and, in order to elevate it and deify it, and reach out after larger things, he comes at last to a night dark with clouds, lit with the glare of the vivid lightning, and he hears the voice which says: "Thou foolish one! This night is thy soul required of thee!" and the hand that grasped unloosens, and nothing is there, and the will that mastered bends to the blind fate of oncoming death. He has worshiped something he thought higher, and finds it infinitely lower.

But all this is not finality, nor is it the most terrible thing. The most terrible thing is that, when a man deifies something he thought higher, in the moment he discovers it lower he finds he has dragged himself down to the level which he discovers it occupies. The man who worships an insensate god becomes insensate; the man who worships something that looks and never sees, himself presently looks and never sees, listens and never hears.

The worship of anything less than God blinds and blasts and burns to cinders every distinctive excellency in man, until life itself becomes an unutterable weariness. Do not laugh at the man who talks about killing time. Next to killing the Son of God, or killing my fellow man, killing time is the most awful guilt and the direst tragedy. Do you want to kill time? You have lost your power to see. Give me that little child for a minute or two. I will put that little child down in a one-acre field, with nothing but green grass and buttercups and daisies, and the child will weave garlands and make crowns and play at kingdoms, and see everything; and you trot over Europe and sweep round the world and see nothing. You have become like your god. Your worship has degraded you. You may have pored over the musty tomes in your search after intellectual crowning, you may have followed every new call of emotional temptation, you may have planned and schemed to grasp power by the worship of Mammon, but these things give you nothing except their own emptiness, their own inability, and, at last, alas! too late, you will find that all you have gathered is vanity. You may live in a soft, miserable age that does not like the preacher who thunders to you about hell, but I tell you you are lighting the fires for it yourself if you are worshiping a false deity.

But let me pass to the other side. "We shall be like Him." I ought to say it with bowed head. I ought to say it with reverent demeanor. I ought to say it in tones that thrill with a great sense of the infinite Grace. I think that when John wrote it his pen throbbed with the sense of the infinite mystery.

"We shall be like Him." Like whom? A careful exegesis of this text must refer the pronoun "Him" to the Father. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God. For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not"—that is God. "Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that if He"—God—"shall be manifested, we shall be like Him"—God. The reference is to the Father. Jesus said one day to an inquiring man, "Have I been so long time with you and hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Yes, we shall be like the Son, and, being like the Son, we shall be like the Father.

Notice first the fundamental change of suggestion. The other men were men who made gods; these people are people whom God has remade by new birth. The primal capacities are redeemed, intelligence is illuminated, emotion is inspired, will is dominated. So instead of saying that when men make gods they make them like themselves; I have to change the whole position and say, When God makes men He makes them like Himself.

Moreover, when men make gods they make them less than themselves; when God makes men He makes them greater than themselves. Man was never perfected on the earth, even when he stood in Eden's perfection, and now John has to write, "We are the children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be." There is something more, there is something grander. The

intelligence has been illuminated, and we have seen into the heart of the riddle of the universe; we have not found the protoplasmic germ—we have found God. The emotion has been enkindled, and we do not worship it; but it fastens on the eternal Love, and is hungry never more. We worship will, but we are not foolish enough to worship our own; instead, we sing with sweet old Faber:—

I worship Thee, sweet will of God,
And all Thy ways adore;
And every day I live I seem
To love Thee more and more.'

These are present realizations, but John says this is not all. There is something else. "It is not yet made manifest what we shall be." We are not at the end of the process. We are just beginning. We are learning the alphabet. We do not know all, but we know something. "We shall be like Him." Much as I love the work of exposition, I have no exposition for that. That defies the expositor, that makes the exegete bow in worship. That is the cry of a heart resting in God. That is the language of the soul in whom the wilderness ends, and the eternal morning flames and flashes with glory. There is neither hunger nor thirst, there is no unsatisfied desire. "Like Him," walking in light with Him who dwells in light—that is the highest function of intelligence. "Like Him," acting in love with Him who is essential love—that is the highest possibility of the emotional nature. "Like Him," operating in power under Him who is essential life, and whose will is therefore perfect in its goings—that is the final action of human will.

Oh that I could speak to you one by one. What would I say? I would say this: Who is your god? Who is your god, young man? Who is your god, young maiden? That is your first question. It is the supreme question, but I beseech you, find your answer quickly, and find it truly. Who is your god?

Today only can you answer that question; tomorrow we shall all know. How shall we know? We shall see the likeness to your god in you. Already it is manifesting itself!

I know that man's God. Who is it? The one only living God. How do you know? See the love in his eyes, the light on his life, see his likeness to the infinite order, see the sweet certainty and peace that make him sing the song of triumph, when the tempests are sweeping round him. I know your God, sir, I can see Him in you.

I know your god also! His marks are already on you. I meet you on the highway, and look into your face, and as God is my witness, my heart often goes out in compassion for you. The brand is there, the shadow of death is on your face, the vacuous stare is there. You are becoming like your god, man! Already it is beginning to be seen.

Listen for a minute, not to me; listen, man, listen to the voice that is speaking within you. Can you hear it? I will tell you what is being said in your heart now: "Show us the Father." That is it. Whatever the desire that is operating in your heart at this minute, that is what it means. You are going back to the thrill of a shameless sin, and the thing you really want is God. The clamant cry that you are trying to answer in a wrong way is the cry of your being after God. There are some who say, Yes, it is true; what shall we do? I have the answer to that cry in your heart. They are not my words, but I am here by holy ordination, the ordination of the pierced hand on my head to utter them for my Master. Do not hear them as mine, hear them as His. "No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him. Come unto Me." "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Crown Him and find God. Find God and grow like Him. God helps you now to answer His call and find all that your heart needs.

038 - Proverbs 3:6 - How to Succeed in Life

In all thy ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct thy paths. Proverbs 3:6

This text has a peculiar place in my heart. It has been with me day by day for three-and-thirty years. It was on the morning when I was first leaving home for school that my father said to me as his last word, I want to give you a text for school and for life; and this was the text. He gave it to me without note or comment, save the note and comment of his own godly life. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct thy paths.

I have not always been obedient to the injunction. I have often forgotten Him, often failed in the acknowledgment commanded, but so far as I have been obedient, I have proved the promise true. He has directed my paths.

In order that we may understand the message of the text, let us first consider one or two simple facts. Within the consciousness of man there exists a dual sense; that of possibility, and that of limitation. Every man is conscious that he is able to do. Every man is conscious of limitation in that ability. Every youth and every maiden, in that golden age when the light is forever flashing upon the eastern sky, comes to this twofold consciousness. In youth, this dual consciousness causes perpetual delight. The limitation is opportunity. The possibility is equipment. In old age, when the life has been wasted, the dual consciousness abides, but it is that of despair. The limitation becomes everything, and the possibility is gone. Dreadful indeed is such old age. There is, however, an old age of the youthful heart, in which expectation is still busy painting pictures of coming victories. When life has been well and truly

lived the dual consciousness abides, but the proportion is very different. The limitation is growing less with every passing hour, and the possibility is growing more.

I sat yesterday by the side of an old man whose years have reached four-score and five, and he said two things to me which profoundly impressed me. He said first: "As I lie here and think, and listen, that of the world which most profoundly impresses me is its sin." Then, with a new light in his eye, he said: "I want to be away, to be with Christ in God."

My brothers and sisters with the flush of youth upon your faces, and the light of hope in your eyes, I tell you his dreams were more wonderful than your visions; his expectations more wonderful than your hopes. The life well and truly lived has come to age, but the light that never was on land or sea is resting upon his brow. Limitation is growing less, and the consciousness of the possibilities of his own being is growing more.

It is out of my strong desire that your present hopefulness may never grow less, but burn more brightly when the long day's journey is done; and that when the sun goes westering and the shadows are flung across the landscape, new light may break upon you; thus I bring you the message of my text.

It is certainly a Divine arrangement that the young should see visions; that they should build their castles in the air; that they should aspire after success.

Let no embittered and disappointed man check the enthusiasm of youth, and that for two reasons.

First, because my brother, embittered and disappointed though you be, I question whether you have any right so to be. I feel almost as though I would like to stay and preach to the old man for a moment. You tell me, looking back, that you dreamed your dreams, and built your castles in the air, and have failed. I ask you, How do you know you have failed? If according to your light, and in the measure of the opportunity which has come to you, you have been true to God, then just beyond the limit where the infinite sky kisses the finite earth, you will discover that the commonplaces of your life are transfigured into part of God's great whole of perfect work. I would hearten you, rather than that you should discourage others.

Also, because it is within the Divine intention for youth that it should dream dreams, and build castles, and see visions, and be ambitious to succeed, I say to you, never dishearten, never check, or attempt to kill the enthusiasm of youth.

How beautiful is youth! how bright it gleams,
With its illusions, aspirations, dreams!
Book of beginnings, story without end,
Each maid a heroine, and each man a friend!
Aladdin's lamp, and Fortunatus' purse,
That holds the treasures of the universe!
All possibilities are in its hands,
No danger daunts it, and no foe withstands;
In its sublime audacity of faith,
"Be thou removed," it to the mountain saith,
And with ambitious feet, secure and proud,
Ascends the ladder, leaning on the cloud.

Youth is forever looking to the distant. The vision is always of things ahead. The boy who stands by his mother, and tells her what he is going to be, is the symbol of all that of which I speak.

Sometimes the height is never reached, success is never achieved. The gleaming glory seen afar fades and passes, and there is nought but darkness and disappointment. The reason is that while the glory was true in possibility, the true path to the mountain heights has not been discovered. There in the distance is the alpine height, but if we do not know the way, the end will be in the valley, in the place of disaster, in the place of defeat. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct thy paths."

That within us which makes us desire victory, the passion for perfection, the determination to achieve, is all of God; and if we can but discover His way, His plan, His thought, and follow His direction, then we shall come to fulfilment even though it be through battle and through strife, through conflict and through tears, through apparent disaster and defeat.

My appeal is made to those who have the goal insight, and it declares the abiding condition upon which the pathways which lead to the goal may be discovered. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct thy paths." The whole text conditions life in the present, and so conditions it for progress to consummation.

Let us then take the text in these two parts; first, the injunction, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him," And secondly, the promise, "And He shall direct thy paths."

"In all thy ways acknowledge Him," are comprehensive words, recalling us at every point of our lives from atheism. I have used the word atheism quite carefully, in order that I may arrest your thought, that I may even startle you into consciousness of the insidious peril which threatens us every day and everywhere. There is a very practical and widespread atheism which would very much resent the term. There are a great many atheists who would be very angry if we called them such. What is an atheist? One who is without God. Atheism is not merely intellectual. There is a volitional atheism, which may recite the creed and imagine it believes it, while through all the busy days it violates and denies it. The Apostle Paul connects atheism with the death of that principle which is the supreme charm and value of youth. "Atheists and without hope." These two things are forever closely associated. The proportion in which a man is without God is the proportion in which light is fading from the sky, shadows are settling upon his way, darkness is overtaking him. Godlessness, I repeat, is infinitely more than intellectual disquietude, questioning, and unbelief. Godlessness is life lived without reference to God. That is the peril against which this text warns us. That is the danger from which it seeks to deliver us.

The first idea of the word "acknowledge" is that of vision. It is as though the Preacher had said, In all thy ways see God. It calls us to recognition of the fact of the presence of God at every point of our lives. It reminds us that in all our ways, God is. It denies the heresy that God is in the sanctuary, and not in the market place. It denies the heresy that God is interested in the central spiritual fact of human life, and has no relationship with the mental and the physical. See God everywhere. The word thus calls us to a recognition of His existence, which must produce fear, not slavish fear but that solemn awe of the soul which holds life in balance and proportion. That awe which the age lacks disastrously. It is absent largely from the life of today. Man is standing altogether too erect in the presence of high heaven; challenging the wisdom of God, or laughing at the ancient conceptions of His majesty; abandoning the figures of speech by which the prophets, seers, and psalmists of bygone generations attempted to bring men into subjection, and with the abandonment of the figures, forgetting the facts.

I am not pleading for a solemn and awful dread which will banish all brightness. I do desire to recall youth to that awe in the presence of the ever-present God which delivers from the flippancy and frivolity which curse, and spoil, and mar life.

Such recognition of His existence will issue in acceptance of His claim, and produce obedience.

Such obedience will strengthen belief in His interest, and issue in prayer.

Yet, I think there is another meaning in this word "acknowledge." To acknowledge Him, is to use His gifts in the sphere of His will, recognizing that they are His gifts, and that we are responsible to Him for them.

There are some words of Jesus which I think we often interpret altogether too narrowly, if not with absolute inaccuracy. In the Sermon on the Mount, that great Manifesto of the King, Christ said to His disciples, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" And again, "Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they?"

Our Lord did not for a single moment mean that as the lilies are clothed, without toiling and without spinning, we are to expect to be clothed without toiling. Neither did He mean, that if He provides for the birds of the air without their forethought, we are to neglect forethought. He meant rather that if the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, unable to plan and arrange, are cared for, how much more will God provide for those to whom He has given reason, and ability to plan.

Let no man think that he can come to the fulfilment of his life by prayer alone. Let him understand in this respect also that "faith without works is dead." We have another figure of Christ, that of the mountain removed by faith. We say mountains are never removed by faith today. Yet is this true? At this hour in different parts of the world, mountains are being removed and cast into the seas. We say, "That is a great engineering triumph." What lies behind the work of the engineer? The faith of the engineer. No mountain has ever been leveled or tunneled, and no highway has ever been flung up by humanity, save by works preceded by faith. There is first the vision of the possibility, and then the action which realizes the vision.

"In all thy ways acknowledge Him," does not merely mean see Him, believe Him, pray to Him, fear Him; it means also, take the forces which He has placed in your personality and use them under His government. Do not expect that He will ever bring you to the mountain height unless you climb. Do not imagine that you will ever come to fulfilment of your own life unless you toil. Do not for a moment think that to acknowledge God means that if you are a member of the Christian Church He will make your life full and beautiful and rich if you are lazy in the matter of your daily avocation.

I want to save young life in this age from the idea that godliness consists wholly in singing hymns and going to prayer-meetings. What is the capacity within you? Is it mechanical? Then you are not merely to pray, you are to work out to perfection the forces which God has placed within you. You are to neglect no single side of your nature which He has created. When you have discovered what your calling in life is to be, you are to remember that you can only come to fulfilment thereof by consecrated toil under the

government of God.

"In all thy ways acknowledge Him." Let us take one or two illustrative applications of the principle.

In your home life. In the home in which for a while you sojourn, the home of your childhood which as yet it may be, you have not left. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him." Recognize His goodness, recognize the authority over you as representing His authority. Jesus went down and was subject unto his parents. He had first said, "I must be about My Father's business."

In your thinking about the homes which you will presently make for yourselves, in that whole sacred and wonderful matter of the birth of love within your nature, acknowledge Him. I may be allowed to say from this Christian pulpit, and as a Christian minister, that I am weary to death of a great deal of flippant, foolish joking on the subject of love between youth and maiden. Sacred, high, holy, and beautiful, is all such love when heaven born; but it tends to hell when it is not tested in the light of the love of God. I have seen the daughters of the King, the fairest and most beautiful, full of promise, robbed of their beauty by alliance with men who lack recognition of God. I have seen young manhood, enthusiastic for the Kingdom, full of force, paralyzed by alliance with those who have no such vision. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him." I pray you remember, that unless you can test your love by the light of heaven's pure love, it is going to be the most unutterable curse that ever came into your life.

Take another application at which I have already hinted, that of your business. What are you going to be in the world? Someone said to me but today, Are you going to make all your boys preachers? I said, God forbid. What did I mean? As God is my witness, nothing would gladden my heart more than to see all of them preachers, but I cannot make them preachers, and I have no intention of suggesting to one of them that such should be the work of his life. I take that illustration simply to lead me to say this. You have no right to choose what you will be. Seek Divine guidance. Pray about it, but do not end with praying. For remember this, in every human life there is some power which God needs, not merely for the supply of all that is necessary to the life possessing it, but for the commonwealth. It is for every man to discover in God's presence, and in fellowship with Him, what that power is; and then to take hold of it and develop, and use it, as in the will of God.

I would say to those of you who have already discovered the line of your life in this world; master it in every detail, be restless until you are able to do the thing you have set out to do, so that when done you can hold it up to God, and say, Here is this piece of work.

Very reverently I pause to illustrate that, from the wonderful carpenter's shop. Jesus Christ, as a carpenter, made yokes in which the oxen ploughed the plains of Bethshan. Jesus Christ as a carpenter constructed those single-share ploughs with which the farmer drove the furrow through his field. I affirm, without one moment's hesitation, that when Jesus Christ made a yoke it was one that heaven itself would have accepted. When He had finished the plough it was true to the measurement of eternity. Presently, He left the carpenter's shop and came to His preaching, and He borrowed the things of His toil to illustrate His preaching. "My yoke is easy." He knew what He was talking about. He had made yokes, and so made them that they never galled the neck of the oxen that wore them. "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom." Note the masterly assumption. He did not suggest that the furrow could be crooked because the plough was wrong. It is the man who must be wrong, when He has made the plough.

Put your godliness into your business. Let all your religion be seen in the letter you have to write for your employer, in the piece of work you have to do for him. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him."

In your recreations also, let this be true. What does that mean? That you can have no recreation which dulls your perception of God. However harmless it may be to you, if to me it raises a mist through which I cannot see clearly the face of my Father, then I must have none of it. However harmless it may be to me, if you, seeking recreation in the same way, lose your keenness of scent in the fear of the Lord, then you are to have no such recreation. That is the test.

I am told that today the question of amusements is a very difficult one. By no means. It is a very simple one. That is its test. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him." You say, I am very doubtful about—. That settles it forever! If you are doubtful, you dare not. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." "In all thy ways acknowledge Him." Remember, God is God not only of your life, but of your brother's life, and you cannot seek recreation in that which ministers harm to other people. I leave you to apply the principle. Any recreation, though it may not be harmful to me, which can only be gained by harming the man who provides it, I cannot, if I acknowledge God, indulge in.

Forgive the illustrations. I think sometimes illustrations do but minimise the value of the whole. Listen to the whole word of the preacher. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him." Not the ways of Sunday only, but of Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday. Not the days of the Lenten season only, but the three hundred and twenty-five days remaining after Lent is over. Not the ways that are public to the gaze of others, but the inner secret ways of which men can know nothing. Acknowledge Him, see Him, in the dark as well as in the light; in the shop as well as in the sanctuary; in the valley as well as on the mountain height; at play as well as at work. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him."

In a brief, concluding word hear the promise. "He shall direct thy paths." That promise calls for the exercise of faith. Our one responsibility is that of obedience to the condition of which I have been trying to speak. Yet let me say this, the truth of the promise is discoverable in all retrospection. Perhaps that is the most difficult thing for youth. It is so hard to look back. There is so little to look back at. Hear then the testimony of those who look back after long pilgrimages and arduous days. The testimony of the whole of them is that as they have acknowledged Him in all their ways, He has directed the paths.

He has many ways of directing. He directs by obstacles placed across the way which I cannot overcome, and which drive me into a new way. He directs by clearing obstacles away, which I thought could not be moved. He directs by delay, keeping me waiting long after I have heard His call to service. He directs by immediateness, flinging me out into a new position, wherein I must seek His guidance. He directs by opposition; the Spirit hindered Paul. He directs by encouragement, by whispers in the soul, which make a man dare, when all men tell him his daring is of no avail. He directs by disappointing, or by realizing our dreams. I state these contradictory things in order to throw you back upon this profound conviction; not from me nor from any man, must you take your rule of His direction. You must discover the rule for yourself in immediate relationship with Him. I say this now out of profound conviction, God help me to say it as it ought to be said. No youth or maiden has ever yet bared their soul to God, desiring to be led of Him and determined to follow, but that He has led, He has directed.

I love the personality suggested by the pronoun in the text: "He shall direct thy paths." Behind the "He" of the ancient preacher is the God of the Bible. Because that is so, the "He" trembles with the tenderness of the Father's love. No evil can baffle if He direct the path. No enemy can prevent the final realization of His purpose. No obstacles can hinder if He lead. No opposition can overcome if He direct. No exigencies can overwhelm the wisdom of God, no surprises prevent Him. Oh, the safety of being in the will of God. "He shall direct thy paths."

Not always in easy or pleasant paths, but always in right paths. Not always in those I would have chosen, but always in paths which lead to success. There may be the vastest difference between success and fame.

"He shall direct thy paths." The paths that He directs lead always, through mist and mystery, through battle and through bruising, to the fulfilment of the meaning of life.

How much that is called success is dire and disastrous failure. I believe that these conditions may put limitations upon material success. It may be you could make a far larger fortune if you forgot God. But that is a very material thing to say. I have used the word fortune in its debased sense. I have used it as though it only applied to those material things which you can grasp and state in figures. The man who would lay up treasure for eternity cannot forget God. The man who would make to himself friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness must acknowledge God in all his ways.

The final test of life is beyond the things of time and sense. It will be a test of fire; only that which cannot be destroyed will remain. In the light of that final test if we would make our lives successful we must begin right. What is the first step. Surrender. What the plan of life, the pathway to the end? Obedience. Confronting everyone of us tonight, God in Christ asks for our lives.

I pray for you that you may realize your ambitions, and fulfil your dreamings. In order that when the eternal morning flushes the eastern sky, you may come to fulfilment. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."

039 - Proverbs 9:10 - The Problem of How to Begin

The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom....Proverbs 9:10

There are hours which suggest new beginnings. At the dawn of the year, on our birthdays, when we leave school or college and enter upon life's business, we find ourselves almost invariably and inevitably beginning again. To use the very old and familiar figure of speech, we turn over a new leaf. The figure is poetical and it is warranted. In our life story we turn the page and begin a new chapter; and it is impossible to do it, if we have any moral sense and any spiritual sense, without wanting to begin all over again. We are conscious at such times that in very many regards our lives have been characterized by folly, and we desire that they should be governed by wisdom. We look back along the pathway and see the mistakes we have made, sometimes ignorantly but often wilfully, and at the parting of the ways, we earnestly desire that in the days that lie before us there should be fewer mistakes made either ignorantly or in waywardness. We have turned over a new leaf, and we desire that the writing upon the new page shall be more legible, more worthy of the great Master, having fewer erasures necessary, fewer spoilings of the meaning by indistinctness, more of truth, more of beauty, more of glory.

How are we to begin? That is the supreme question of such hours. It is not a simple question. The measure of our honesty is the measure of our perplexity. The measure of our sincerity is the measure of our fear. May I venture to add to these statements another; the number of our years is the measure of our fearfulness. We are more afraid than we used to be of new resolutions and new beginnings by reason of the many failures of the past. Still we desire to begin again. How are we to begin?

In my text is the answer. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...." In the last of the set discourses on wisdom in this Book of Proverbs, the preacher made that declaration. It is not to be confused with an earlier statement. I open the Book of Proverbs and I read, "The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel." The introductory words run on to verse six, constituting a preface. Then the preacher summarized the whole intention of his discourses on wisdom and of the proverbs which he had collected, and the summary is found in these words, "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge;..." In the last of the discourses we have the words of our text, "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom...."

The difference to which I want to draw attention is not the difference between the words "knowledge" and "wisdom," but a difference between two words which are the same in our translation but which are not the same in the Hebrew; "The beginning of knowledge" and "the beginning of wisdom." The word translated "beginning" in the first declaration is a word which means first, but not in time alone; it means first in order of time, of place, of rank, of value; first in importance. You will observe that the revisers have suggested an alteration in the margin so that the first of these verses should read, "The fear of the Lord is the chief part of knowledge." The thought of the first declaration is that the fear of the Lord is the supreme value in wisdom. Of course in that larger declaration, the thought of the text is included. We are now dealing with beginnings, and that is the exact meaning of the word of my text, the beginning as the starting point, the commencement. The fear of the Lord is the starting point in wisdom, is the commencement of wisdom. The commencement of the way of wisdom is the fear of the Lord, for the fear of the Lord is the abiding secret of the way of wisdom.

Let us first consider generally this subject of beginning. In doing so I would remind you first that a beginning is not a beginning. There is always a past. There is always something that has preceded what we call a beginning. I might summarily dismiss this by saying that a new beginning is impossible. A beginning is never a beginning. We may illustrate the truth in any sphere of life. What is the beginning of a tree? There is no beginning that is not related to a past history. The young tree that we plant in our garden; that is the beginning of the tree there, but it is not the beginning of the tree. If we plant an acorn, that is not the beginning of the oak tree; the beginning of the tree which will come from the acorn is the tree from which the acorn came. We travel back until we discover that every tree is related to mysteries as infinite and far-extending as is the mystery of our own life. Take the beginning of a bird. Some of the older men and women will remember the great days when Hastings lectured on Christian evidences and that curious and interesting question which he perpetually propounded to those who held contest with him; which was first, the hen or the egg? We begin our backward journey, and there is no beginning. A beginning is not a beginning. Enough of illustration on the lower level. There is no moral beginning either of sinning or of doing righteousness. You did not begin to sin when you sinned. Behind that beginning to sin was the thought, the conception, and behind the thinking and the conception, tendencies assaulting the soul; that mystic stuff of which thoughts and dreams are made lay behind. There is no beginning. There is no beginning for the doing of right. Behind the deed is the thought, and behind the thought is the will, that infinite majesty of personality. I am less and less surprised as the years run on, and I know better, to find that I cannot know myself. I am less surprised that the psalmist said of God, "Thou understandest my thought afar off." And then added: "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain unto it." There is no beginning. Being has no beginning. The only beginning is that of form; the form of being may have a beginning; but that which takes the new form existed before in some other form. The new form is but a resultant of things that lay behind it. It always has to do with a past. I will turn over a new leaf, and I will begin again. I cannot. All the past is there. The new leaf is in the one volume and must constitute a part of the one story. The way of wisdom must take into account that past. It was this tremendous sense of the past that made Nicodemus look into the eyes of Jesus in the night and ask the question that was neither rude, flippant, nor irrelevant, "... How can a man be born when he is old?..." It was not a foolish question. It was a question coming up out of the deepest sense of personality, the essential, the elemental. It was a question of the soul. "... How can a man be born when he is old?..." What of those years that have run? How can I begin? If we are to discover the secret of wisdom, we must take the past into account, for a beginning is not a beginning.

In the second place, I remark that a beginning is not lonely, independent, self-contained. Whatever may seem to begin, begins in the midst of environment, in the midst of surrounding forces that touch it and will claim its attention. There is nothing which begins and which, in its beginning, is separated from all the forces that are outside itself. Every beginning is made in the midst of forces which are destructive and constructive. The tree begins its growth and its development; and there are evil things waiting to fasten upon it and destroy it, and there are great and generous forces waiting to give it new strength and enable it to come to perfection of being. To those forces, that which is begun will respond, rejecting sometimes, receiving sometimes; rejecting the evil things and receiving the good sometimes; sometimes rejecting the beneficent things and receiving the evil things. These are the mysteries of life. If we leave that lower realm of illustration and climb to the higher, we shall immediately see how true all this is. We make our new beginnings in the midst of forces destructive and constructive. They are in waiting for us tomorrow; no, they are right here in the sanctuary! Some of the most disastrous moral and spiritual catastrophes have happened in the sanctuary of God in the hour of vision and light and glory. When we turn over the new leaf and decide we will begin again, we must begin remembering that we cannot begin alone or independently; a beginning is not self-contained. Beating through the air, advancing upon us, are forces destructive and constructive, and the whole activity of a new beginning is concentrated at that point. A new beginning in the moral

and spiritual realm is the readjustment of life to forces that surround, both constructive and destructive; the opening of the soul to the constructive, and the shutting of the doors of the soul to the destructive. The way of wisdom must take into account the forces which surround the life. There is another question, one which Nicodemus did not ask but which is quite as pertinent; how can a man live his own life in the midst of these forces? When I have turned over this new leaf and begun again, how am I going to realize my own personality in the presence of these forces? Any answer to the question of how to begin must take in this great fact of environment.

I have one other thing to say about the beginning. A beginning is a beginning. We do start new things when we begin. Being has no beginning, but its form and its expression have, and in the creation of a new form, a new expression, new forces are sent out, the issue of which no man can see. Whenever a man makes a new start, a new beginning, he is starting something that will run on from the propulsion of that beginning, whether good or bad. This fact creates the supreme responsibility of life. In that hour when we turn aside to the thing that is base, and low, and mean; beginning that from which we had previously turned away, we are starting things, the ultimate issue of which we cannot see. Equally is it true that when we form resolutions on the side of good, in that hour we start forces for good, the ultimate of which will be known in the future and never perfectly here. Every new beginning is in that sense a beginning, and the things that follow will take direction and shape from that beginning.

In the new beginning of which we are now thinking, the new moral and spiritual beginning, that new direction is supremely in mind. What do we mean by turning over a new leaf? That the order of our life is to take a new shape, a new form, a new color, a new tone. We are looking ahead. When a man desires to walk the way of wisdom, he must take tomorrow into account, for the way of wisdom is supremely a passion for tomorrow. Here then we have another question that we ask; how can a man give the right direction, the true form and fashion and shape to the future? Every beginning must take into account three things, the past, the present, and the future. How then shall we begin?

That brings us to the declaration of the text, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...." The supreme thing in every hour of new beginning in moral and spiritual life is that of some principle of action which will set us in right relationship with the past, with the forces that lie about us in the present and with the future. That principle must be more than intellectual orthodoxy. It must be vitally actual. It must be a principle which, being observed, brings us into the place of moral and spiritual power. We must find some principle which deals with all these facts not merely ideally, but dynamically, not merely from the standpoint of revealing to us a philosophy, but from the standpoint of communicating to us potentiality, which shall be sufficient for this terrible mystery and fact of the past, for these tremendous powers of the present, and for that weird and yet alluring mystery of the future.

When I pondered this text and had come to this part of my message and my burden, I said to my soul, "It is so old a statement, how can you deal with it?" I then asked two questions, and I will now ask them aloud. They are the questions of a man who presumably had never heard the statement before; the questions of a little child. First, "Who is the Lord?" And second, "What is it to fear the Lord?"

Who is the Lord? I have no answer to this inquiry other than that of biblical and Christian revelation. That answer is a threefold one as I understand it. He is the Creator and therefore the One Who knows perfectly that which He has created. He is the Preserver of all such as He has created and therefore the One Who cares for that which He has created. Finally, He is the Redeemer and therefore the One Who must love that which He has created and which He has preserved. There is nothing new in all that, but if some of us can put our lives into right relationship with it all, that will be something new; that will be a true beginning.

He is the Creator, therefore knowing. Already in my sermon I have made a quotation which I want to use again, from that wonderful, classic psalm than which there is nothing finer in the Bible in this regard and nothing approaching it outside the Bible:

O Jehovah, thou hast searched me, and known me,
Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising.
Thou understandest my thought afar off.
Thou searchest out my path and my lying down,
And art acquainted with all my ways.

"... Thou understandest my thought afar off." Thought is the most wonderful thing in my personality, mystic, strange, the thing that supremely puzzles me; it is the vehicle through which temptation assaults me, and I cannot help its assault; it is the vehicle through which high aspirations come to me, and I cannot help their coming. "... Thou understandest my thought afar off." The Lord is the Creator, and I am the created, a realized thought of God. He thought me, planned me, and fashioned me. He distanced Himself from that which is physical in me by the distance of my parenthood. He kept Himself near to me in the essential mystery of my being which is spiritual. For in me, as in all other men, He breathed the breath of life. Therefore He knows me perfectly.

O the comfort of it? Did you expect me to say the terror of it? By no means; the comfort of it! "Thou God seest me." In the olden days they printed those words, framed them, hung them up in the nursery, and too often interpreted them so as to suggest that God is a sort of moral policeman. Print it again, frame it, bedeck it with flowers, and then sing it to the children: "Thou God seest me." He

watches over us as the master Workman, Who, according to the ancient history, when He had completed man saw that His work was very good. The Lord is my Creator, understanding the mystic mechanism of my being. As to physical powers, I am fearfully and wonderfully made. More marvelous still are my mental capacities. The supreme, august, majestic dignity is that spiritual life which is akin to Deity, offspring of the Most High. I do not know myself; Thou Lord, knowest me perfectly. Then indeed, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...."

He is Preserver also, caring for all that His hands have made. Here we approach a statement where there are difficulties, but let us think carefully, let us think broadly, let us come to no hasty conclusion. There are men and women in London tonight for whom it seems as though God did not care. There are little children in London tonight for whom it is very hard to understand that God cares. But we must remember that the plane of human suffering which is unrelieved by Deity is a plane from which God is excluded by man's rebellion. The blame of such suffering is not upon God's provision but upon man's dealing with God's provision. There is in this world of ours such plenty that there need be no crying out in the streets and no poverty; but when man forgets God and breaks His law, then suffering follows. In the provision of God there is perfect supply for the preservation of humanity. Remember further, that disease and suffering are not in the economy of God; they are overruled within that economy, mastered within it, held in the grip of the Divine government, but they are not the will of God. Let us talk no blasphemy about disease being the will of God. Disease is never the will of God. The Lord is the One that preserveth the life which He has created. He created the morning for us, He created the darkness for us, giving His beloved sleep and in sleep giving to His beloved; making season follow upon season for man's well-being. We often measure Him by our own incompetence, and we imagine that several wet weeks in succession demonstrate the fact that the throne of God is vacant and that humanity is to be ruined. It is not so, and those who know God never blaspheme Him by criticizing His weather. He preserveth the life of man and beast! He is the Preserver of such as He has made.

Finally, He is the Redeemer. I am not going to discuss the problem. There is a problem, the problem of evil, of sin. The fact that man has lost his vision of this God, and the consciousness of this God, and relationship to this God, and that rivers of evil surge through the centuries destroying human life; the fierce fires of wrong persist in human history and permeate humanity, blasting, scorching, destroying. We have to face the fact that man, most mystic and mysterious in his being, is a rebel, and that thus revelling against God, he is banished from consciousness of God and fellowship with God. What then? God has not left humanity; God has not abandoned humanity! God has found a way by which His banished ones may return, because His is love which alters not when it alteration finds. God's is the love that follows and associates itself with sinning souls in comradeship in order that such may be healed and restored, and that at infinite cost; cost so marvelous that we cannot attempt to speak of it in any terms that are current in the common speech of humanity. The Lord is the Redeemer.

What then is His fear? Subjectively, it is recognition of His might and of His holiness. It is admission of the righteousness of the claim He makes upon the human soul. It is reverence for Him and a desire for conformity to His will. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him...." The fear of the Lord subjectively is that acknowledgment of God, that recognizing of Himself and of His claims, and that desire for such adjustment to that central infinite truth of all the universe and of all life which shall be for the glory of Him Who is at once Creator, Preserver and Redeemer. It follows that objectively the fear of the Lord is submission, adjustment, obedience. I do not mean that fear of the Lord is acceptance of truths about Him, or subscription to creeds which men have written. I am not undervaluing either the one or the other, but there may be both without the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord, I repeat, is first of all recognition of Himself and admission of His claim, reverence for Him; and then the answer to it that comes out of the volitional center of the life, the answer to that of which the soul is convinced.

Here someone will say in his or her heart, "This is all in the realm of mystery; let us get back to the realm of simplicity." Then I inquire, "Do you believe in God in any form, do you believe in Him in any manner?" Then the fear of the Lord is the answer of your life to that which you believe; it is the taking of your life and putting it into true adjustment to that of which you are convinced. Is He Creator? Then I venture to say in the name of common sense, if on no higher ground, your business is to find His thought for you and to obey it. Is He Preserver? Then I affirm that the supreme business of your life is that of worship and of faithfulness in recognition and in response. Is He Redeemer? Then the supreme business of your life is that of yielding yourself to that redemption, the handing over of the soul to the Redeemer. "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom...."

I claim, in conclusion, that this declaration of the ancient preacher is justified, philosophically, historically and experimentally. It is justified philosophically. Note the relation of Jehovah to the things which we said at the commencement must be taken into account in the way of wisdom; the past, the present, and the future. As to the past. What relation has the Lord to the past? Let the whole business be stated briefly once again by declaring whatever your past, or mine, He antedates it. Let me speak now to those who may not agree with all my attitudes towards the Bible. I want to ask you before you take my Bible and tear out its first page, to make up your minds what you propose to substitute for that page. We were among the trees a little while ago, tracing them back, and we lost our way. We were among the birds following them back, and there also we lost our way. Follow the pathways again; then take the Bible up and read; "In the beginning God created...." If some other cosmogony satisfies you, I have no right to dictate to you; but so help me God, nothing else can satisfy me, but that does satisfy me. "In the beginning God..." I do not mind which way you travel; it may be you will say that the birds came after the trees and that something preceded the trees, and you travel back until you come

to primordial protoplasmic germs. I will go with you, but now what is at the back of that? "In the beginning God created...." He antedates all your pasts and can control your past.

What of the present? What of the forces that assault the soul, luring it both to good and evil? He encompasses the whole of them and can control them. Nothing is out of His grasp. Not heaven alone but hell also is within His government. The Book of Job, that wonderful Book, teaches us how the Adversary of man is compelled to tell the sum of his devilry before God before he is permitted to exercise his power against man. That is always so. Milton when he made Lucifer, son of the morning, say, "It is better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven," made Lucifer express not his badness only, but his madness also, for Lucifer cannot reign in hell. God reigns in hell. "Though hell be nigh, yet God is nigher, Circling us with hosts of fire." All the forces in the midst of which we make our new beginnings are atmosphere in Deity and are controlled by God on behalf of all such as fear Him.

What of the future? He possesses it and can order it. He sees the end from the beginning. The final consummation, in one gleam of gold the New Testament has revealed and in one only, when Paul having climbed to the greatest height of all his apostolic thinking, said, "Then cometh the end, when He shall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power." That is the great and wonderful consummation about which the Bible has said so little that we dare say but little. That is made sure by the government of God. The future is His.

Where then shall I begin? "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom...." There is my past, "... How can a man be born when he is old?..." God stands between me and my past. Around me are the forces of today; How can I deal with them? God will deal with them, so I can deal with them in fellowship with Him. There is the future, what am I to do with tomorrow? There is hope in God for that also is His. Faith in God about the past; fellowship with God about the present; hope in God about the future. "Being... justified by faith,..." that is the backward look. "... We have peace with God..."; that is the present. "Rejoice in hope of the glory of God"; that is the future.

In proportion as our lives are put into right relationship with Him, we mount His chariot and ride triumphantly toward the goal of the ages and if the wheels be sometimes splashed with blood and the conflict leave scars upon the man who fights, what does it matter! Life is not feeble, frail; it is mighty, mysterious. The way of wisdom is the way of infinite, glorious victory, and the beginning is the fear of the Lord.

The declaration is justified historically in the experience of all the souls who have known the fear of the Lord. Hear me again—it is a sentence I would like to elaborate, but I will not—in the history of all the nations that have feared the Lord, the declaration of the text is vindicated.

Finally, it is vindicated experimentally. At this moment, the answer of the soul intelligently to the declaration vindicates its accuracy, and the experience of the soul in obedience vindicates its accuracy. By which I mean that we know full well that to fear the Lord is to walk in the way of wisdom. We know full well that if we will act in the fear of the Lord, we shall have found the highway at the end of which is the perfected life and the city and the home of God.

040 - Proverbs 11:30 - Winning Souls

He that is wise winneth souls. Proverbs 11:30

The slight difference between the Authorized Version and the Revised Version in the translation of this text suggests two different meanings. The Authorized Version reads, "He that winneth souls is wise," and that seems to mean quite simply that it is a wise thing to win souls. The Revised Version reads, "He that is wise winneth souls," and that seems to mean quite as simply that the condition for winning souls is wisdom; winning souls is a wise business; a man must be wise if he is to win souls. When the two ideas are thus suggested we realize that each translation may convey both meanings. The Authorized Version declares, "He that winneth souls is wise," that is, in himself and in his deed. The Revised Version reads, "He that is wise winneth souls," that is, wisdom is the condition for the work, and when that condition is fulfilled, the winning of souls is the inevitable issue. I feel, therefore, that we are justified in treating this text in both ways, as conveying both ideas. Whichever translation we take, whichever idea may appeal most strongly, we recognize that one subject is suggested, that of winning souls, whatever the declaration with regard to it may be. The declaration we shall treat as twofold; first, that wisdom is necessary to the work, and, second, that the accomplishment of the work is demonstration of wisdom.

Let these be the lines of our consideration: first, the subject referred to, winning souls; second, the wisdom which is necessary to do the work; and, third, the wisdom of the work done.

First, then, as to the winning of souls. The phrase is an old one. I do not mean merely by the fact of its presence in the Divine oracles, but by the fact of its use. I think we are compelled to admit that we do not hear so much about it now as some of us did in our boyhood days; but it is still being used, and is by no means unfamiliar to Christian people. Herein lies a difficulty, not

insuperable, but quite definite; the difficulty of familiarity with a phrase, and the consequent difficulty of prejudice as to what the phrase may really mean. Here, therefore, we must clear our ground, or we may be led into false speculations and certainly into misunderstandings of the enterprise which is suggested by this phrase of the Old Testament, a phrase illuminated, transfigured, and glorified by all the revelation contained in the New Testament.

What, then, is meant by winning souls? To proceed carefully with our investigation brings us immediately to another question, What are souls? When we have answered that, we may proceed to inquire, What is it to win them?

What, then, are souls? We have no right to take the word as it is in common use today and read into it either the interpretation of that common use, or the interpretation of our own conception of its meaning. We want to know what this man meant when he wrote the word. What did he mean by "souls"? I can answer the question only by looking carefully at the word and seeing its place in these Old Testament Scriptures. Let me immediately say, it is one of the commonest words to be found in these writings. Someone who has had the time to count tells us that the Hebrew word occurs 754 times in the writings of the Old Testament. Of those 754 times, the word is translated "souls" 472 times; on 282 occasions the Hebrew word is translated in forty ways, so that altogether the same Hebrew word is translated in forty-one ways. The predominating translation, however, is the one that we find in our text. If, then, this word was thus variously translated, and evidently as variously used, it is important that we discover its real intention. The word means simply a breathing creature. Its first occurrence, interestingly enough, is in the twenty-first verse of the first chapter of Genesis, which says that "God created the great sea-monsters, and every living creature that moveth," living creature meaning breathing creature. As I take my way through the Bible and observe its use, I discover that it became almost constantly and exclusively used of man himself. To take this Hebrew word *nephesh*, and trace it through the Old Testament and tabulate the results carefully, is to have a remarkable aid to the study of the psychology and theology of the ancient Hebrew people. It is used over and over again of man as a person, of man as a being whose existence is due to the fact of life. Thus the word does not refer to the spirit of a man alone, it does not refer to the mind of man only, and it certainly does not refer to the body of man alone; but the word in its common use excludes neither body nor mind, nor that which is essential, spirit; it includes all of them. "He that is wise winneth souls." Here the word "souls" does not mean the spiritual side of man's nature only, or the mental capacities of a man alone; certainly not his bodily powers only. It means the whole man, and man is not a disembodied spirit. The essential in man is spirit, but no man is man in his spiritual nature alone. This old-time writer, having much less of light and less understanding of the value of human life, and less understanding of God's estimate of the grandeur and glory of human life than we have today, said, "He that is wise winneth men"—using the word genetically.

Now we may ask our second question, What is it to win men? Here again the word employed arrests us. I like the word "winneth" and yet there is a sense in which while certainly valuable as it reveals the best method of doing the work, it is not quite accurate as a revelation of the thought of the writer. "Winneth" is a very beautiful word, for it is by the note that woos and wins that men are most often helped; but the Hebrew word here is to take, to catch, and that in the widest variety of applications. Here again a little illumination may come to us if we remind ourselves of how this word is rendered in our versions. It is translated elsewhere, to accept, to bring, to buy, to draw, to infold. I would not be at all afraid of taking any one of these words and putting it into my text. He that is wise accepteth souls. He that is wise bringeth souls. He that is wise buyeth souls. He that is wise draweth souls. He that is wise infoldeth souls. That suggests all sorts of methods for doing the work, and every word seems to have some of the music of the gospel of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and some revelation of the beauty of His methods with men. But the simple meaning is, to take alive. We may get some New Testament light on this in the story of the miraculous draught of fishes (Luk_5:1-11). Jesus said to Peter on that occasion, "From henceforth thou shalt catch men." That is exactly the thought of my text. "He that is wise catcheth men." Looking at the story in Luke again, I am constrained to say that our translation misses something. What did Jesus really say to Peter? "From henceforth thou shalt catch men alive." The value of what Jesus said did not consist in the similarity of the work these men were called to do, but in the disparity between the work they had been doing and what they would do henceforth. Henceforth you shall catch men alive. They had toiled all night and had not taken anything. Jesus instructed them where they should cast their net, and they cast it, and caught a great multitude of fish. When they caught those fish they took them from the element of life into that of death. Jesus said, Henceforth you shall catch men alive, that is, you shall do for men, the exact opposite to what you have been doing in the case of fish. Those fish you have brought from the element of their life to the element of death. You shall bring men from the element of death unto life. You shall catch men, take them alive; you shall lead them into life; you shall bring them to Me, and so bring them unto life; you shall buy them by putting out your own strength and energy in service and sacrifice to bring them into life; you shall draw them in your fellowship with Me from death unto life; you shall infold them in the bundle of life.

That is the real thought of my text. Let us go back to Proverbs and think of it as a whole. First of all, we have a series of parental discourses on wisdom by a father to his son, then a collection of proverbs made by Solomon during his lifetime, then a collection of proverbs made in the time of Hezekiah, finally, certain speeches by men unknown to us. The whole book is unified by its perpetual contrast of two ideals of life, two methods of life, two conditions in which men live: the way of wisdom and the way of folly, the way of righteousness and the way of wickedness, the way of godliness and the way of godlessness, the way of life and the way of death. In my contrasts I have introduced only one word that is not in the book of Proverbs, the word "Godlessness." All the rest are there,

and that is plainly inferred. In the discourses on wisdom, and in the Proverbs these things are put into contrast: wisdom and folly, rightness and wickedness, godliness and godlessness, life and death. Right here, in the heart of the book, the preacher says, "He that is wise winneth souls," that is catcheth men, leading them from folly to wisdom, from wickedness to rightness, from godlessness to godliness, from death to life. This is also what Jesus said, "Henceforth you shall catch men alive," winning them from the element of death and bringing them into the element of life, wherein all the meaning of their personalities will be fulfilled to the uttermost. The work is winning, not spirits alone, not minds only, not bodies simply, but men.

I submit to you—broad, hurried, and necessarily brief as this outlook is on a great subject—that it is a great enterprise to win souls, to capture men and bring them from darkness into light, from death to life. It is a worthy enterprise, that is, it is worth while. There is no enterprise that confronts a man when he stands in the bloom of his young manhood that ought to appeal to him like this. There is no enterprise that presents itself to a girl in the beauty and freshness of her youth that ought to capture her dear heart like this. To win souls, to lead human beings out of darkness into light, out of death into life, out of paralysis and failure and heartbreak into power and victory and joy, is a worthy enterprise. I submit to you, it is an enterprise which brings more satisfaction and delight to the soul than any other. I say to you, my Christian brothers and sisters who have never yet given yourselves to this work, you do not yet know the joy of life. There is no joy in the world like the joy of seeing a broken, soiled, spoiled man or woman healed, cleansed, renewed; to observe the haunting fear in the eyes as first we saw them changed into dancing joy when they have come to Christ and to life. To win souls, to catch men, women, and children, to take them alive, out of the element of death into the element of life—that is a worthy enterprise, a satisfying enterprise, a delightful enterprise.

In his proverb the preacher said, "He that is wise winneth souls." What is the wisdom that is necessary for this enterprise, for doing this work? What did he mean by wisdom? All the book of Proverbs reveals what he meant. The other wisdom book, which came from the same pen, the book of Ecclesiastes, will show what he meant. The third wisdom book of the Old Testament, with which in all likelihood this man was familiar, for it is probably the most ancient of all the Old Testament books, the book of Job, will show what he meant. Wisdom, in the sense in which these books are designated wisdom books, meant simply what we mean by philosophy. In these books we find the philosophy of the Hebrew religion. There is a distinction between the philosophy as discovered to us in these wisdom books and all other philosophies which I will only mention now. The Hebrew philosophy began with the affirmation of God. All others begin with Pilate's question, "What is truth?" Do not misunderstand that passing illustration. I am not criticizing the method of the question, but reminding you that the Hebrew philosophers did not begin with that question. They affirmed God, and proceeded on the presupposition that God is all-wise, that wisdom could be perfectly predicated only of God, that apart from Him there is no wisdom, that in Him all wisdom dwells. From that presupposition they deduced their doctrine of human wisdom. I go back to the beginning of this wonderful book of Proverbs and find a definition. The preface is in the first seven verses of the first chapter; then the writer gives his definition of wisdom:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.

These Hebrew philosophers believed that wisdom in man was the result of man's right relationship to God. God is the fountain of all wisdom, and in proportion as man submits himself to His law and seeks His knowledge and His guidance and direction, in that proportion man is wise. I am inclined to say, in spite of all the centuries that have passed since these wisdom books were written, that it was a very sound philosophy.

I turn to the New Testament and I do not find that conception of wisdom altered. I do find it is illuminated, that a new light is breaking out, because there is a new revelation of God. In the letter to the Romans Paul comes to a point where he breaks out into a great doxology; "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past tracing out!" That is the Hebrew conception of God as the All-wise, but it follows the great apostolic teaching concerning salvation. I turn from that to the Corinthian letter and I find the same man writing to people who are being darkened in understanding by false philosophies in the Corinthian city, and he tells them that God has chosen the foolish things of the world to bring to nought the wise things of the world, until at last he reaches the culmination of his teaching when he declares that Christ Jesus "was made unto us wisdom from God." Then he analyzes the wisdom, declaring it to be "both righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

Thus the New Testament doctrine of wisdom is that it exists in God, that man is wise only as he comes into right relationship with God, and that wisdom has manifested itself in a method by which men, blind and foolish and far away and in darkness, may see and return and be enabled. Paul declares that for humanity in its sin and shame the ultimate unveiling of the wisdom of God is in the redemption that He has provided for man in Christ Jesus.

Then I turn to James—the supremely ethical writer of the New Testament, whose very letter is saturated with the Sermon on the Mount, and with Proverbs and the wisdom books of the Old Testament—and I find that he gives us a description of what wisdom is when it is at work: "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy."

In this passage we have a perfect description of the man who wins souls. If, then, I am to be engaged in this great enterprise I must have the wisdom that cometh down from above. There is a wisdom, says James, that does not come down from above, it is earthly, sensual, devilish, and so he dismisses it. He then describes the wisdom that cometh down from above, and so shows us the wise man as God sees him. This is the man who is able to catch men and lead them from darkness to light. Let us then observe what James says about the wisdom that cometh from above, not in its widest applications, but with our minds fastened on this one subject of the capacity for winning souls. In this declaration three little words must be carefully observed which are not descriptive words but which mark a method: "First, pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy." My emphasis has brought out the words I ask you to observe: "First... then... without." "First," that which is fundamental in this wisdom; "then," the attitudes of mind that result; "without," the things that are excluded. What is fundamental? Purity. What are the things that result? "Peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits." What are the things that are excluded when this wisdom masters the life? "Variance, hypocrisy."

The first word needs no comment; the wise man must be "pure." Then the attitudes of mind. "Peaceable" means not merely that the wise man is in himself a man who loves peace, but that he is pacific, that he makes for peace. Immediately the word of Jesus comes to our minds, the word from the great Manifesto, "Blessed are the peacemakers." The next word, translated "gentle," really means patient. The next word, "easy to be entreated," is a great word and certainly admits of two interpretations. This translation is the interpretation of the revisers, and I do not agree with it. "Easy to be entreated," suggests a man who can be approached easily, but I believe it means more, it means persuasive. "Full of mercy," that is, full of compassion. "Full... of good fruits," that is, full of the very things these needy people are waiting for. All these things lie within wisdom. They may be remembered by simple alliteration: pure, pacific, patient, persuasive, potential. These are the very qualities that are necessary if we are to win men.

First, pure. I cannot win men from impurity to purity if I am impure. I cannot catch men from the element of death and bring them into life if I myself am abiding in the element of death. I cannot lure men to walk the sunlit path if I hug the place where shadows lie and the darkness is thick. "First, pure." The man who attracts other men to holiness is the pure man. The reason why many people are utterly incapacitated for winning souls is that within their life is harbored, permitted, entertained, something that is impure and unholy. First, pure.

Then peaceable, pacific, making peace. Then patient. Ah, me, how often much patience is needed for winning souls! How they disappoint us, how they break out again and again into the same old sins, and how we are tempted to say, We will wash our hands of them! Never! The wisdom that is from above never washes its hands of the most hopeless, failing souls. Love never faileth. Love is at the heart of the wisdom of God. Then persuasive, knowing how to deal with men so as to lead them to the light. Then potential, replete with compassion, which is the desire to give good fruits, which are the very gifts for which men wait.

This wisdom that is from above excludes variance. Here I deliberately go back to the Authorized Version, and prefer its rendering, "partiality." God is no respecter of persons, we are told. That is not so. He is a respecter of persons. The Bible does not say that He is not. The Bible says God is no respecter of faces, and the word was spoken to Jews, who thought that their very faces won them the respect of God! That quality of impartiality is necessary if we are to win souls. We so often have respect for faces; we do have hope of this man, but not of that other man. We look at certain people and come to the conclusion that they are not salvable. Such a conclusion is always a lie, a blasphemy. There is no man on whom Grace cannot work God's perfect will if he can be brought into right relationship therewith.

Again, without hypocrisy, that is, without pretense. In the mystery of the common human mind there is a most remarkable detection of any kind of hypocrisy or cant in a man who is trying to talk about religion. All our influence is killed if our attempt to draw a man to religion is mere pretense.

This is the wisdom that cometh down from above. This is the wisdom that is needed if we are to win men. This winning of souls is not a mechanical business which we can go to school to learn; it is not an easy arrangement which can be taken up by people when they have read a certain number of books dealing with the subject. The capacity for dealing with souls is that wisdom which cometh from above, which is, first, pure, then contains within itself these great and gracious qualities, and excludes partiality and hypocrisy. The capacity to win souls lies in life homed in the will of God, responsive to the grace of God, incarnating the very life of the Christ of God. "He that winneth souls is wise." "He that is wise winneth souls."

It seems to me that I need take no time with the third line of thought, save briefly to refer to it. I need not argue the wisdom of the work. Why is it wise to win souls? Because this satisfies God. God is against the spoiling of human lives and the wanderings of men into the paths that run out into pathlessness. Catch them, catch them alive, bring them back, turn them again into the way of peace, and God is gladdened. It is wise to win souls, for it satisfies God.

It is wise to win souls, for it glorifies man, and that in the true sense. Oh, the wasted wealth of humanity, the powers and capacities and potentialities blighted, spoiled, ruined! Oh, the agony of it! Win them, catch them, renew them! This is great, gracious, and glorious work. To see that which was out of the way turn into the way, that on which rested the cankerworm and the mildew and

blight, breaking out into blossom and beauty and flowers and fruit. To see that man whose very face had become the awful sign manual of his lust being transformed into a man whose face is a revelation of the love of God. To see that girl whose eyes, naturally full of life and love, had become hard and scornful and devilish transformed, until from them flashes the glorious light of the eyes of Christ. It is great work, this! It is wise to win souls.

It is wise to win souls, moreover, because by winning souls we hasten the coming of the day of God.

Are we winning souls? Are we catching men? If not, why not? Is it that we have never seen the glory of the enterprise? Or is it that we lack the wisdom necessary? If it be that we have never been winners of souls because we have never seen the glory of the enterprise, then let us get near to Christ, really near to Him, spiritually near to Him. Resolutely forgetting and putting right out of our lives for one short hour all the influences of friends and others, and getting near to Him, and looking from His viewpoint, what shall we see? We shall see the extreme glory of humanity as we have never seen it. We shall see as He sees, that when God in the counsel of His great wisdom said, "Let us make man," He said a great thing. We shall see the consequent tragedy of human undoing as we have never seen it. The man who sees only the ruin of humanity has never seen the ruin of humanity. That man who is impressed only by the foolishness he finds in human nature does not know the tragedy of human undoing. But if behind the face bruised, marred, scarred, and battered, bloated, blasted, we can see the potential image of God, then we shall begin to know the tragedy of sin. Jesus looked through the mask (more than a mask), through the disfigurements of sin to the potential that lay behind. Thus He saw the tragedy of the leprosy. If we can see with Him, then the master passion of life will be to win souls, to have some share in the glorious enterprise of realizing the latent possibilities of humanity, in order to glorify that humanity and in order to glorify the God Who thought it and made it.

If we know the glory of the enterprise and fain would be winners of souls, but are conscious of our lack of the wisdom necessary, then let us return to an earlier word of James in this same letter: "If any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, Who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not."

I lack the wisdom, God knows how I lack it, and how I feel I lack it, the wisdom that is first pure, then peaceable, pacific, patient, persuasive, potential, and without partiality or pretense. I lack it, but I am going to ask for it, and when I do so, ashamed that I am so lacking, He does not upbraid me, and He will give it. I, even I, can have it! I can have this wisdom. I also may become a winner of souls.

Shall we not presently get away somewhere quietly and put ourselves at His disposal, that in the power of the wisdom that cometh from above we may share the high and holy enterprise?

041 - Proverbs 18:10 - The Strength of the Name

The name of Jehovah is a strong tower: The righteous runneth into it, and is safe. Proverbs 18:10

Life is full of strain and stress. Sooner or later we all come to the consciousness of this fact. The illustrative figures of the inspired Scriptures all remind us of this fact.

Life is described as a race, for the running of which it is necessary that we should lay aside all weights, and forgetting the things we pass, as soon as they are passed, with eyes earnestly fixed upon the goal, so run that we may obtain.

Or life is described as a voyage, and the suggestion is that of the need the mariner has for skill and constant watchfulness, that he may escape the perils of rocks and sand-banks and shoals.

Or life is described as a battle in which the warrior must be fully panoplied and prepared to stand, and to withstand, in order that, having done all, he may stand.

Or life is considered as a great problem, full of perplexity, in which every day brings its new amazement, and all the way is a way in which the pilgrim passes through mystery and into mystery.

All these figures suggest the strain and stress of life.

There come to every one of us, sooner or later, days when strength is weakened. These are the days of disaster or victory in human life, the days in which we find that of ourselves and in ourselves we are unequal to navigating the vessel, to prosecuting the battle to finality, to discovering the way along which we should walk, and to continuing therein in spite of difficulty. The day when we have to say we cannot is a day of disaster or a day of victory, and whether it be disaster or victory depends entirely upon whether or not we believe our text of the morning, and have entered into the full meaning of its profound and comforting suggestiveness. "The name of Jehovah is a strong tower: The righteous runneth into it, and is set on high."

Shall we first remind ourselves of the forces that are against us, in order that we may then consider what this text suggests as to the

place of safety, in order that we may finally consider the proofs of safety.

Of the forces that have been and still are against us, the first are mystic and strange, and not perfectly understood; they are spiritual antagonisms. We have been conscious in the midst of life of the sudden assaults of evil. We deny absolutely that they came from within. They were not part of ourselves. We do not believe that they came from God, but we are quite sure of the assaults. Over and over again we are made conscious, whatever our philosophy may be, that there are spiritual forces, insidious and subtle, which suggest evil; and we are appalled by the overwhelming strength of these spiritual antagonisms.

Or, to speak of these things as they are personified according to Scripture, we have to take our way through life perpetually antagonized by one who has been described as "seeking whom he may devour," one who finds his way, if Scripture be true, into the immediate presence of God, there to slander and to ask permission to test us that he may sift us as wheat. The revelation of the antagonism of this evil spirit flames into supreme revelation in the Book of Job, and especially in one very remarkable sentence in that Book, where it is said that God inquires of him, "Hast thou considered My servant Job?" "Hast thou considered?" The question reveals an enemy who is patiently watching—watching for the weakest place in the chain, that there he may attempt to break it; watching for the least guarded door in the citadel of man-soul, that there he may force an entrance.

But there are other forces against us. The age in which we live is full of things that hinder us in our attempt to live the godly life. Let me name one or two of them. First, there is the fact that men are so eminently successful without God. That may sound a strange thing to say. The preacher is always denying it, and there is a sense in which we shall still continue to deny it. But it is impossible for the man of business, who is attempting to be a godly man, to look out upon his age without seeing how marvelously well men seem to get on without God.

Or, there is the problem of the long continued victory of evil in the world, the fact that time after time, when it seems as though morning were breaking, it suddenly darkens into midnight.

Then there is the problem of universal pain, the problem that floods me with letters, which I am always in amazed difficulty as to how to answer.

These are among the things that make life strenuous, and create the sense of strain, and demand some place of quietness and some place of peace.

Or, again, we have to do with the persistence of the self-life. I often feel that the enemy I dread most is not the devil, not the problems by which I am surrounded, but myself. The reappearance of the self-life is perpetual. Immediately a man thinks he has gained a victory over it, mastered it, it garbs itself in other vestments, and appears anew.

And then, there are the sorrows of life, the bereavements that come to us, the empty places in the home, the hope deferred that makes the heart sick, the disappointments that crush the spirit in personal friendships, the hour in which a man has to say:

Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat my bread,
Hath lifted up his heel against me.

These are some of the forces against us. Individually they defeat us; united they destroy us.

Now what are we to do? It is in the midst of a Book that is full of the revelation of these contrary forces, a Book that recognizes the spiritual antagonisms, that this wonderful verse flames out. It seems to be very much alone in this chapter of Proverbs. Yet, there is a wonderful fitness that this verse is put down into the midst of words that seem to have no connection with it. Into the chaos it comes with its suggestion of cosmos, into the darkness with its flaming light, into a sob and a sigh with its song. "The name of Jehovah is a strong tower: The righteous runneth into it, and is safe."

Let us attempt to interpret the meaning of this text by the Book, because the name of Jehovah is related to the whole of the old economy. I pray you remember the use these Hebrew people made of that name, the fact that they never pronounced it as we pronounce it, the fact that they never wrote it in fulness, so that they have created for us unto this hour a difficulty as to what the full name really was. On all the pages of their ancient Scriptures this particular name, to which the preacher now refers, stands revealed by four consonants, with no vowels, indicating a reverent reticence in the pronunciation of a name so full of rich suggestiveness. And remember, moreover, that as you study these Old Testament Scriptures, you never find this name linked with any qualifying or distinguishing adjective. You never read, the Jehovah, or my Jehovah, or the living Jehovah. The Adonahy, the Lord; my Elohim, my God; the living Elohim, the living God; but never the, my, or the living Jehovah. It always stands alone as the tetragrammaton, four consonants from which the light seems to break. There was a singular reverence and reticence in the use of the name, and yet, it was the very center of the Hebrew religion, and the measure in which these people rose to any height of religious life was the measure in which they saw the light of that name, and took their refuge in its signification, and were made strong by all it said to them.

I know the difficulty of interpretation, but I do not hesitate to adopt the interpretation that it means the Becoming One—that is, the One Who becomes to His people all they need. It suggests the adaptation of Infinite Being to finite being, in order to bring about the strengthening of finite being with all the strength of Infinite Being. If it is difficult to follow that line, and to discover the mystery of the tetragrammaton, then let us turn to the name as it is illustrated for us in the Old Testament, in five pictures.

The first is that of Abraham on a mountain with Isaac. The second is of Moses on a mountain. In the valley are the hosts that he has led from Egypt's slavery engaged in deadly conflict with Amalek. Moses' hands are lifted in prayer, and while they are so lifted Israel prevails, and when they faint and droop Amalek prevails. The third is the picture of Gideon, the peaceful farmer, suddenly called to national service, commanded to gather an army and to strike a blow that shall break the power of Midian. The fourth is a picture of a prophet in prison—Jeremiah, exercising a ministry in which there is no gleam of hope as to immediate result; knowing this from the commencement, and becoming more profoundly conscious of it as he continues, until at last he is in prison, and in the prison house he is singing a song of hope. And the last is the picture of yet another prophet, an exile from his own land, by the River Chebar—Ezekiel, looking through all the clouds and the darkness by which he is surrounded, ever through and through until there breaks upon his astonished vision the ultimate realization of all for which he has long hoped.

We know the pictures: Abraham on Moriah; Moses on the mountain, with hands uplifted while Amalek fights Israel; Gideon acting to set his people free from Midianitish oppression; Jeremiah in the midst of utter failure, the prophet of failure; and Ezekiel in exile by the river banks.

Now all these men knew the meaning of my text, and knew it in one particular way in each case. In connection with these five pictures I find the name illustrated. Abraham on Moriah said, "Jehovah-Jireh." Moses on the mountain said, "Jehovah-Nissi." Gideon facing the conflict said, "Jehovah-Shalom." Jeremiah in the dungeon heard the word, "Jehovah-Tsidkenu." And Ezekiel by the river said as the last thing in his prophecy, "Jehovah-Shammah."

Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord will see and provide. Jehovah-Nissi, the Lord our banner. Jehovah-Shalom, the Lord our peace. Jehovah-Tsidkenu, the Lord our righteousness. Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord is there.

In these pictures, I find an interpretation of the meaning of my text which is full of value. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe."

In the case of Abraham, we have an illustration of the obedience of faith in extremity. And by extremity I mean that he had come to the last test of his faith. Faith had been tried and tested and proved through all the years, but this was the final test. "Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac." All the promises of God were to be fulfilled in and through Isaac, and there was no other way in sight. Nevertheless, this man, in the hour of faith's stern and awful and overwhelming extremity, found the tower of refuge a place of strength, a high rock pinnacle where he was set above the stress and strain. "Jehovah-Jireh" means, quite literally, the Lord will see; but inferentially, and by intention, the Lord will provide. There is not a great distance between seeing and providing, vision and provision. Provision is the outcome of vision; and this man, when the command was given, and the altar was prepared, and he was at the end of everything upon which he had been learning, did not say, "I cannot see"; but he said, "God can see"; and thus he ran into the tower of refuge. The Divine vision and provision was the place of strength to a man when his faith was obedient to the very last extremity of its testing.

Again, the picture of Moses upon the mountain is that of the conflict of faith. The hour had come when the men of faith, who had been redeemed because of their belief in him who had endured having seen Him Who is invisible, were gathered in conflict; and in the conflict Moses knew that everything depended not upon the strength of their fighting, but upon the presence and the power of God. In that hour he uttered these great words, "Jehovah-Nissi," the Lord our banner. I like to imagine the picture from Moses' standpoint. There in the valley are the hosts of Amalek—cruel, overwhelming hosts. And there also is this little company of fighting Israelites. But what did Moses say that day when, conscious of the stress of the conflict, he ran into the name of the Lord? Like a banner floating and fluttering in the breeze he saw that name, and knew that victory depended upon God's presence with them. The name of the Lord to him was a strong tower, to which he ran and was set on high.

Or Gideon yonder is seen shrinking from service; and I have no criticism for him. I have already said that he was a farmer, a man of simple tastes, unused to the things of war. This man was apprehended, and appointed in the midst of his toil to be the deliverer of the people from long and brutal and cruel oppression. Oh, how he shrank, afraid even of the vision of the angel that had come to him for his commissioning. He said, I have seen the angel of the Lord, and I shall die. It was then that the great word came, "Jehovah-Shalom," the Lord send peace. And he went into the name of God, and was set on high above his own fears, above his own anxieties; and in that moment he became the intrepid leader who presently was content to fight with three hundred rather than thirty-two thousand, because such was the revealed will and method and purpose of God.

Or, I go once more to that dungeon, and see Jeremiah therein—a man who is the witness of faith in the midst of the most hopeless circumstances, and what is his hope? He says, "Jehovah-Tsidkenu," the Lord our righteousness. He knows perfectly well that there

can be no civic strength that is not based on righteousness, no national restoration and uplifting that is not founded upon righteousness. And where is righteousness? Absent from the counsels of kings, absent from the policies of the men who were ruling, absent from the national leaders at that moment. Then he entered into the name of the Lord, "Jehovah-Tsidkenu," and was certain that because He was righteous the victory must be won; and he sang the song of the certainty thereof.

And, finally, Ezekiel by the Chebar, seeing his visions of God, was a man of faith in the hour of exile, when all upon which human hope had been set was broken to a thousand pieces; and he saw through the mists and through the clouds, and as he looked to the ultimate, that on which he finally dwelt was not the glory of a temple or the prosperity of a people, but the presence of God. Ezekiel saw Jehovah present in the process, and consequently, present finally in the fulfilment of purpose. "The name of Jehovah is a strong tower."

I leave those illustrations, and I ask you for a moment to think with me of the proofs of safety. My brethren, all these I have referred to are in themselves proofs of how safe men are when they enter into this name. Abraham, Moses, Gideon, Jeremiah and Ezekiel; you notice that the illustrations coincide with the history of the nation. The whole history of Israel is in these illustrations. Abraham, the father and founder; Moses, the law-giver and leader; Gideon, the leader at a particular time of peril; Jeremiah, the prophet of failure; Ezekiel amid the failure. All these men were able to sing the song of victory, and to achieve a present victory, and pass its power on to coming days because they knew the strength of this great name. In every case these men were set on high above the tumult and the stress, entering into the place of peace even in the midst of conflict.

The Bible abounds with illustrations. Daniel knew conflict; he was persecuted, and they took him and put him in the den of lions. But if you tell me that Daniel was in the den of lions you have discovered only the most superficial truth. Where then was Daniel? In the name of Jehovah, in the den of lions; and when the king in the morning said, "O, Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, Whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" Daniel answered, "O, king, live forever. My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths." He went into the tower, and was set on high.

Or Job, who came to the fulfilment of his own life when he found his way through the flaming glory of the Theophany into the secret place of the name, and rested therein.

Or David, if indeed the psalm we read this morning was David's psalm. Did you notice the growth of experience and the growth of the sense of safety? At the beginning of the psalm he said, "I shall not be greatly moved," but before the song was done he said, "I shall not be moved." And how did he climb from trembling confidence to matchless assurance? Read the psalm again, and it will be seen that it is the psalm of God and the song of the name of the Lord—the song of a soul gathering courage and heroism in the secret place.

We need not confine ourselves to Biblical illustration. "Saints, apostles, prophets, martyrs," who passed through conflicts as severe, if not severer, than we can ever know, put their trust in this name, and found it safe. Or may I not appeal to some of you who are in the midst of conflict to prove the assertion of the text by the memory of things you have known in the lives of your loved ones? Will you let me help you by an illustration? I remember, seven and thirty years ago, when God took from my side—the side of an only boy—his one playmate, his sister. Do not ever indulge in the heresy that a child is incapable of sorrow. I remember coming back one morning—only a lad as I then was—from the grave where I had sat in loneliness, and I found in the house my father and mother. And, boy as I was, I crept up to where they were sitting together, and, if you like the heathenism of the word, it happened—there is a better word than that—my father's hand was resting on his Bible, and I looked at where his finger rested, and I saw these words: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord." And, boy as I was, I knew there was a connection between that verse and the light I saw on the faces of father and mother; and I never lost the impression of it. And, twenty-four years after, when my own first girlie was taken out of my own home, I got the Bible and turned up the same verse, and laid my hand where my father had laid his hand. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: The righteous runneth into it, and is set on high."

The proof is scattered through the experience of the saints in all the ages, and is as near to you as father and mother's trust in God. Nay, verily, brethren, have you not yourselves proved it?

Of the supreme onslaught and victory, we have the story in the New Testament. Jesus knew the conflict of life as none other has ever known it. He knew the forces of spiritual antagonism. He lived in the midst of the problems that vex us. And the subtle forms of temptation with which we are familiar, He knew them and entered deeply and profoundly into them. He knew the sorrows of bereavement and difficulty; He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And how did He overcome them? To Him the name of the Lord was a strong tower into which He passed and was set on high. The supreme secret of all His victory over sin and sorrow is contained in His own confession, "I and My Father are one." In fellowship with Him He overcame. But there is a deeper signification in that story of Jesus. The name Jesus in itself is composed of the ancient name Jehovah, and yet another word that speaks of salvation. The name Jesus essentially means Jehovah is salvation. The name Jesus is Joshua. Now let my young friends take their Bibles and find out when the name was made. The Son of Nun did not bear it first. It was given to him. The significance is that of Jehovah and salvation interwoven, making the name Joshua, which is our name Jesus; and into that name finally we may run

and be set on high.

Jesus, name of sweetness,
Jesus, sound of love,
Cheering exiles onward
To their rest above.

My brethren, what is the conflict to you this morning? Are you at the extremity of faith? Are you asked to walk a pathway that seems as though it must end in disaster? Are you sure it is God's will? Then, in comradeship with this Christ, Who walked the via dolorosa, and walked the way to victory, take your way along that pathway. Are you in conflict with foes in the valley that are against faith and against God? Let your hands be uplifted, and in that name Jesus there is a banner of Jehovah, and victory must come as you follow Him. Are you commissioned to some work from which you shrink, as did Gideon of old? In Jesus is the fulfilment of the great word "Jehovah-Shalom," for He is our peace; and we may enter into all service in perfect peace in Him. Are you feeling, rightly or wrongly, that you are strangely in company with Jeremiah, that all the foundations are breaking down around you, and that the national outlook is of the darkest? I pray you, in your dungeon, look higher and see "Jehovah-Tsidkenu." Or, if you would translate it into modern language, sing this: "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun doth his successive journeys run." And if today the thickening battle and the darkening gloom overwhelm you, stay a little by the river, and look far enough and earnestly enough, and beyond all the mystery of the hour you will see the glory of God's victory; and its chief word is this, "Jehovah-Shammah," the Lord is there. The crowned Christ, having won the kingdoms of the world, will make them His own to the glory of God.

042 - Proverbs 18:24 - My Friend

He that maketh many friends doeth it to his own destruction; but there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Proverbs 18:24

Those of you who are familiar with the rendering of this text in the Authorized Version must notice the very striking change of the revision in the first part of the verse. In the King James Version it reads: "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." There is no doubt that the rendering as we have it now is true to the original. The Authorized Version was due to a mistake made by confusing two words which are very nearly alike, and yet have totally different meanings. In the new rendering we see that which was most certainly in the mind of the Preacher. He is speaking to young people on the subject of friendship, and he warns them that the man of many acquaintances is in danger, but that there is a kind of friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

I am perfectly well aware that at the first my text has no application such as I propose to make of it this evening. You would at once be conscious when I read such a text that I am going to talk about my Friend, my one Friend. But when these words were written that Friend was not in view save as a great ideal. As a matter of fact, the Hebrew words used here for friend are quite distinct, and carry two meanings. The word translated "friends" in the first part of my text simply means associates or acquaintances. That translated "friend" is different, and may with all accuracy be translated "lover," and that conception harmonizes perfectly with an earlier proverb. "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." The true quality of friendship is love, and the one expression of perfect friendship is that of adherence, loyalty, or, again in the somewhat rough and striking translation of both versions, a friend is one who "sticketh closer than a brother."

The heart of man is forever craving friendship. Let every man beware of the crowd of acquaintances. Let every man value at the very highest the friend who is a true lover. It is a little difficult in June days to distinguish between the acquaintance and the friend. We have to wait for November and December. It is not easy to know your friends when the sea is smooth and reflects heaven's blue. You will find them when the sky is overcast and Euroclydon beats the deep into fury, and you are in peril. It is not quite easy to distinguish between acquaintances and friends in your days of prosperity. "A brother is born for adversity." You discover him only then. Friendship is tested by tempest. May we not say that the difference between acquaintances and friends is the difference between the reeds that grow by the river side and the rough, gnarled old oak stick when you are contemplating climbing hills. If I have a rough hill to climb give me one rugged old oak stick to lean on rather than a hundred reeds that grow in perpetual green by the river bank. If I have difficulty to face and burdens to bear and tempests to weather, give me my friend—he may be very rough, quite a curious specimen of humanity, but he loves me, and he sticks—rather than a hundred butterflies who are round me while the sun shines and are gone when storms lower. That was the Preacher's meaning. It was a valuable meaning. It is a great philosophy of friendship, and we do well to consider it.

Interesting as the theme may be, I do not intend to discuss this subject of friendship on the level of the ordinary friendship of these passing days. When the Preacher said, "There is a lover that sticketh closer than a brother," he stated a high ideal of friendship, the very highest and the very best that his eyes had seen or his heart had conceived. In the process of the centuries He appeared, incarnate, the one true Friend of all men.

This evening I want to introduce you to my Friend. I have found this One of whom the Preacher spoke so long ago. I know Him personally, intimately, though not yet fully. I am not going to discuss the philosophy of friendship. I am not going to portray the ideal of friendship. I want to talk to you about my Friend, to tell you some things about Him, and then how you also, if you will, may come into the circle of His friendship, among those to whom He says in infinite tenderness and love, "No longer do I call you servants... I have called you friends."

Therefore, you will understand that I am speaking tonight, as I sometimes say, not as an advocate, but as a witness. With all reverent familiarity I want to tell you what I have found this Friend to be. You say, "Why do you come with this message?" This message, like those of recent Sunday evenings, has grown out of the necessity of the hour. I attempted to speak last Sunday night of the way in which men and women in conflict with evil may hope to be successful. I directed them to that philosophy of conflict contained in the words of James, "Submit to God; resist the devil." In the course of my message I referred to the loneliness of many in this great London, and once again I have been dealing all the week, by correspondence or in other way, with those who found that word touch a chord in their hearts. There are a great many lonely men and women in London. If before I turn to my real subject I say some word or two about them, I crave the patience of those who are not feeling lonely. There are so many lonely souls all about us. There are young people in business houses in this district who are awfully alone. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, nine in the morning till nine at night; Friday the same; Saturday, nine till eleven; Thursday, nine till five, and then—no friend! The home far away in some country place. The loved ones who understand best, not nigh at hand. It may be no home worth the name, no lovers, no friends who really care. I do not think I can say tonight all that ought to be said and all I want to say about such a condition of things. I think I shall have a good deal to say about it before long. I want to talk to those who are in such places. Perhaps there are some even more lonely. I have not described your situation, but you are awfully alone. Hundreds of people on the streets as you walk along, but no one who knows you. The most lonely moment I ever had in my life was in 1896, when I first landed in New York. I stepped from the great steamboat on to the wharf, and there were hundreds of people meeting friends, but no one meeting me. Not a voice I knew, not a face that was familiar, and I stood for a few moments feeling desolately lonely. I am never lonely now when I go there, but I was lonely for that first hour. And that was a mere nothing, because I could find my way to friends, and presently I did; but, oh, these men and women in London who are alone! I would like to say in passing that it is part of the work of Jesus Christ to see to it that such hours as I have named cease once and for all. Until that work is accomplished it is the work of Jesus Christ to find these lonely people and introduce them to a circle of living, warm, loverlike affection. God help us to do it. We are going to try.

There is something needed beyond anything we can do on such lines. For the rest of this evening I want to speak to the lonely hearts in this great crowd. All the rest of you be patient. Thank God if you are not alone, and pray that I may so speak of my Friend Who never leaves me utterly alone, that I may win these lonely hearts to Him, and introduce them to a comradeship absolute in its perfection.

My Friend is first of all a lover. He fulfills that fundamental condition of friendship which the Preacher of long ago described. To my unutterable surprise, He says He loves me. The Bible, treat it as you will, speak of it from whatever standpoint you will, have all the difficulties you may concerning its construction, is His love letter to me. And whereas it says many things I have not yet understood, the one message ringing through it from beginning to end is the message of love. The Friend Who drew near to men nineteen hundred years ago in such warm and tender nearness that they could touch and handle and see Him is the Eternal Friend of men, closer than breathing in spiritual presence forevermore, and always saying to me that He loves them. The one great message of this Letter is a love message. I take it up and read it, and the thing that comes home to my heart startling me, surprising me, is that the pure, white, holy God loves me notwithstanding my sin, notwithstanding my pollution and my failure. My Friend loves me in spite of all my degradation.

More than that, He has demonstrated His love so as to bring conviction to my heart. Whether I have responded or not is not the question for the moment. I simply state the fact. "God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." He explains that in His own words, for He rises to the highest conception possible to the mind of man when He says, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." This is your greatest conception of love; you cannot climb higher than this. There is no supreamer proof of love than that a man should lay down his life for his friends. But my Friend died for me while I was yet a sinner, while all the set of my life was against His true and holy purpose, while all the influences and forces of my being were running counter to the influences and forces of His holiness and tenderness. Even then my Friend died for me. He laid down His life for me. Not only is it true that my Friend tells me of His love. It is also true that He has demonstrated His love to my heart's deepest and profoundest conviction. My Friend is a lover. Out of that come all the other things. Because my Friend is a lover He is faithful. He is true. He is tender. He is strong.

He is faithful to me, never deserting, never tiring of me. It was Shakespeare who sang, "Love is not love that alters when it alteration finds." Like that of the Preacher of old, that high ideal has had its perfect fulfillment in the case of my Friend. One of the pictures which I think I love to dwell upon almost more than any other in this connection is the picture of Jesus standing upon the mountain and leaving His loved ones. He gives them their great commission, and tells them what they are to do. Then with hands stretched out in blessing He vanishes out of their sight and the heavens receive Him. The question that comes to me is this, Will He, having

left the pathway of human sorrow and need, be unmindful of the men He has left behind, for this is how I have been disappointed in human friendships. The man that was my friend when we trod the same rough path together—or seemed to be my friend—when he escaped from the roughness, and found the place of ease, forgot the man with whom he tramped the rough pathway. There is a whole philosophy in a word of the Old Testament, "The butler forgot Joseph." As I once heard Thomas Champness say, "His name is not always Butler." This Man is going, will He forget them? The next thing that happens, to their unutterable surprise, is the coming out of the mystery of the all-encompassing heaven of God of two men in white, who stand by them and say, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? This Jesus, which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven." I have not quoted that to discuss the meaning of what they said, but to bring you face to face with the fact of their coming. He loved them, this wondrous Man, this more than Man, this mystery of Being, so warm that they had touched Him, so distant that they had never comprehended Him. He has left them, and, call it imagination if you will, when He left them and the heavens enfolded Him, His first thought was for the men He had left behind Him. The glorified Man of Nazareth, even in heaven's own light, called two messengers, ministers of the presence of God, and said, "Go, comfort the men I have left, and tell them I am coming again." My Friend never forgets me, never deserts me. He does not find any in high heaven in whom He takes a greater interest than He takes in me.

His faithfulness is of another pattern also. He is my Advocate against slanderers. He stands forevermore pleading my cause in the presence of God against all the lies that can be invented against my soul.

My Friend is true as well as faithful. My Friend rebukes me. He tells me in my deepest heart when I am wrong. I do not always like His rebuke. I shrink from it and try to excuse the thing He rebukes; but He is persistent. Hear the paradox and know its truth. With pitiless pity He refuses to make peace with any evil thing in my nature, in my habit, in my life. My Friend is true to me. When He sees that my thinking and acting are likely to lead me astray from the path that leads to ultimate victory He rebukes me, and His rebuke is severe. If you would know how severe, listen to His answer when one of His friends said to Him in seeming pity about the cross, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto Thee." Jesus, looking into the face of Peter, said, "Get thee behind me, Satan." It was harsh, but it was very tender. It seemed unkind, but it was real friendship.

Do you think He ne'er reproves me? What a false Friend He would be
If He never, never told me of the sins which He must see.

It is also true that He praises me. It is a great proof of friendship to be able to do that. I have known people in this world who have come to me and said, "I am your friend, and now I am going to be faithful to you." I always try to escape. That may be a confession of weakness, but it is true. The true friend will rebuke, but he will also praise. Some people seem to think that my Friend will never say, "Well done," until we stand before His throne. It is a mistake. At the risk of being misunderstood, I tell you this, He often says, "Well done," even now. At eventide, when the shadows are lengthening and the day's work is over, and the heart is sore and sad that it has done so ill, in quiet communion He comes and says, "Well done." I am always surprised when He says it, but He says it. He does not postpone His tender caresses to the moment when the infinite light shall be about us. He comes with me all the way, and I am often surprised to hear the accents of His voice saying, "Well done." You know it is true. There are more than a thousand witnesses in this house upon whom I could call, and they would tell you it is true. Yesterday I was tempted. I resisted, almost to blood, and I won, although I was wounded in the winning, and I heard Him in my deepest heart say, "Well done." He is a true friend. He rebukes me for my wandering. He praises me for every victory. He knows how to save me by the severity of His reproof, and how to help me by the tender faithfulness of His praise.

This Friend is tender beyond all telling, in my sorrows always sympathetic. We have all had, or shall have, some sorrows into which our nearest and dearest earthly friend cannot come. I have never yet had a day of sorrow in which I did not find my Friend at hand. Sometimes He is quite silent, never a word, nor a touch of His hand, and I have thought I was alone; but in the moment when my heart has said, Where is my Friend?—not perhaps by word, but by a sudden mystic consciousness of His love—I have known He was there, silent, and in the silence gathering into His own dear heart of infinite love all my sorrow. He is, moreover, gentle with all my weakness. Two or three years ago I found what gentleness is, and that in a definition. It is not often we learn things from a definition, but George Matheson defined gentleness for me, and now I know what it is. He said, "Gentleness is strength held in check." I cannot quote his actual words here, but only his thought. One speaks of the gentleness of the brook. There is no gentleness in the brook. It rushes and presses, laughs and roars, and does all it can with its puny strength. There is no gentleness there. But if you will stand by the mighty ocean when there is such a tide as "moving seems asleep," and the great waters kiss the shore, and your little one paddles upon its edge, and is kissed by the crest of the wave, that is gentleness. With one great uprising the sea might engulf the child, but its strength is held in check. My Friend is so gentle. He might crush me even by the inflow of His strength. He might blind me by the very vision of His glory, but He does not. He bends over me and says, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." He is waiting for me. He has been waiting all my life to say some things, but He has not said them yet, because I cannot bear them. My Friend is tender with a great gentleness that waits for my weakness.

Yet my Friend is strong, so strong that He can overcome sin, and Satan, and self. Sin overcomes me even yet. Satan overcomes me

yet. Self-uprising blots the sun out of the heavens for me even yet, but it is always because I try my strength against sin, or Satan, or self, and forget my Friend. I never hand self over to Him but that He puts His cooling hand on the pulses of desire, and self is conquered. I never remit to Him the conflict with the foe but that the Lion of Judah overcomes the Lion who roars, seeking to destroy. I never hand over sin to Him in any of its hundred forms but that "He breaks the power of canceled sin and sets the prisoner free." My Friend is strong on my behalf against all the foes that oppose themselves, and He is strong in my weakness. If He is gentle with my weakness He is also strong. To that wicket gate somewhere in the castle of Man-soul that I do not know how to guard, and in trying to guard which I have failed, and the enemy has broken in, my Friend will come and make it the mightiest in all the castle. That is but another way of saying what Paul said. I repeat it, out of an experience far off from his it may be, yet real to me, "He hath said unto me... My power is made perfect in weakness... when I am weak, then am I strong."

Then my Friend is rich. He owns the whole earth. All the keys hang at His girdle. When in resurrection glory He appeared to one of His friends in the olden days He named some of the keys, but not all. He said, "I am... the Living One;... and I have the keys of death and of Hades." But there are other keys upon His girdle; they are all there—the keys of knowledge and wisdom, the keys of light and of love. My Friend can admit me into the mystic meaning of the daisy and lift this poor frail life of mine into fellowship with the rhythmic order of the infinite universe of God. This world is His. There is never a bank of flowers but that they exist through His power. There is never a glorious sunset that flames upon my vision but that His hand has painted it. There is no music worth the name but that He presided over its first thinking. There is no color but that is an expression of my Friend's beauty. I am seeing Him increasingly as the days go by in all the colors of life, and in all the grays moreover, and in the somberness. My Friend owns the world, and I am finding out that you cannot introduce me to anything that is in itself essentially beautiful but that at its heart my Friend is sitting as King. You cannot bring me to anything that is worth having in the world of things, moral or mental, of music or literature, but that I find my Friend will lead me a little deeper and swing the door a little wider, and fling the horizon a little further back. All the world belongs to Him, and more than that. If it be true that there are many keys at His girdle and He is Lord of the world, then He is Lord of the heavens, and there are many diadems upon His brow. When this soul of mine thinks beyond dust into the realm of deity, my Friend is still on the throne. When this life of mine, chained for the moment to the things of time and sense, flings itself out to the infinite and eternal, I find that in the midst of the glory is my Friend, and heaven is already familiar ground to me, for my Friend has gone to prepare an abiding place for me, and He whispers in my heart as I tramp the dusty road, "Where I am there you may be also." My Friend is Lord and Master of Time and Eternity, of this world and the next.

Once again—and now what word shall I use? I must use a commonplace for lack of something finer—my Friend is generous. He gives me all I need, and infinitely more, for He shares with me all He has. His very life He makes my life. His very resurrection glory is my inheritance.

If these things are too high and too far and too distant, let us get back again to the things of time and sense. He gives me the world that belongs to Him. This world is mine tonight, in its every spear of emerald green, in all the music of the thundering sea, in all the healthfulness of its blowing winds. They are all mine. You may put up a notice, "Trespassers are not allowed," but because my Friend holds all the earth I can look over your hedge and possess what you only own, and there is an infinite difference between the two things. He has given me Himself, and with Himself all things.

"Are you never lonely?" you ask me. Well, dear heart, never perhaps quite as you are, for today my path lies differently, and I have my home and my loved ones, but I have been alone as you are in the days gone by. I have been in a city where there was no one who seemed to know or care, and even today there are lonely hours. Even today there are moments when even my dearest and nearest—and how near and dear they are only my heart knows—are excluded, hours of mystery and questioning, hours when the heart grows faint; but I never have an hour now in which I cannot find my Friend if I will. In the midst of the city, right there in the place of business, He is close at hand, a lover "Who sticketh closer than a brother." How shall I say it? I cannot say it as it ought to be said. May God the Holy Spirit sing it into your heart tonight as the very Evangel of hope.

How may all lonely souls come into His circle of friends? It is quite easy for you to enter the circle, because this Friend is your Friend long before you are His, and He wants your friendship. The advance is on His side, not on yours. Listen to the tender and strong words He spoke to the first group of His earthly friends, "Ye have not chosen me but I have chosen you." That is still true. Is your heart turning toward Him in its loneliness? Are you crying out for His comradeship? He has been seeking yours for a long, long time. There is the first message of hope I bring you in answer to your question. Let Him speak again if you would desire to know how to enter the circle of His friendship. This is what He says, "Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you." You say that is difficult. Listen to the first thing He commands you to do. "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." Begin there, and He numbers you at once amongst His friends, and all the rest of the commandments He will give you one by one as you are able to bear.

You need not understand the mystery of His Person, you need not be able to formulate a theory of His Atonement, but you are to come to Him and give yourself to Him. You are to say, "Is this the Friend who seeks my friendship? I will be His." And then, bending over you, He will say to you, "No longer do I call you servants... I have called you friends."

Behold, a Stranger at the door!
He gently knocks, has knocked before;
Has waited long; is waiting still:
You use no other friend so ill.
But will He prove a friend indeed?
He will: the very friend you need;
The friend of sinners, yes, 'tis He,
With garments dyed at Calvary.
O lovely attitude! He stands
With melting heart and open hands;
O matchless kindness! and He shows
This matchless kindness to His foes.
Admit Him, ere His anger burn,
Lest He depart and ne'er return:
Admit Him, or the hour's at hand
When at His door denied you'll stand.
Admit Him, for the human breast
Ne'er entertained so kind a guest:
No mortal tongue their joys can tell,
With whom He condescends to dwell.
Sov'reign of souls! Thou Prince of Peace!
O may thy gentle reign increase:
Throw wide the door, each willing mind;
And be His empire all mankind!

043 - Proverbs 22:6 - The Training of Our Children

Train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6

One is inclined to commence this morning by asking in the presence of this text a somewhat startling question. The question would be whether Christian people generally today believe the Bible to be true. A great many who would quite readily answer the inquiry in the affirmative would nevertheless halt, and attempt to qualify, and so begin to indulge in their own peculiar method of criticism in the presence of this particular text.

"In the beginning God created"—yes! "And God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son"—certainly true! "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap"—there can be no question about that! "Train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old he will not depart from it"—well, that is open to question; we are not quite sure about it. This text is not so often preached from, nor so often quoted today, as in olden days; and that is because people are not quite sure whether it is true.

New methods and new ideals concerning children have made men question the absolute accuracy of this Old Testament word, the word of the preacher of long ago. Indeed, you will find sometimes that if this truth be insisted upon with anything like vehement emphasis there will be an equally vehement protest. Whether in conversation among friends, or in general discussion, or even in preaching, you insist upon it today that if a child be trained aright, it must end right, people begin to question, and I have heard personally a most angry protest against the statement of this truth on the part of Christian people whose own children have gone wrong. Ah, there you touch the secret reason why this text is not believed as it was believed, or is questioned more today than it was in the past.

Well, my brethren, this morning at any rate I intend to treat it as an inspired statement, as a declaration of truth, as something which the preacher was inspired of the Spirit of God to write because it is essential truth, and to which there are no exceptions.

Believing this I shall ask you to consider in the simplest way first the condition, "Train up a child according to his way"; and, second, the promise, or perhaps it would be more accurate to speak of it as the sequence, the necessary result, the inevitable issue, "and even when he is old he will not depart from it." In dealing with the condition, the word that arrests us necessarily is the first word of the verse, "train." "Train up a child." I want to say two or three of the simplest things about this question of the training of children. I speak with more doubt about it than I should have done seventeen years ago, but I speak out of personal conviction, and in all tenderness and love to my brothers and sisters who have the charge of children in their own homes, and especially in the hearing of those of you who have charge of children in the Sabbath school, or Day school. To all such as are privileged to touch child life, and to be in any way responsible for it, I desire to speak.

And the first is that training involves an ideal. There can be no training save to some goal. A result must be desired, and training simply means working toward that result. There can be nothing capricious or haphazard about true training. Unless there be some goal toward which we are moving, some ideal that we desire to realize, some great purpose ahead, there can be no training, and we shall never train the children of our own home as they ought to be trained, neither shall we train the children of our Sunday schools except we have some underlying conception of an ultimate for them. Training means going in a direction toward an ultimate. It means a great deal more than that, but that is the first thing.

And we are living in an age, brethren, when I am afraid in the Christian Church—and I have no message in this respect to the men and women who are outside the Christian fact; my first word to all such is, You must be born again; I have no ethic for the man who has not been born again, because he is absolutely unable to obey; he is dead in trespasses and sins—but within the Christian fact, within the circle of such as accept Christ as King and Saviour, and share His common life, I am afraid today that the ideals that we have for our children are often very low; and it is because our ideal for the child is a low ideal, that our training is a false training, and so much of the ruin and disaster that appals us constantly in the case of Christian people results from this fact.

Too often our ideal for our boys is that they shall be educated, gain a position for themselves, and, alas, to use the phrase that so constantly is upon the lips, even of Christian people, "get on in the world." Too often for our girls we have the ideal that they shall be also educated, and refined, and accomplished, and presently, again to use a phrase which if I could I would cancel absolutely from the thinking of Christian parents, "get settled." Well, brethren, these as ideals are anti-Christian and pagan. I am not undervaluing education. It is the duty of every man to give to every child he has the best education that he possibly can. I am not undervaluing position. Let every lad be ambitious to be the best carpenter, the best doctor, the best lawyer, in the whole district. Let our girls in very deed and very truth be educated and cultured and refined, but if these are the ultimate, then what are we removed from pagans? This is not the ideal with which we must start in the training of the child. What then is that ideal? I might put it in many ways. Let me take one of a hundred. That the child shall realize Jesus Christ's estimate of greatness. By realize it I do not mean theoretically merely, but practically. What is Jesus Christ's estimate of greatness? That a man is great in proportion as his character is what it ought to be. In the great Manifesto of the King, that wonderful enunciation of the ethic of the Kingdom of God, never a single blessing is pronounced upon having, never a blessing pronounced upon doing. All the blessings are upon being. And the true ideal toward which we are to move, and for which we are to train our children, must be the realization of the character upon which Jesus Christ has set the sevenfold chaplet of His benediction. That the boy may be a Godly man, that the girl may be one of the King's daughters all glorious within, that first. Everything after, but that first. To neglect that as the ultimate, to lose sight of that as the goal is to ruin our children by love which is false love, is to harm them by the very method in which we attempt to serve. Simply to take your boy, my Christian brother, and desire that he shall be a successful merchant and business man and make money, I am not sure that it would not be kinder for you to shut your front door upon him, and let him fight his way through slum and up. To take your daughter, Christian father and mother, and simply desire that she shall shine in human society, with never a thought in your mind of how she appears in the palaces of the King, is cruel and dastardly, and not kind. Training means moving toward an ultimate, and the first thing in the training of the child is that we should see to it that the ultimate upon which our eyes are set is the true ultimate.

And now a second thing. The training of a child involves personal discipline. And as God is my witness I preach to my own heart this morning. What I want my child to be, I must be. I should like to bring that a little closer home to my heart and yours by stating it thus. What I want my child to be, that I am. Some man says, Not that; I want my boy to be better than that, truer, higher, nobler, purer! No, sir, you do not, or if you do, you desire a thing that can never be, by your influence at least. For remember this, you will make your boy what you are, and not what you tell him to be. How constantly Emerson's thought comes back to the mind when one thinks or talks of character. He says in thought, not in actual word, I cannot hear what you say for listening to what you are. That is what your boys are saying about you this morning. You say to your boy, Be good, and you are not good! He will be what you are, and not what you say. You say to your boy as he starts out on his life, Be pure, and in your own heart there is impurity. Your boy will answer what you are, and not what you say. And this is not merely the thought of a preacher, it is the science of life. If you are going to train anyone to anything, you must yourself be that, or able to be that toward which you are attempting to train. There was a gymnastic display here last night. I was sorry I could not be present; but I am quite sure they are not going to appoint me the trainer for next year. And if you saw me on parallel bars, you would know why. I cannot train the lads to gymnastic excellence. Would that I could, but I cannot do it. It is too late. There are things I think I could help a boy to do, but not that. Why not? Because I am not an athlete. Now lift your thinking back. You cannot expect your boy to be a Christian athlete if you are weak and anemic in your Christianity. If you neglect prayer, and if the family altar is a thing you can lightly lay aside, your boy will never erect it in his home presently. I can make my child only what I am myself. Dear teachers, remember it. God bless you and help you this morning. Do not forget that, as you gather your class around you Sunday by Sunday, you influence them only by what you are in yourself. It is true of the preaching. God help me to remember it. I cannot influence any congregation by what I say, unless behind it there is the mystic force of a life true to the preaching. Thank God for the children in our homes, not merely for the privilege of training them, but for the fact that they train us. And how they train us! There is something in my own make-up which is perhaps mischievously independent, and if a man

tells me I should not do this or that, I always feel like saying, Mind your own business. But if a man says, How will this thing that you do influence your boy? I am alert and listening.

And I must answer that conviction of personal necessity for discipline. If I am to train my child I must see the goal toward which I desire the child to press, but I must go that way too. I cannot persuade the children of my home to set their faces toward the King's city and Kingdom if I am a rebel.

Then, brethren, again, training involves a recognition of certain facts about the child, and that thought is enough to take our whole morning. I am going to deal with it only briefly, and yet attempt to say two or three things which seem to me to be important in this connection. I think there are two things we need to remember when we look into the face of every little child, and they are: first, "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child"; second, that child has upon it the mystic sign of the Master's Cross. There is no child for which He did not live, for which He did not die. And as I look into the faces of the children about my feet, in my own home, in this church on Sunday, in our Sabbath school, I must remember if I would help them and serve them these two things. First of all, account for it as you will, I care very little about the philosophy, but I care a great deal about the fact, that there is enough of iniquity in the heart of every child to work the ruin of a race if you let it work itself out. But I remember this also, that there is not a child born that is not born to the inheritance of the Christ of God, and that is far mightier than the forces which are against them. So I have these two things to remember in the training of every child, that there is in the child, first of all, the capacity for evil, but beneath it, deeper than it, truer than it, is the capacity for good, and at the disposal of the child for the realization of the good as against the evil is all the grace of God. These things being remembered—and, my brethren, you see how much one would care to say about these things, but I pass them—these things being remembered, now I come to the main message of my text. "Train up a child according to his way." And here is where the home is important, and where neither Sabbath school, nor Day school, can ever take its place. I suppose it is necessary in these days that we should teach children in crowds. Would to God we could escape from it. But at least we can in the home, and it is of the home I am principally thinking this morning. Every child is a lonely personality, a special individuality. You know the phrase that is often made use of concerning remarkable men. I have heard it said, and I doubt not you have too, that God made Oliver Cromwell, or John Wesley, or Abraham Lincoln, as the case may be, and He broke the mold. That is one of those curious sayings which have in them so much of truth and of falsehood. It is perfectly true that God made Abraham Lincoln and broke the mold, but what do you mean when you say that? Do you mean to infer that was the lonely and exceptional method, that occasionally God makes one man and breaks the mold so that there may be no other like him? I tell you, that is God's regular method. God made you, and broke the mold. He made every child in my home and broke the mold, and there are no two alike. Those blessed with children in the home know how true it is. They contradict each other, and disagree, and conflict in that sense is not always evil. You cannot find me two children in your own home alike. Listen, train up your family of two, or three, or four, or five, on exactly the same lines, and you may hit the goal in the case of one, and miss it in all the rest. No, you must specialize. Every child you have demands special consideration, and lonely attention. "Train up a child according to his way." You must discover what the child is if you would train the child. I think we have suffered in every way, socially, may I say, politically, and most certainly religiously, by the habit of imagining that we can deal with children in crowds, and treat them all the same way. It cannot be done. For the teaching of certain things that they must know it is necessary. But not when you are going to train a child, educate a child—not instruct a child. There is all the difference in the world between instructing and educating. To instruct is to build in. To educate is to draw out. But when you are going to train a child, to educate a child, you must find out what the child is. Let me give you one or two illustrations.

Here is a child of sanguine temperament, always hoping, never to be suppressed. Now the one business of the trainer is to put the hand upon that child, and see to it that the child is humbled. No, I did not say "snubbed." And don't you misread the English language so far as to imagine that humbling means that. The child must be kept humble, or else the child will break its own heart, when presently some morning which dawned brightly becomes a day gray and ashen. The child must be treated with such judicial care as shall save it from following the gleam that is not light at all, but which leads to darkness.

Here is a child despondent. You have tried to treat them both alike, and when it has been necessary not to encourage the sanguine child overmuch, you have nearly broken the heart of the despondent child with your lack of appreciation. That despondent child needs to be praised for every good deed done. There should be for such words of helpfulness.

Here is a child skeptical, forever asking questions, an agnostic from birth, a child who will ask you more theological questions in the course of one day than you will be able to answer in a lifetime. What are you to do? Are you to tell the child that asking of questions is an evil thing? Certainly not. You must reason, and answer the questions, and take time to do it.

Here is another child, brother of the other, or sister, it may be, who is credulous, and believes all things without inquiry. Your business with that child is to ask it questions, to show it that there is a necessity for testing the spirits, and being perfectly sure of things.

Here is another child born, as scientific men are very fond of telling us, with a religious temperament. Guard that child carefully. Be

afraid lest the temperament should lead to fanaticism.

Here is a child born with an irreligious temperament, with no leanings toward spiritual things. Then that child must be led into the light, the interest must be awakened, and that by showing the child that all the things of dust, which it most loves, are allied to Deity.

The illustrations are imperfect. I trust the philosophy is clear. You cannot take half a dozen boys and girls and treat them all in the same way. You must take them child by child. "Train up a child according to his way," and the business of parents supremely is that of attempting to discover what God has put within every child, in order that it may be led out to fulfilment.

I think therefore that the training must be twofold. First of all, it must be positive. The children must be taught that they belong to Christ, and led to the point of recognizing this fact and yielding themselves thereto. In the second place, the children must be taught that sin is their enemy, and therefore God's enemy, and it is therefore to be fought perpetually. It is the old-fashioned method of the Sunday school that we need to get back to, and not away from. Did I say "method"? Perhaps you will let me change the word. It is the old-fashioned passion of the Sunday-school teacher we need to get back to. I have read with great interest during the last days a book entitled Bible Teaching by Modern Methods, containing papers and reports of discussions at the Round Table Conference recently held in connection with our Sunday School Union. If you have time for nothing else, borrow the book—not mine, because I want it—and read the first and last lectures, Dr. Davison's lecture, in which he again emphasizes what indeed is the true aim of Sunday-school work; and Dr. Adeney's lecture, in which he emphasizes the fact that our teachers must be trained, and the work must devolve upon the ministry. Our first business is to bring the child into a recognition of its actual relationship to Christ, and a personal yielding thereto. Let it be done easily and naturally. Do not be anxious, if indeed your home is a Christian home, that your child should pass through any volcanic experience; but as soon as possible the little one should be able to say, Yes, I love Him and I will be His. It is as simple as the kiss of morning upon the brow of the hill, as the distilling of the moisture in the dew, or it ought to be. Thank God for men who, having wandered far away, have come back by volcanic methods, but thank God for the little ones who have been led to the point of yielding and finding their Lord before any other lord has had dominion over them. Training should be toward that. Every child is called of God to specific work in the world, and the specific work ought to be discovered by those who train them; and when the capacity is found, then let a child be trained toward it.

Now one or two words concerning the text's declaration of sequence. "Train up a child according to his way, and even when he is old he will not depart from it." I desire in this connection, first of all, to observe that only upon the fulfilment of the conditions enunciated have we any right to expect a fulfilment of the promise made. I have no business to expect that my child will fulfil the true purpose and intention of its own life if I neglect the training of the early days. I want to say also in this connection that this whole text answers objections. For instance, you may say to me in the presence of the text, and of my insistence upon this training, Then the untrained must go wrong. If I fail to train my child, the child must go wrong. No, not necessarily. I say that with reserve, and yet I am compelled to say it. You may neglect your child in your own home, and some Godly Sunday-school teacher may do the work you have neglected. Then you say to me again, Then the wrongly trained must go wrong. Not necessarily. It is not always so. There are children wrongly trained at home, who yet at last have found life and its great fulfilment. But what I want to say to you is this, that the man or the woman who finds the child, and really trains it up to the high ultimate, will possess the child in the ages to come, for we still believe that the things of time are finally the things of the eternities, and that the relationships of time can be the relationships of eternity only as they are fulfilled in the power of the eternal things. I want to put that, if I may, more superlatively, although I shall not enlarge upon it. I hear people sometimes who have been very careless about their children, very careless about their training, very careless about their Godliness, who thought of all the things except these things, when their children are taken from the world, speak of their hope that their little ones will meet them when they also cross the border line. Well, I do not know. Yes, perchance, but remember, your child if you fed it and clothed it, and educated it, and neglected its relation to God, will be more eager to meet the Sunday-school teacher who led it to God than you. Spiritual relationships, after all, are the final relationships. No, you and I have no right to infer negative conclusions from the text, although we should take solemn warning from the fact that we cannot infer conclusions. The promise is a positive one, and we stand by it. It does not say if we do not train our children our children must lose their way. But it does say, "Train up a child according to his way, and even when he is old he will not depart from it." That is, he will fulfil his life, he will fulfil God's thought for him, and purpose for him, and intention for him, the intention that lies within him as a prophecy and a potentiality. The promise is the declaration of a sequence. It is not a capricious word spoken to men, but the unveiling of a law which operates, and from which there is no escape. And I make an appeal. With such an ideal, and such a training, and such a promise, the only fear we need have about our children is fear for ourselves. You tell me in answer to all this, Ah, but there have been such failures. Well, why? And who am I that I should judge? You know how constantly it is being said that the children of ministers so often turn out ill. Why? Well, I do not know, but I will make you these suggestions. Children turn out ill from Christian homes sometimes because of the laxity which imagines that a child's happiness consists in self-pleasing, imagines that for the child to be perfectly happy it must have its own will. There is all the difference between letting a child have its own will and its own way. To train a child in its own way crosses the ill sometimes. But never do it with passion. Passion burns to destruction. Reason fires to construction, and we must always make this careful differentiation. You mean well by your child. Are you too gentle, too tender? Have you an anemic conception of love?

Or, on the other hand, it may be and I give you this as a personal conviction, it is more often due to, the sternness which forgets the needs of young life. How often I have seen it. You talk to me of a Puritan home and upbringing, and you know the sternness of the moral policeman regime, and the moment the boy crosses the threshold, with a sigh of abandonment he is into every excess of evil. Said a man to me some years ago, "How is it I have lost my children?" And I said to him, "I do not see you have lost your children, they are sitting round your board, most of them, and you do not seem to have lost them. They respect you, and look up to you." "Oh, yes," he said, "but there is not a boy round my board who trusts me." And I said to him, more for the instruction of my own heart than to imagine that I could help him. "What do you mean?" "Why," he replied, "there is not one of them makes a confidant of me." And I looked the man in the face and said, "Did you ever play marbles with them when they were little?" And he said at once, "Oh, certainly not." And I said, "That is why you lost them." My brethren, this thing is a burden on my heart. I am not talking pleasantries. We do not lose our children when they are seventeen. We lose them when they are seven. I am not talking to mothers. I never do! And that is not a flippant remark. I would like to hand all the bairns over to mothers for their theology. It is the fathers of the Christian Church who have failed with their children. You are a good man, and a hard man, and your children know it, and they respect you, but they do not trust you, and you lose them. There may be a laxity that is too gentle, a love that is anemic. There may be too much iron in your blood, too much sternness.

How shall I find the happy medium? Be very much and very constantly in comradeship with Jesus Christ. That is the last thing I have to say. If I am going to be so severe as to be true, and so tender as to hold, I must know Him, the Man Who could look right into the soul of a Pharisee and scorch it with His look, and into the eye of a little child and make the child want to come and play with Him. Oh, I must be much with Christ if I am to be with children. In God's name, if you do not know Christ, keep your hands off the bairns. You cannot train the boy to be a carpenter unless you are a Christian man and in fellowship with Him constantly. The parents' responsibility cannot be relegated to Sunday-school teacher, or Day-school teacher. To do that will injure me and place my child in great danger. I have tried to talk to you. God knows how much I have talked to myself, and all I can do in the presence of the old affirmation of ancient scripture which is fresh in its application today is to pray that my Father will keep me so near to Himself that I may know how to be a father to my children.

044 - Proverbs 29:18 - The Value of Vision

Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint. Proverbs 29:18

This is among the "proverbs of solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out." It is the crystallization into a brief sentence of a national principle of the first importance. It must be interpreted in the atmosphere in which it was written, and its terms must be explained therefore by what they signified to those who made use of them.

The central word is most evidently the word "vision." The word means, quite simply and literally, sight, and refers both to the thing seen and to the power to see it. "Where there is no vision," the thing seen; "Where there is no vision," the power to see, "the people cast off restraint."

But the word had a particular value in the Hebrew economy, referring perpetually to a definite and specific revelation of God to the people. In the days of Samuel's childhood "there was no frequent vision." The word of God was precious in the sense of being rare, and the declaration that the word of God was rare is immediately explained by the affirmation that there was no frequent vision, and it is thus evident that the word was used of some definite revelation of God made to His people. Let us bear in mind that value.

The Hebrew word which is translated "cast off restraint" in the Revised Version, and "perish" in the Authorized Version, means very literally to loosen, to dissolve, to separate, to break up, or as I like to say, using a very simple colloquialism, to go to pieces. "Where there is no vision the people go to pieces." The Revised Version has simply given us a symptom of the disease, not the malady itself. One of the symptoms of the disease assuredly is anarchy, "The people cast off restraint." That which causes anarchy is that the people themselves are dissolved, loosened, broken up, have gone to pieces.

If we take these words in the atmosphere of the times in which they were written, with all reverence we may change out text into words far less beautiful, and used only for the sake of interpretation: Where there is no direct revelation of God to men, the people go to pieces, break up, perish. Where the people lack clear vision of God, that is, are ignorant of His revelation, unacquainted with His will as it is declared, they lack the principle of cohesion and continuity, they are dissolved, they go to pieces.

That conception is central to the history of the Hebrew people as given in the Scriptures. The text itself is among the words of Solomon, a man in whose reign the vision faded. There was no more disastrous failure in the history of Israel than that of Solomon, a man who was punctilious in his observance of externals and neglected the essential, the spiritual verities; who attempted to solace a great people by ostentation and material magnificence, and undermined the kingdom. The vision faded, and the moment the spell created by the presence of the magnificent King Solomon was broken, the people went to pieces: Jeroboam and Rehoboam, the divided kingdom, with all the appalling sequence of the terrible years. That is the man who wrote these words, "Where there is no vision, the people go to pieces."

To go back in history, the graphic description of the condition out of which the mistake of clamoring for a king arose is found in these words: "There was no frequent vision." Men did not hear the word of God, it was rare; there was no continuous traffic with heaven, there was no commerce with the spiritual, no listening for God and to Him. With what result? The people went to pieces; they lost their high ideal of the theocracy and clamored for a king. That was the beginning of the ruin of the kingdom itself.

The same thing is graphically described as the condition preceding the reformation under Asa. Israel had not known the true God, there was no "teaching priest," an arresting phase in itself.

Then we have those wonderful words of the prophet who was neither a prophet nor the son of the prophet, by which he meant to say he was not ordained, not recognized by the schools of the prophets, the herdman of Tekoa who broke upon the people in thunder with a great message. He described the condition as that of "famine for the Word of God." With what result? The young men and maidens thirsted and were weary; they went to pieces, because there was no vision, no dealing with God.

My purpose this evening is to take that principle and see what it means in the case of the great continent of South America, which we are trying during the course of the winter months to understand in order that we may know our responsibility. In previous sermons I have spoken of the geography and the peoples of South America. Its geographical situation and conditions are attracting the attention of the whole world. Its peoples are presenting grave problems to missionary enterprise because of their past history. Moreover, I have declared in passing that the supreme need of the people of South America is twofold: moral dynamic, and spiritual vision.

The text which I have taken puts these two things into their proper relationship. Moral dynamic is always the outcome of spiritual vision. In this sense also the text is true. When there is no spiritual vision morality goes to pieces. That, unless I sadly mistake, is what Harold Begbie has tried to put before us in his last novel, *The Challenge*, a significant title. I am not going to describe the novel. I have read it, and advise you to read it. If I may summarize its teaching in a few words, this is it: the only challenge to immorality is religion.

That is the message of my text concerning men and concerning the nation. If these great peoples of South America are to be made strong nationally, they must be made strong individually; and if they are to be made strong individually, it must be by vision in the Old Testament sense of the word, by revelation.

In this fact we have the sanction and compulsion of Christian missions. Let us say it boldly: We have the true vision of God, we have His final revelation, for "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in the Son," in the Son Who is "the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance." Vision through the Son is our greatest possession. It is in the light of that vision that we are assembled for worship in this hour. It is in the light of that vision that we live our lives as Christian men and women. It is in the light of that vision that we are ready and prepared to carry our burdens, to endure restraint, to win victories, to enjoy the high and holy ecstasy of our fellowship. We are, therefore, humanly responsible for those who lack our vision. "Humanly," you say. What do you mean? I could understand it if you argued that it is a Divine compulsion that is laid upon us. It is a Divine compulsion, but I choose to stay on the lower level, the level of human responsibility. Is there any man in God's world more despicable than the man who tells you he has invented a cure for cancer, and then proceeds to make profit out of it and does not give it to the world? If any man has discovered that which will touch the dire disease with sure healing, he owes it to humanity to tell humanity the secret, even at loss to himself. That is the human sanction; it is Divine at last, I grant, for all high human sanctions are at last Divine; but that is a sanction which will be recognized by the man who denies our Christ. Therefore I say that we Christian men and women who have indeed seen the vision, and who have found it to be a vision that heals and helps, our bounden human duty is to see to it that that light is given, so far as we are able to give it, to all people who sit in darkness.

That conception of the sanction and compulsion of missionary endeavor is at the same time a revelation of the sphere of our operations. Where are we to take the light? Wherever people are in darkness. Yes, but South America is not a heathen country. I am told I must not so speak of it. Are the people in darkness? If they are, that is a sphere for missionary operations. That is what we have to discover. That is what the Church of God in the homeland is compelled to consider. It is to that subject I ask your attention from this moment forward.

There are two things I want to do in as few words as possible: first, to state the conditions of the people, and then to apply the principle of the text.

How shall I describe the condition of the people in South America? I am speaking for the moment, not of the Indian tribes, but of the people of Latin America. I know the difficulty of the task; yet there are certain outstanding facts from which there can be no escape.

There exists among these peoples a certain courtliness of manner under appropriate conditions, and an absolute absence of it under other conditions, a courtliness of manner which is conditioned by the etiquette of social, civic, or national functions, but which

passes directly when no such claim is set up. The people are rapidly increasing in wealth, and are preeminently lovers of pleasure and display. They are—and the descriptive phrase I use is in some senses an ugly one because of its apparent flippancy—a people characterized by a jovial disregard of truth, a disregard of truth that is easy and careless. They are noted for a lack of conscience, and consequently for widespread distrust and deceit; abounding intemperance, most appalling looseness in all matters of the sexes, widespread indecency of language, and such indecency of action that if you visit the great cities you will never permit your daughters to walk in the streets alone.

In family life there is a very low standard of social purity, and consequently a low standard of homelife; homelife is lacking in sanctity, and therefore lacking in comfort, and appallingly lacking in discipline.

In the social conditions there are things that cannot be named in the assembly of the saints: the loosest of marriage customs, an appalling condition of illegitimacy, so that it has been declared that the percentage of illegitimate births is sometimes thirty, fifty, or even greater.

Politically, there is perpetual unrest; while they now have greatly improved constitutions, for all have been modeled on that of the United States of America, there is lack of administration—the machine lacks the true motive power.

Inclusively, because there is no vision, the people are dissolved; the principle of cohesion and strength in the national life is missing.

That leads us naturally, necessarily, to the lack of vision. Two mistakes are constantly made about South America in speaking of it in this respect. First of all, it is described as a Christian country, and it was because it was so described that it was shut out from consideration by the great meetings of the Edinburgh Missionary Conference. In the second place, it is affirmed that it is a Roman Catholic country. That is not wholly true, for there are still to be found vast numbers of Indians untouched by Roman Catholic influence. Alan Ewbank said, "If you start away at the north and go right down to the south of the continent, you can travel in heathen lands, among people who do not know Who God is. The whole of that Southern continent, except the fringes around the edge, should be colored heathen." About that section of the population there is no question: they lack vision. Here Romanists and Protestants agree. In paganism there is no true vision of God. It will at once be agreed that among these people there is room and demand for our evangelism.

I turn then to the countries where Romanism is without any question the dominant religion. I cannot touch on this subject without recognizing that our campaign—I think I may so describe it now—for quickening interest in that continent is stirring up a good deal of criticism in England. I am receiving a good many letters of protest. I was speaking in Liverpool recently, and after the meeting received a long letter in which the writer charged me with historic ignorance. The only comfort I obtained from the letter was in the last sentence, "You ought to know better, seeing you are a clergyman of the Church of England!" I have had sent to me only this week newspaper cuttings criticizing certain things I have said, and an extract from a book that was published in 1911, called *Peru of the Twentieth Century*, by Percy F. Martin, F.R.G.S., in which he protests against all Protestant work in the country, and affirms that he has "no religious prejudices whatever," which it is quite easy to believe. I have received with this cutting a letter written from this neighborhood by a Roman Catholic, ten pages in length, kindly, courteous, Christly in spirit, but protesting, declaring that we are ignorant of what the Church of Rome has done in South America, and charging me—and that is the special reference I make in regard to this letter—with lack of charity and with slandering the clergy of the Roman Catholic church.

In speaking in public on this subject I have been very careful to distinguish between Roman Catholicism as it is in South America and as it is in England. I believe that underneath they are one; but I quite recognize that there is a vast difference. Moreover, I have always been careful, and shall ever remain careful, to distinguish most particularly between individuals and the system. I am perfectly sure that in the Roman communion there are saints of God; I have known them personally; I have numbered them among my closest friends; and far be it from me to say anything to wound them in the matter of their personal relationship to Jesus Christ.

But it is impossible to be blind to the influence which Rome has exerted in Latin America. I want to say with regard to that one charge, and I want you to hear me very carefully, when we are charged with slandering the Roman clergy in these countries, our appeal will be from Protestantism to Rome itself. I have another letter here, and in it are a few words that have come from Brazil, written by a Roman Catholic lady there, after hearing what was said at our Mundesley Bible Conference about our new work. She writes: "We shall welcome the English church out here, and I hope many earnest workers will come out, for my Church has not sent of its best, nor enough, and its worst side is largely seen in every town." But I appeal even from that letter written by a devout Roman Catholic in Brazil itself. I appeal to Pope Leo XIII, and I shall ask you to remember that nothing I have said, nothing any of us has said, as we are attempting to draw the attention of Christian people to this country, is stronger than this. In his encyclical on the point these words occur:

In every diocese ecclesiastics break all bounds and deliver themselves up to manifold forms of sensuality, and no voice is lifted up imperiously to summon pastors to their duties. The clerical press casts aside all sense of decency and loyalty in its attacks on those who differ, and lacks controlling authority to bring it to its proper use. There is assassination and calumny, the civil laws are defied,

bread is denied the enemies of the Church, and there is no one to interpose....

It is sad to reflect that prelates, priests, and other clergy are never found doing service among the poor; they are never in the hospital or lazar house, never in the orphan asylum or hospice, in the dwellings of the afflicted or distressed, or engaged in works of beneficence, aiding primary instruction, or found in refuges or prisons.... As a rule, they are ever absent where human misery exists, unless paid as chaplains or a fee is given. On the other hand, you (the clergy) are always to be found in the houses of the rich, or wherever gluttony may be indulged in, wherever the choicest wines may be freely obtained.

No words we have uttered are severer in their condemnation of the Roman clergy in South America than those words written by Pope Leo XIII in order to call to book the clergy because of their failure in that country. The reasons why we should carry to these Latin people the gospel of our Lord and Master as it is found in the New Testament have been set forth by Dr. Robert Speer cogently and forcefully in a paper which appeared in *The Missionary Review of the Word* for March, 1911, entitled, "The Case for Missions in Latin America." From the reasons which he gives us justifying our work as Protestants I shall select three, and I shall give you them in his own words rather than in my own, for they state the case so clearly that they cannot be improved upon. He says:

Protestant missions are justified and demanded in South America by the character of the Roman Catholic priesthood. I fought as long as possible against accepting the opinion universally held throughout South America regarding the priests. Ever since reading as a boy *The Life of Charles Kingsley*, the celibacy of the priesthood had seemed to me a monstrous and wicked theory, but I had believed that the men who took that vow were true to it, and that while the Church lost by it irreparably, and infinitely more than she gained, she did gain, nevertheless, a pure and devoted, if narrow and impoverished, service. But the deadly evidence spread out all over South America, confronting one in every district to which he goes, evidence legally convincing, morally sickening, proves to him that, whatever may be the case in other lands, in South America the stream of the Church is polluted at its fountains....

"Protestant missions in South America are justified because the Roman Catholic Church has not given the people Christianity. There are surely some who find peace and comfort, and some who see Christ through all that hides Him and misrepresents Him, but the testimony of the most temperate and open-minded of the men and women who were once themselves earnest Roman Catholics is that there are few whom they know in the Roman Catholic Church who know the facts of Christ's life, and fewer still who know Christ. The crucifixes, of which South America is full, inadequately represent the gospel. They show a dead man, not a living Saviour. We did not see in all the churches we visited a single symbol or suggestion of the resurrection or the ascension. There were hundreds of paintings of saints and of the Holy Family, and of Mary, but not one of the supreme event in Christianity. And even the dead Christ is the subordinate figure. The central place is Mary's. Often she is shown holding a small lacerated figure in her lap, and often she is the only person represented at all. In the great La Merced church in Lima, over the chancel is the motto: *Gloria a Maria*. In the oldest church in Barranquilla there is no figure of Christ at all in the altar equipment, but Mary without the infant in the center, two other figures on either side, and over all *Gloria a Maria*. In the wall of the ancient Jesuit Church in Cuzco, known as the Church of the Campania, are cut the words, 'Come unto Mary, all ye who are burdened and weary with your sins, and she will give you rest.' There are many, I am sure, who learn to love and reverence the name of Christ, but Christ as a living moral and spiritual power the South American religion does not proclaim.

... Protestant missions are justified in South America, because the Roman Catholic Church is at the same time so strong and so weak there. There priesthood has a powerful hold upon the superstition of the people. As we rode along one day in Brazil, with bare heads and rubber ponchos, an old woman came running solicitously from her hovel, mistaking us for priests, and crying, 'Oh, most powerful God, where is your hat?' To the people the priest stands in the place of God, and even where his own life is vile, the people distinguish between his function as priest in which he stands as God before the altar, and his life as man, in which he falls into the frailties of the flesh. Not only is the priesthood the most influential body in South America, but the Church has a hold upon politics and family life and society which is paralyzing. Its evil is not weak and harmless, but pervasive and deadly, and the Christian Church is called by the most mandatory sanctions to deal with the situation. But, on the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church does not have a fraction of the strength and power in South America which we had supposed it had, and the inefficiency of its work is pitiful. With enormous resources, with all the lines of power in its hands, it has steadily lost ground. The churches, save on festivals, are mostly ill-attended. The priests are derided and reviled. The leading newspaper in Chile, which bitterly attacked some statement which I made upon returning, about the character of the priests, a few weeks later printed a denunciation of the priests in Northern Chile far more sweeping than anything I had said. The comic papers gibe at them. This spectacle of a continent of men losing all respect for religion and leaving it to women, and to priests whose moral character they deride, is a grave and distressing spectacle. There is no sadder sight to be found in the whole world.

I maintain that if nothing more be said, that threefold indictment of the Roman Church in South America as failing to give the people Christianity, and yet as presenting something to them in the name of Christianity so as now to create in the minds of thinking men a revolt from Christianity, is a supreme and overwhelming reason why we should take to them the gospel of that vision of God which came to men in Christ. The author of *Ecce Homo*, when speaking of the Pharisees, said: "If a divine revelation be the greatest of blessings, then the imposture that counterfeits it must be the greatest of all evils." Or, in the words of the Lord: "If... the light that is in

thee be darkness, how great is the darkness."

I solemnly indict the Church of Rome for misrepresentation of Christianity in Latin America. When I am charged with ignorance of history, my appeal is to history. When I am charged with not being familiar with the facts, my appeal is to the facts that are patent to all who look and see. No stronger appeal for evangelization is coming from any quarter of the world than from South America.

In the building of nations—if you will suffer me to use a figure the force of which will be perhaps more patent to many of you than to the preacher—the true method is that of reinforced concrete. What is concrete? In case I should manifest my ignorance, I quote from the dictionary, "a compact mass of gravel, coarse pebbles, or stone chippings cemented together by hydraulic or other mortar." What is reinforced concrete? The phrase gripped me when I first heard it, and one day, sitting with my friend Mr. Charles Hay Walker in his study, I asked him what it was. He probably knows as much about reinforced concrete as most men, and he explained that reinforced concrete is that method of building in which metal and concrete are used. The metal prevents the concrete crumbling; the concrete prevents the metal buckling.

Nations must be built with reinforced concrete. The concrete of South America is its intellectual development, and all that means, of political emancipation and commercial advantage. But it must have the strong metal of religion. Where there is no vision of God, the concrete goes to pieces. Though you weld it with hydraulic mortar, the wash of the waves and the pressure of burdens will make it sag. Unless the Church of Christ that has seen the vision carries it to South America, then God alone knows the disaster that must sweep on those countries in the days to come.

There is only one appeal I can make to you as my eyes turn to that great continent, and I shall make it best in the words of one of the greatest missionary hymns ever written:

Shall we, whose souls are lighted
With wisdom from on high
Shall we, to men benighted,
The Lamp of life deny?
Salvation! Oh, Salvation!
The joyful sound proclaim,
Till earth's remotest nation
Has learned Messiah's name.

045 - Song of Solomon 6:10 - The Fourfold Glory of the Church

Who is she that looketh forth as the morning.
Fair as the moon.
Clear as the sun,
Terrible as an army with banners?
Song of Solomon 6:10

There have been three methods of interpreting the Song of Songs, which, for the sake of brevity, I may describe as the material, the ethical, and the allegorical. There are those who treat it as being merely an Eastern love song. There are those who believe it was written in order to make a protest against polygamy, and to show the true ideal of marriage. There are those who believe that in the writing of it there were mystical intentions, that it was intended to convey spiritual truth.

My own view is that to lay undue emphasis on either of these is to miss the full value of the whole. It is an Eastern love song, but I think not finally. Even in that way it is the song of songs, for never was there a more wonderful unveiling of all the mystic wonder and beauty of love as the basis of marriage than is to be found in this song. In that sense, therefore, it has ethical values. I hold, however, that its chief value is spiritual.

It is an interesting fact, and a very suggestive one, that the Chaldee Targum contains a Jewish commentary on this Song of Songs, of which this is the title: "The Songs and Hymns which Solomon the Prophet King of Israel delivered by the spirit of prophecy before Jehovah, the Lord of the whole earth." That title at once reveals the fact that the Jewish commentator looked on it as being spiritual and mystic in application.

I think, moreover, that this view is warranted by the harmony of Old Testament literature, for the final relationship between Israel and Jehovah was repeatedly described by those who saw most deeply into the great truth under the figure of the marriage relationship. That creates the infinite pathos and beauty of the whole of the prophecy of Hosea. It is found also in the writings of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel. When we turn from the Old Testament literature to the New, we find that the same figure obtained in the clearest thinking of

New Testament writers concerning the relationship between Christ and His Church. If we think of the attitude of the Christian Church toward this Song in the past, we shall find that Hippolytus was its first Christian commentator, and he treated it throughout as allegorical. He was followed by Origen, who taught us that it was intended here to set forth the relationship between Christ and His Church, or between the soul and the Logos, between an individual and Christ. He was followed by Athanasius, Gregory of Nyasa, Jerome, Augustine, Chrysostom, all of them treating the Song in the same way. In the Middle Ages, those dark ages in which shone some of the brightest and most wonderful light that ever has shone in the history of the Christian Church concerning Christian experience, this Song of Solomon became the very textbook of the mystics. Bernard of Clairvaux preached eighty sermons on the first two chapters alone, and Aquinas made it perpetually the medium of teaching concerning the mystic relationship between Christ and His people.

I propose to employ the text in the allegorical sense. The Song of Solomon is not dramatic literature, but idyllic. There is not one consistent story running through, but certain phases of relationship are described. The opening chapters celebrate the marriage feast. At the center we have the matchless story of the betrothal. At the close we have pictures of the united state. If the writer was intending to suggest truth concerning the ideal relationship of Israel to God, then we have every right to take the Song and consider it as setting forth the relationship between Christ and His Church. Christ was the Revelation of Jehovah, the Church is the realization of the ideal of the Hebrew people. In that sense, therefore, I take this particular text, constituting as it does one of a series of interpolations running through the Song.

For the most part, the Song is made up of monologues and soliloquies by Solomon and the Shulamite, in which expression is given to all the deepest senses of the love and fellowship and communion existing between them. Ever and anon, between these soliloquies or monologues, the chorus is heard breaking out into inquiry. In the third chapter, sixth verse, we hear the inquiry of the chorus:

Who is this that cometh up out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke,
Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,
With all powders of the merchant?

Again, in the fifth chapter, ninth verse:

What is thy beloved more than another beloved,
O thou fairest among women?
What is thy beloved more than another beloved,
That thou dost so adjure us?

Again, in the sixth chapter, first verse:

Whither is thy beloved gone,
O thou fairest among women?
Whither hath thy beloved turned him,
That we may seek him with thee?

And then we come to our text, in the tenth verse of the chapter:

Who is she that looketh forth as the morning,
Fair as the moon,
Clear as the sun,
Terrible as an army with banners?

In the eighth chapter, fifth verse, we find two further inquiries:

Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness,
Leaning upon her beloved?

And in the end of the eighth verse:

What shall we do for our sister
In the day when she shall be spoken for?

The text is, first, an inquiry, which in itself constitutes a description of the bride in her glory and her beauty:

Who is she that looketh forth as the morning,
Fair as the moon,
Clear as the sun,

Terrible as an army with banners?

Lifting the literature on to its highest level of intention and suggestion, the text becomes a question concerning the Church as the Bride of Christ, in which we find a description of the Church. It is a comprehensive description of certain aspects of true Christian life, whether in the individual or in the corporate catholic Church. It is a text in which the glories of the Church are set forth ideally. It may be said, that the Church as we see and know her, never seems completely to have fulfilled the great ideal; nevertheless, there are senses in which these things describe exactly what the Church is, what she has been, and what she must continue to be, in her relationship to her Lord. Let us, therefore, first simply consider the fourfold figure, looking forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible as an army with banners. We shall be aided, I think, if we can put ourselves imaginatively in some Eastern land at the break of day. First, we see the dawn, swift and sudden and beautiful, illuminating every thing. Then, sinking away to rest, we notice the moon, in the suggestive beauty of her whiteness. Then, as the flush of dawn spreads over the Eastern sky and the moon is lost to sight, the sun himself appears, clear as with burning heat. As he gradually rises to meridian glory he becomes "terrible as an army with banners." Inclusively, the idea is of daybreak and of the glory of day. It has night for its background, but night being driven away by light.

Looking forth as the morning. Here, for a moment, let us forget what the figure suggests. Let us see the thing quite naturally. Morning is the time of new life. Sleep and unconsciousness have passed away. There is the sense of renewal, of reinvigoration. It is the time of new light. Darkness is vanishing and hasting away, and in its passing becoming beautiful, for its deep, dense blackness grows to purple, and presently to saffron.

Hail, smiling morn,
That tips the hills with gold,
Whose rosy fingers ope the gates of day.
Who the gay face of nature doth unfold,
At whose bright presence darkness flies away.

Morning suggests freshness. The dawn always comes with the moving of the wind. The night may have been dark, hot, sultry, and oppressive; and, perchance, the day presently will be hot and sultry and oppressive; but just when the first flush of the dawn is on the sky there is always a breath of wind. The dawn is the hour of true enthusiasm. Then the matin of the birds, then the opening petals of the flowers. The sun has not yet appeared, but he is creating the dawn.

"Fair as the moon," or literally, beautiful as the white one. The moon, which is being kissed into obscurity by the dawn, has been fulfilling her function in the night, reflecting the light of the hidden sun. She is perfectly prepared for the great and gracious ministry of reflection—having no light within herself, but catching on her otherwise darkened surface the glory of the hidden sun; then with gentle white beams she shines over the darkness, so that, while she shone there was no darkness, for the deep, dense darkness itself has been made silver with suggestion of the dead day and the coming day.

At last, with magnificent willingness, the moon is hidden, for the sun has appeared, and so we get our third figure, "clear as the sun." The word clear is suggestive. It means clarified as with burning heat. The Hebrew word is the same as that occurring in the charge of Isaiah, "Be ye clean, ye that bear the vessels of the Lord." Be ye clear, clarified as by fire! It is a word never used of ceremonial cleanness, but always of moral and spiritual cleanness. It means that no evil thing remains; it partakes of the nature of fire; things destructible can never live in fire. Then is seen the day emerging under the dominance of the sun. It appears in all its strength, glory, and beauty. The figure is of an army, of hosts armed, and ready for conflict, keeping rank, with banners flying, the great attacking force of God. Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. So at last the vision is of an army, terrible, with its banners flashing in the sun as it moves forward to the destruction of all the enemies of God.

Glancing again over the same line of perfect rhetoric and wonderful unveiling, considering the figures now as revealing truth concerning the Church, I suggest that each figure deals with a separate relationship. Looking forth as the morning, that is the figure which sets forth what the Church is within herself. Fair as the moon, that is the figure which sets forth what the Church is toward the world and its darkness. Clear as the sun, that is the figure which sets forth what the Church is toward her Lord. Terrible as an army with banners, that is the figure which sets forth what the Church is toward all the enemies of God and toward the things that are against the accomplishment of His high purposes.

"Looking forth as the morning." That is what the Church should be as within herself, not so much as to her effect on the world, to which we come presently—but what her own sense should be. It should ever be the sense of the morning, the sense of the dawning of the day; the sense of fire, the sense of light; the sense of freshness, the sense of enthusiasm, of music, and of motion. Her very consciousness should be a perpetual prophecy of the day that has not yet come, but which surely is coming. Yet, alas, how constantly the Church has sat down in sackcloth and ashes on a dark and dreary day. In the days of Isaiah there was a time when men were calling on God, and were saying to Him: "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord," to which God's answer was: "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion, put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem." It was as though God said to them: I have

never been asleep! It is you that have been asleep! Awake, put on thy beautiful garments! It is a picture of God's people, Israel, sitting in dust and ashes when they ought to have been shining in the darkness, for they were children of the day, even though the day had not yet appeared.

Alas, how constantly and perpetually the Church has sat in sackcloth and ashes, lamenting, crying out for God's help, when she should have been shining. Constantly the word of God to the Church is, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Whenever the Church has realized herself, she has looked forth as the morning. "Watchman, what of the night?... The morning cometh, and also the night!" The morning is known when the night is darkest by those whose relationship to God is such that they catch the gleaming hidden glory, and reveal it in what they are themselves, in the freshness of their enthusiasm, in the evidence of their faith, in their determined loyalty to the great beliefs and convictions that have made them. That is the first aspect of the Church; but there can be no dawn save as the Church is conscious of morning within her own soul.

Then take the second of the figures: "fair as the moon." That is the Church toward the world, reflecting the glory of the hidden sun. That is not the final figure, for there is a sense in which the Church is called on to shine in the world, not merely as a reflector, but because, in relationship with her Lord, she herself is light. Yet, while not exhausting the truth, it suggests a matter of great importance concerning the Church. What is the light which shines as the dawn? In the midst of some hour of darkness, in the midst of some circumstance of terrible trial, there is one man, one woman, one youth, one maiden, on whose face there is light, by which other faces are irradiated. That light is the reflected glory of the face of Jesus Christ, of the One Who never fails, and is never discouraged, nor will be until He have set justice in the earth, for Whose law the isles are ever waiting. If we could but see things as they are we should see that amid the sad and awful darkness in Flanders, in Gallipoli, are men on whose faces is the light that never was on land or sea, and these men are helping their comrades. What is the light on the face of that lad as he stands where death stalks round him? It is light reflected from the face of Jesus! That ought to be true of all of us who bear the holy name. If we are a part of the bride of Christ, of the holy catholic Church, we should ever be beautiful as the white one, catching the glory that is otherwise hidden, and reflecting it on the age in which we live. "Fair as the moon."

Again, the poetic figure runs on, and we reach the next stage of exposition: "Clear as the sun." Now I seem to break down in the sequence when I declare that this suggests the Church's aspect toward the Lord rather than toward the world. Yet this is the mystery which only He understands. The Church is as the sun itself, clarified with burning heat, possessed with a passion which sustains her, and enables her to create day. The Church shines most gloriously, not in reflection of her absent Lord toward the world, but in her relationship with the Lord in that deep, mystic, inner life which in some senses never can be revealed to the world; for spiritual things can be discerned only spiritually, and there are essential strengths and glories and perfections within the Church that can be apprehended only of the Lord Himself. So it ever seems to me that the words, "clear as the sun"—clarified as with burning heat, all that is evil burned up by fire—tell the deep and profound secret of the Church's relationship to her Lord and of His understanding of the truth concerning her. Men look on the Church, and even at the best she seems to be beautiful only as the white one, reflecting a glory. They see much of the dark through the white, they see much of her failure; but the Lord Himself looks on His Church, and knows her perfectly, sees all her hidden purity, her aspirations after purity which in themselves are the guarantees of her ultimate victory and glory. There is a sense in which the true catholic Church of Jesus Christ in the world is affecting the world more by what she is in the seeing of Christ than by what she is in the seeing of the world. Involved in that view is the heartening deduction, the solemn declaration of obligation, that the Church's true passion is not to reveal anything to men, but to be true to her Lord, and to reveal herself to Him as answering the fire of His cleansing, and so sharing His enthusiasm and His emotion.

Finally, "terrible as an army with banners." That describes the Church in her attitude toward all the enemies of God, forever warlike, forever unconquerable, forever a terror. Do not let us soften the first word, for therein lies its force and beauty—terrible: the Church must be a terror to evildoers. The conception is microcosmically revealed in the history of Jesus. There was a day when, proceeding on His way, He found Himself confronted by a demon-possessed being, and the demon spoke, "What have we to do with Thee, Thou Son of God?" Then came the revealing answer of Christ: "Come forth, thou unclean spirit, out of the man." Evil is always saying to the Church of God, Let us alone. When the preacher is told he has nothing to do but to preach the Gospel, and must not interfere with any vested evil, the drink traffic for instance, the answer of the Church is this: We cannot let evil alone; we are bound to speak, and to say to every demon that damns humanity, Come out, thou unclean spirit! "Terrible as an army with banners." Add to the great poetic figure of this ancient, mystic song the words of Jesus Himself, "I will build My Church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." That is the picture of an army terrible, marching against every form of evil, breaking through the very gates of Hades!

In conclusion, let us dwell on the first figure as expressing our responsibility. We must ever be looking forth as the morning. He Who walks amid the seven golden candlesticks, holding in His own right hand the stars of the seven Churches, said of the Church at Ephesus, "I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love." The loss of first love is the loss of the quality of the morning. The freshness has gone, the enthusiasms have died out, the breath of the wind is no longer felt, the song of the birds is silenced, the flowers are not blossoming. For the Church and for the individual there is no tragedy more appalling than the loss of first love, the

ending of the first upspringing of enthusiasm that inspired the song and created the light and brought the breath of the wind. Are these things lost? Have we lost them? Are we sighing and sobbing with Cowper,

Where is the blessedness I had
When first I found the Lord?

Then we are failing to reflect light on the world, we are failing to satisfy the heart of Christ in the cleanness of the fire nature, we are failing to be terrible as an army with banners.

What, then, shall the Church do, if she have lost her first love, if she is no longer looking forth as the morning? She must return to the source of her first love, she must go back to face Him Who came as the Dayspring from on high, visiting His people. Or, to utter again the eternal paradox, she must go back to the place of the Cross where the darkness was deepest, and where hatred seemed to have won its victory; there in the place of the Cross she will find light upspringing, and love outrunning, and life beginning. Being thus herself restored to her first love, she will look forth as the morning, and become fair as the white one, be clarified as with burning heat, and become terrible as an army with banners.

As are the units, so is the unity. As are the individual members of the Church, so is the catholic Church. Then let us aim high, individually. Let us attempt in our individual life to get back into the spirit of the Song of Songs. Let us earnestly pray and strive, that in the day of drought and darkness and desolation, and almost of despair, we may be fresh as the morning, fair with the reflection of the hidden light, clear as the fire nature in our intimate relationship with our Lord, and members of the host of God to whom He has given a banner for display, proceeding resolutely against all the enemies of God and the race.

Behold the Bride. She, herald-like precedes
The royal sun, arrayed in dazzling light,
As mild Aurora smiles away the night,
While all in dewy stillness shine the meads.
Behold the Bride, fair as the moon outgleaming,
Melting dim shadows of the midnight skies;
His grace, through her reflected, meets our eyes,
The light which she receives o'er others beaming.
Behold the Bride, a terror to her foes;
As the vanguard of long embattled hosts,
The power of heaven's Eternal King she boasts,
Renown to win, and glory, forth she goes.