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Minister's handicap.

The
MINISTER'S
HANDICAP

J. WILBUR CHAPMAN D.D.



The Minister's Handicap

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Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.



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DEDICATED TO
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A Preacher of the Gospel

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FOREWORD

This is a great day for preaching the Gospel. The World War has stirred the deepest emotions of the people, and men who could not be approached spiritually before the war began are now easily reached. Their hearts are tender, and they make quick response to any appeal which is made to them, if Christ is the center of it and if it means strength in the time of temptation, and sympathy and help in the day of trial.

I began my ministry in 1881. Since that time I have preached in churches of various kinds. My first pastorate was in Liberty, Indiana, and College Corner, Ohio. I served the churches in these two places jointly. In College Corner my congregation was largely made up of farmers. In Liberty it was composed of village people.

My next pastorate was in Schuylerville, New York. My friend B. Fay Mills was pastor in Greenwich, New York. I was making him a visit and had accepted an invitation to supply the Schuylerville church for a single Sunday. This day of preaching resulted in a call, and for two years I

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lived in an Eastern village church and found the people in the Eastern village very different from those to whom I had been preaching in the Middle West.

From Schuylerville I was called to Albany, New York, and for five years served the First Reformed Church as pastor. This congregation was made up largely of people who represented the old families of Albany. They were aristocratic, devoted to the church, and as true to the minister as any people who have ever lived.

From Albany I was called to the Bethany Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. This church at that time was in some respects the most conspicuous church in the world, not only because of its large membership, but also because of its great Sunday School, which was a monument of the work of the Hon. John Wanamaker, and many times in the Bethany Sunday School during my pastorate the attendance would be quite 5,000 scholars on a Sunday. The church was also distinguished because of its former pastors, especially the Rev. Arthur T. Pierson, D.D., who was my immediate predecessor. It was a people's church and its great buildings

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were thronged at almost every service.

From Philadelphia I was called to the Fourth Presbyterian Church of New York City. It was a congregation of people exceedingly well-to-do, Scotch in their original ancestry, and as loyal to their pastor as any people could be. I came to New York from Philadelphia because whenever in my travels I would speak of an Evangelistic Church and would cite Bethany as an illustration, ministers would smile at me and say, "Of course it would be quite easy to be evangelistic in such a church as that!" and so when my call to New York came, I knew I had the opportunity to prove that one could be evangelistic in preaching to rich people, and my experience in New York was really the climax of all my pastorates.

I have also preached in all parts of the world, and these things are mentioned only that I may be able to speak with some authority concerning the preaching of the Gospel and the way people receive such preaching. I think my friends will bear me out that I have had a measure of success in my pastorates and my experiences in my world-wide travels are pretty generally

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known, so when I say I know that people are interested in the Gospel, that they will listen to that when they will not listen to anything else, that their hearts will respond to it when it is preached fervently, I am speaking out of my own experience.

The average minister fails only because he does not preach the Gospel in simplicity and in power. This is the day for the minister, the day for which he has longed and for which he has so fervently prayed; and if he is but loyal to his ideals, fervent in his spirit, passionate in his devotion to Christ, and plain in his statement of the principles of the Gospel, he will be reckoned a success by men and be counted great in his work in the Church.

Theodore L. Cuyler was a success not only because he was a great pastor, but because he preached the Gospel.

Dwight L. Moody was a success not only because he was a great leader of men, but because, as his printed sermons will show, he preached the Gospel, and he never preached anything else.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was a success just because he was a great Gospel preacher;

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and it is a significant fact that, while he has been dead for years, his sermons still sell at a remarkably rapid rate just because they are Gospel messages and people's hearts are touched by them.

I would like to make a special appeal to students of the seminaries who are just entering the ministry: Preach the Gospel! It will win when everything else fails. Audiences will grow under such preaching. Some ministers seem to think that they are called to discuss philosophy in the pulpit. Under such preaching audiences dwindle. Some seem to think that they are called upon to discuss secular themes, and the men who sit in the pews lose their respect for them when they do it, for they have the newspapers and the magazines with experts elaborating the themes presented by the ministers.

We have a monopoly when we preach the Gospel, and if we preach it faithfully we are sure to succeed.

I would like to make a special appeal to young ministers: Keep in touch with all evangelistic meetings and Bible Conferences. I owe much to Northfield, Winona Lake, and



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other places for any blessing which may have been given to me in my ministry.

Read spiritual books. When I was a young minister I used to fairly devour all of F. B. Meyer's writings, Andrew Murray's books and books of a similar sort written by other men. I desire to express my keen appreciation of the book from which I have quoted so frequently, Robinson's "The Personal Life of the Clergy." It was given to me by my friend Dr. John Willis Baer. I have read it many times, and always with personal profit.

Keep in touch with men who have made spiritual progress. It was my good fortune to be much with Mr. Moody and men like him, and I cannot express in words how much I owe to them for the blessings of my ministry.

I close this foreword by saying this is the day for the preaching of the Gospel. God pity us if we fail!

A handwritten signature in cursive script, likely belonging to J. M. Chapman, positioned below the main text of the foreword.

The Minister's Handicap

I

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"An ambassador in bonds."—EPHESIANS 6 : 20.

Under circumstances of every sort St. Paul never forgot that he was a preacher of the Gospel. It cost him much to reach this exalted position, but when once he took his stand nothing could turn him aside from the mission to which he felt himself divinely called.

His enemies may oppose him, that will only increase his zeal; they may cast him into prison, but he will write his messages and send them forth to a people eager to receive them; they may chain him to a Roman guard, but he will tell his guard the story of his conversion and make him an evangel of the truth; by means of these guards who were constantly changed, he sends his story

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throughout the Roman Empire, and thereby has a wider hearing than if he himself had gone in person to declare the truth.

The Epistle to the Ephesians is spiritual in the extreme, and there is a very good reason for this. Paul was shut off from the world; he was withdrawn from its confusing and disturbing influences, and so had time to think and to pray; the Epistle bears evidence of the fact that he must have done both. When he said, "I am an ambassador in bonds," he was in prison. This in part accounts for the triumphant ring in his message, for in spite of his imprisonment he worked unceasingly. He wrote four Epistles while he was in bondage—the Epistle to the Colossians, which has to do with the Head, that is Christ; the Epistle to the Ephesians, which has to do with the Body, that is the Church; the Epistle to the Philippians, which has to do with the walk of the Christian when the Head is recognized and the Body is submitted to its control; the Epistle to Philemon, which Luther described as a charming illustration of Christian courtesy; certainly it is a most forceful appeal

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made to a friend in behalf of a runaway slave, Onesimus by name. Paul was in every way a great preacher.

In his call he was a marked man. Referring to it himself he said, "At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among

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them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."¹

It would be worth while for ministers frequently to go back to the day when they were called to preach the Gospel and examine their subsequent ministry to see if like the Apostle they could say, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."

I was called to preach when a boy. I was conducting a meeting under the auspices of the Y. M. C. A. in my native city. I thought that I had done my work poorly, and was wondering how I could escape from the room without meeting any of my friends, when a business acquaintance of my father's who was in the room came forward and putting his hand upon my shoulder, said, calling me by my name, "I was deeply interested in what you did to-day, and somehow I have the impression that you will some day be a minister of the Gospel." It never had occurred to me before this time that such a position of honor was for me.

¹ Acts 26: 13-19.

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That day in the little room I received my call, and I have sought to be true to the vision. This may not always be easy.

“Life in this world is only a choice of difficulties. If we avoid them in one direction it is but to meet them in another. It will cost us much to be true to our vocation, but the penalty will be greater if we are not. It is ‘hard to be a Christian,’ but it is harder not to be! When those who have once seen the vision and ‘tasted the heavenly gift’ draw back, they invite experiences compared with which the trials of the saint are light and sweet. The really ‘hard’ thing is to ‘kick against the pricks.’ ‘The way of transgressors is hard.’”¹

Paul was a remarkable preacher in his zeal. If we find him in Athens, he is not sight-seeing, much as this would have interested him; he is telling the story of his Master. If he sits on the river’s bank just to rest for a little while, he finds a woman by the name of Lydia sitting near; he speaks to her of his Saviour and wins her to Christ. If he is in Ephesus, he goes from house to

¹ Robinson: *The Personal Life of the Clergy.*

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house beseeching men to be reconciled to God.

A profound impression would be made upon a community if the ministers should frequently give themselves to this form of service, and if St. Paul could do it, it is not beneath the dignity of the ministers of to-day.

I know of a minister in the western part of the United States who announced to his people that for three weeks there would be no preaching services held in the church. He told them that if they would attend the church the next Sunday morning, he would tell them what was in his mind. When they came he informed them that he had divided the church into groups of ten, and had made one person responsible for nine others. He told them that he would expect them for the next three weeks to visit the people who were not in the habit of attending his church, and who might not be in regular attendance upon any church, and that he expected at least to have these persons invited to the services which might be held, and also to be brought personally to his atten-

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tion. He said that it was his plan to hold a Wednesday evening meeting, at which time they would be expected to tell their experiences in this form of work, and that he would do the same, inasmuch as he also intended to visit from house to house. The Sunday mornings and evenings would be occupied in some special way, but not in preaching. The plan worked admirably. At the end of three weeks almost one hundred people had been led to Christ and united with the church. This is a workable plan for every community, and it is in line with what the apostle suggested when he spoke of going "from house to house."

If all the ministers in the United States, or in the world, could spend ten days in a house-to-house visitation, telling the story of Christ and urging men to accept Him, multitudes could be saved and the world itself would be moved towards God.

Paul is a remarkable preacher in his passion. When he writes to the Corinthian Church concerning his ministry, he says, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel." Writing to the elders of the Church

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at Ephesus, he says, "Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."¹

I was holding a conference with a company of ministers in Scotland—and surely Scotchmen are never accused of being too emotional—when one of them said to me, "I think I know the weakness of modern preaching." I thought he might say that it was lacking in intellectual force, but instead, he declared that as preachers we had become "too dry-eyed." He told me how Thomas Chalmers would preach after the great blessing came into his life; he said it was with tears, and sometimes with sobs, and the impression he made upon his people was profound.

Paul was remarkable in his loyalty to his Master. When he writes to the Corinthians we find him saying, "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified,"² and when he reaches the end of his ministry, and the time of his departure is at hand, he triumphantly

¹ Acts 20: 31.

² I Corinthians 2: 2.

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exclaims, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."¹

In these days of changing views and unsettled convictions, it is a great thing to have before us such an ideal preacher as this. We would do well to follow in his footsteps. In these days of sensationalism, when there is a disposition to preach other than the Gospel, we would do well to take to heart such words as the following:

"Would that the great commonplaces might recover their sovereignty. One of the most invidious snares of modern life is the exaltation of means as ends. The cheap-show element, the parade of mere machinery, enters into the modern church. Its assemblies are cheapened by flashlight photography. When our spiritual life is shallow we become sensational; when our thought is thin we grow declamatory; when we have little strength we make it up with struggle. We confuse perspiration and inspiration. There is nothing loud or strident, however, about the spiritual man. 'His voice is not heard in the street.' Yet,

¹ II Timothy 4: 7.

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having the most sensational things, he arrests attention. Let us but be spiritual and we will bring about the greatest 'sensation' of modern times."¹

It is only as we are loyal to Christ that we may expect God's blessing to rest upon us in our ministry. I once heard a great preacher say that there might be times in a minister's experience when he would feel obliged to preach upon some secular theme. Some conditions existing in the community might require that he should do this, but said this preacher, "We have no right to believe that the Spirit of God will rest upon our preaching and carry it home to our hearers with deep conviction unless we are loyal to Jesus Christ, to whom the Spirit of God always witnesses."

There are two great dangers confronting ministers. "It is not an easy thing to single out such dangers as we should agree to consider the most serious and widespread at the present time. The first place, however, shall be given to the danger of 'secularization'; to the temptation which would lead

¹ Jowett.

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us to devote ourselves to a variety of pursuits other than those which properly belong to us to such an extent as to obscure our character and weaken our influence as spiritual leaders. Next we shall do well to think of the danger of 'over-occupation'; and under that head we shall include the risks which we incur when we persist in the attempt to do too many things even of the kind that may be rightly included in our proper sphere."¹

"If we look for guidance to the example of our Lord, we are struck by the way in which the years and days of His public and social ministry were balanced, so to speak, by spaces of silence and retirement. Our peril lies in the temptation to suppose that we can have much of the one with but scant provision for the other. We need the preparation of solitude if we are to carry influence with us as we pass out into the stream of life."²

Paul was an inspiring preacher in the face of obstacles. Too often when a minister is opposed by his people and is faced with complications which may or may not be serious,

¹ Robinson: *The Personal Life of the Clergy*.

² *Ibid.*

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his first inclination is "to resign." I once heard G. Campbell Morgan say that "resignations were mostly of the flesh," but St. Paul was not such a preacher. Those were wonderful words of his to the Corinthian Church:

"Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."¹

¹ II Corinthians 11: 23-28.

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When St. Paul said, "I am an ambassador in bonds," he gave to us the picture of a minister with a handicap, and most ministers have had such in one form or another. That minister is not the best preacher who has had the easiest time in life. Mr. Spurgeon once said, "True preaching is artesian and wells up from great depths."

When trials are many, when burdens are heavy, when tears are blinding, when the heart is almost broken, then, as a rule, ministers come to an experience where effective preaching is possible. There are many who have been in bondage, and this is not surprising. When difficulties confront us, it would be well to say, "I am not the first to travel this way; others have gone ahead of me," or, "Others have borne this burden, and if they have triumphed, it is possible for me to do so," or, "Another has won this victory; surely I am not to be defeated."

It would be profitable to think of some preachers who have worked well with handicaps. Let us start with Jesus Himself. He came into His own country, He was equal with God in power and in authority, and

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they said with a sneer, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" Their unbelief so bound Him that His work was hindered. "And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk and healed them."¹

Many a minister has had the same experience. Our preparation for preaching has been the best that we could make. We have prayed our sermons through and they have thoroughly gripped us. We were impatient for the moment to come when we could rise to give our message, and when it came we had scarcely started speaking when the sermon was dead through no fault of our own, but because of the atmosphere which bound us—the lack of sympathy on the part of our hearers, a building poorly ventilated, a room imperfect as to acoustics, or a choir without consecration.

St. Paul had a handicap. In describing it he said, "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet

¹ Mark 6: 5.

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me, lest I should be exalted above measure."¹ It is supposed by some that this trouble had to do with his eyesight, but this is only conjecture. It may be that we were not told what this particular thorn was in order that his consolations may avail for any who are passing through any experience of hindrance. In spite of the thorn he preached superbly, so we may overcome our handicap if we will. Hear him when he says:

"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."²

How cheering it is to know that we do not need to bear our own burdens, face our foes, nor meet our discouragements alone.

"There is a beautiful expression," says Dr. A. B. Simpson, "which is brought out by a literal translation: 'He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee'; it might be translated, 'He kept saying.' He did not say it once, but again and again. He reiterated the sweet promise, and reassured the

¹ II Corinthians 12: 7.

² II Corinthians 12: 10.

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trembling yet trusting heart of his child. I remember going through a dark tunnel with my child. The little one nestled close to me, and often in those long moments he would whisper his little fears, and I would assure him that he would soon be through. So God comforts and reassures His little children, and we need not be ashamed to tell Him all our fears, and have Him cheer us, and renew His covenants and promises as often as we need them."

Men of more modern times have suffered because of a handicap. Robert Murray McCheyne was such a man. He was born in 1813; he was highly trained in Edinburgh; he died in 1843 in the thirtieth year of his age. In that he was like David Brainerd who died at thirty, and Henry Martyn who died at thirty-two. He might have risen to high eminence in literature, but denied himself such honors that he might win souls. He always had the handicap of a body physically weakened and full of pain. Here are a few sentences from his memoirs:

"Strong oppression of the heart and an

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irritating cough laid him aside from public duties for weeks." "His health was delicate and the care and endless fatigue incident to his position in a town like Dundee were almost more than he could bear."

"Five years before his death his constitution, never robust, began to feel the effects of unremitting labor. He would spend six hours daily visiting. The same evening he would preach. Sundays he always had extra services. Frequently violent palpitation of the heart would come on, yet he preached on, as some one has said, 'as if he were almost dying to see men saved.'" He says of himself, "As I was walking in the fields thinking of my Lord and of my work, the thought came to me with overwhelming power that every one in my flock would soon be either in heaven or in hell, and I wished that I had a tongue like thunder that I might make all men hear, and a frame like iron that I might visit every one in my parish and say to them, 'Escape for thy life.'" At this time he drew up for himself a covenant or pledge under the heading—

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I OUGHT

To confess sin the moment I know it to be a sin.

To see that in shedding His blood there is an infinite over-payment for all my sins.

To study Christ more as a living Saviour.

To never forget that sin grieves the Holy Spirit.

To steadily and solemnly give myself to prayer.

To pray before seeing any one at the beginning of the day.

To spend the best hours of the day in communion with God.

Never to do anything without prayer.

Daily to intercede for my own family, my relations, friends, and members of my flock.

Here was a minister with a handicap, and his preaching was powerful.

There was also George Matheson, that truly great preacher, that very great soul, who was blind, and instead of becoming discouraged, went on triumphantly in his work and wrote:

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“O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee,
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

“O joy that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain
That morn shall tearless be.”

His handicap increased his pathos and power, and men pay tribute to him to-day who, in spite of his blindness, kept on preaching.

Some of the handicaps of the minister have to do with his surroundings. There is the lack of atmosphere in the church, and without an atmosphere the best of men cannot preach. Jesus was obliged to have it. How then can I do without it? Give a true minister an atmosphere, and he will rise above the ordinary in his preaching and magnify his Lord in a great way.

There is a lack of proper setting for the delivery of the message. It is true that some of the greatest sermons have been

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preached under circumstances most unusual—in the fields, in the market-places and the shops—but I am speaking of the work which is carried on in the church where the acoustics are miserable, where the lack of ventilation makes successful work well nigh impossible, where the choir is a hindrance and not a help. No one but a minister of the Gospel can understand how these things, which seem so trifling to other people, handicap us in our work. The lack of sympathy on the part of the congregation will kill a sermon, however well it may have been thought out. The lack of prayer on the part of the church members and the church officers will make preaching almost, if not quite, impossible.

It is said that when Mr. Spurgeon entered his pulpit, a thousand people would bow their heads in prayer. Any one can preach under such circumstances.

I once served a church as pastor where the church officers met me every morning for prayer before I entered my pulpit. They prayed that God would help me, that He would give me courage, that He would enable

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me to preach in such a way as to win men to Christ and make Christ attractive to them. One of my church officers always prayed for me with tears in his eyes, and when they had passed over the pulpit platform to their pews, and I entered the church, the atmosphere was heavenly and preaching was a joy.

Referring again to Robert Murray McCheyne, he had been in the Holy Land, and on his return the people received him with the greatest joy. He preached Thursday afternoon and evening in St. Peter's Church in Dundee. Not a seat was unoccupied. The aisles were crowded. The steps up to the pulpit were filled. There was singing, praying and sobbing. Coming out of his church on the way to his house, the people crowded around him, young and old, to take his hand and thank God for his return.

How easy it is to preach under such circumstances! but how very difficult when these conditions are absent. If a minister is not preaching the Gospel he has no right to expect such help from his people; but many do preach the Gospel and have never had

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this, and therefore they do not know what the joy of preaching is.

Sometimes the handicap is due to the minister himself. Such a little thing can hinder a spiritual work; so many things conspire to help it on. If there is a lack of Bible study on the part of the minister, not Bible study in the preparation of sermons, but Bible study for the purpose of the development of one's own spiritual life, this is a handicap. Nothing can take the place of a purely personal devotional study of the Word of God.

If there is a lack of prayer when the minister is alone with his God, when all the world has been shut out and he bares his own heart to God just that he may be helped himself—when this is lacking there is a handicap, for nothing can take the place of such prayer. No amount of study or careful preparation can make up for this loss.

Dr. Andrew Bonar of Glasgow, so his daughter told me, spent at least two hours each day in communion with God, and then came out from his room, which was his Holy of Holies, with his face shining and his life surcharged with the power of God.

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Lack of communion and fellowship with Christ is a handicap.

Lack of passion in preaching is a handicap. When we realize that men without Christ are lost, then we must preach with a passion. Failing to do so we are seriously handicapped.

The lack of positive preaching in such a day as this, when people are unusually thoughtful and eager to know the truth, is a serious handicap; the lack of complete surrender, the withholding from God some part of our lives—this, too, is a handicap. When God has all there is of us He can use us, and when He uses us, life becomes great in His sight.

It is, however, to be remembered that even with a handicap we may preach with power; that God is greater than our circumstances and mightier than our surroundings; only it is not to be forgotten that when the handicap is due to some weakness in our life, or some sin which we may have hidden and are unwilling to give up, even God Himself is powerless to use us until the wrong is made right.

II

PREACHING THE GOSPEL

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel."—ROMANS 1:16.

In the Authorized Version this Scripture above quoted reads: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ." In the Revised Version the familiar words—"of Christ"—are omitted, and if we go back to the first verse of the first chapter, it is spoken of as "the Gospel of God," and this is as it should be, for that gives us the widest possible designation of the whole body of redemptive truth; so that a preacher of the Gospel is not only one who tells us how to be saved, but he is a man who declares our acceptance with God, our deliverance from sin, our preservation in Christ, our constant representation of Christ and our final presentation to God. What is called the "simple Gospel," therefore, is really a very profound thing, and to speak of it as the "simple Gos-

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pel" is to confuse men's minds regarding its greatness.

The true preacher of the Gospel is never narrow. In the seventeenth verse of the first chapter of Romans, Revised Version, we read, in praise of the Gospel, "For therein is revealed a righteousness of God." This means the right relation in which man is placed by an act of God and because of faith in Christ. In our stead he has fully met every demand of the law and is "made unto us righteousness." The practical side of this truth is that we must reflect the spirit of Christ in all that we do, and in our lives there must be a likeness unto Him. "It will not do to stop with the judicial side of the truth. The world has a right to demand that we ourselves shall practise what we preach as well as insist on others doing so."

There are many phases of the Gospel. I mention them as I have found them in the Scofield Bible, which I most heartily commend to all Bible students, and especially to ministers.

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THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

This was preached in the past by John the Baptist, by our Lord and by His disciples, and when the Church is completed and called away and the Kingdom set up, it will be preached again.

“And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”¹

THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD

That is the good news of salvation, for that is what the Gospel means. It is the Gospel

- Of God, because it originates in His love;
- Of Christ, because it flows from His sacrifice;
- Of Grace, because it saves the hopeless and the helpless;
- Of Glory, because it concerns Him in glory;
- Of Salvation, because it is the power of God unto salvation;

¹ Matthew 24: 14.

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Of Uncircumcision, because it is apart
from forms;
Of Peace, because it means peace between
the sinner and his God.

THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL

This is spoken of in Revelation, fourteenth chapter and sixth verse. This is Good News to Israel and to those who have been saved through the tribulation.

MY GOSPEL

This is spoken of in Romans, second chapter and sixteenth verse: "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my Gospel."

This is Paul's conception of the Gospel, and has to do with the Church in her position in the world in connection with her privileges as the body of Christ, and also has to do with her obligation to reflect the Spirit of Christ.

In the Epistle to the Galatians Paul speaks of "another gospel," but he hastens to say that this is not a Gospel, for the simple reason that it is a "perversion of the real

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Gospel and mingles human effort with grace.”

We are preachers of a Gospel which is broad indeed in its scope, for it has to do with salvation from sin's penalty, deliverance from sin's power, the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ, the reflection of His likeness, and our final going home to be presented to the Father.

The effect of the Gospel is always remarkable. First, on the minister himself. He needs all the help that can possibly be given to him. He is a man, and therefore has inherited weakness. His profession is unique and is not to be judged by the standard of other professions. His work is very wearing, and no one can appreciate this but the minister himself. Nothing keeps the heart warm, the intellect keen, the purpose strong, like the preaching of the Gospel.

“What monotony there is in the ministry of many! Duty presses on the heels of duty in an endless circle, but it is not so when the Spirit of the Gospel is quickening both the pastor and his flock; then there are all the varieties of life.”

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Justly or unjustly, ministers are under fire to-day. This is the time of the world's challenge to them. If they can measure up to their responsibilities, the day has dawned for which they have longed and prayed, when the minister should come into his own. Because the opportunities are great and the challenge clear, the criticisms abound.

I was traveling not long ago with a great business man, one of the captains of industry, who employs more than forty-seven thousand men. He is a Christian and a faithful officer of the church. He has proved his friendship for the ministry, and so I said to him, "What is the matter with the ministry to-day?" Almost immediately he replied, "I think three things.

"First, discouraged lassitude. Ministers, as I have observed them, too often seem to think that they must work in their own strength, losing sight of the fact that they may be indwelt by the Spirit of God, and because they are not so filled, they grow discouraged.

"Second, they too often preach their own doubts. People in the pews do not care to

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be fed on either theories or doubts. Life is too strenuous and too serious for anything but a positive message.

“Third, they have too often substituted ethical addresses for sermons, and I consider this,” said he, earnestly, “a most fatal mistake. Men in the pews like to hear sermons that tell them how to be true, and which will make them strong for the conflicts of life.”

Ministers so soon wear out and cross what is known as “the dead line.” When they have reached the years where the lawyer, the doctor, and the merchant are most in demand, they not infrequently are forced to retire, sometimes with a broken heart.

William De Morgan, the great novelist, died in London recently at the age of eighty-seven. He was a professor of mathematics. He became a designer of stained glass and a manufacturer of art tiles. He amassed a fortune. At the age of sixty-five, when most men would think of retiring, he turned his attention to literature. He wrote after the style of Dickens. He met with extraordinary success. At eighty-seven he died, and

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it was said that the triumph of his old age was due in no small measure to the deliberate purpose with which he kept himself alive.

What could be better for the minister than to keep himself aglow with the Gospel of God, to keep his heart warm with the grace of God, to keep his soul yearning for others with the Spirit of Christ, and to have the same triumphant climax to his ministry which St. Paul had when he said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith!"¹

There is no "dead line" for such a preacher.

The effect of the Gospel on the minister's thinking is great. One of the finest tests of our theories is to try them out on ourselves. Do they make us more gentle, more loving, more patient, more tolerant, more Christ-like?

Dr. Andrew Bonar went from his daily fellowship with God to call upon a dying boy. He was unknown to the boy, but he spoke so beautifully and so filled the room

¹ II Timothy 4: 7.

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with the atmosphere of heaven, that when he said to the boy, "Good-by, little lad; don't be afraid, you will soon be home"—the lad turned to his mother after he was gone, saying, "Mother, I know who that was. That was God." It will be a great day when we reach the place as ministers where we shall remind people of Christ by what we do and say and think.

It is well also to test our theories upon the lives of others. In ordinary life do the people who hear us become stronger in the fight against evil, more sympathetic with others in trouble? Do they grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? I know of nothing that can keep one so true, so brave, so strong, as to be able to say with the apostle and the hosts that have come after him, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel."

It is well to study the effect of the Gospel upon the world. Let us try "the other gospel" to which St. Paul referred. This gospel has for its message to lost and ruined men the following appeals:

"Do your best." But may I ask, By

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whose standard? My best might fall far short of God's ideal and thus utterly fail in the divine test.

"Be sincere." But do not forget that you may be sincerely wrong. If you should ever visit the Sydney harbor in Australia you would find that you must pass in through what is known as "The Heads" into the most magnificent harbor in the world. "The Heads" are two mountains at the harbor's entrance. Years ago a master of a certain ship thought he was right. He steered for what he thought was "The Heads," but he was wrong, and instead of passing into the harbor he struck upon the rocks, and practically the whole shipload of people was lost. The ship master was sincere, but he was wrong.

"Give up your sins." But in whose strength? This would be a poor message indeed to one whose character was ruined and whose will was weakened.

This "other gospel" talks much about the fact

That God is love. And so He is, but how about His justice?

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That Christ is merciful. And so He is, but how about the judgment?

That there is another chance given to men. But where is the Scripture which makes such a statement as this?

The "other gospel" is doomed to failure. It will not bear the test on a ruined life. On the other hand, the Gospel of the Grace of God is sufficient to meet every need. This Gospel is all-sufficient if it is "convincingly believed, vitally lived, and passionately preached."

It presents a great Saviour.

In the Southern seas a shipwrecked crew was discovered to be afflicted with yellow fever. They drifted near a certain island, and a French doctor whose duty it was to inspect all infected vessels did it in this way: several hundred yards off from the stricken crew he stood up in a boat and examined his patients through binocular glasses, and then made his report.

This is not like Christ in His visit to a sin-cursed world. "Jesus did not station Himself on a star yonder, within hail of this plague-stricken earth, but He came to earth,

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He boarded the doomed craft. The black flag of despair was on earth, but the Lord, to the amazement of the universe, and to the wonder of it, a wonder they have never got over yet, came to this earth of ours. Oh, what a wonder it is, that God became incarnate, that He boarded the craft, that He attended to the souls of men, that for the guilty he shed His blood; that in His Holy Spirit He arranged that a new life, a new nature, should be bestowed on every believer in Jesus."

It presents a message which is broad in its scope.

Dr. W. L. Watkinson in one of his articles says, "I was wasting my time the other day reading a work of fiction in which the writer said that Buddhism was a thousand times better than Christianity, but he went on to say that it needs a mild climate in which to work. Thanks be unto God," said the great preacher, "Christ works everywhere, and the Gospel is for Occident and Orient. It works in frigid zone and furnace heat. It is a great Gospel."

The effect of the Gospel on the sinner is

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almost beyond one's power to describe. John Bunyan, the blasphemer, is changed and writes "The Pilgrim's Progress." Jerry McAuley, the thief, is converted and becomes one of the most potent forces for good in the city of New York. S. H. Hadley, the drunkard, is won to Christ, coming almost to look like Christ, so wonderful is his Christlike spirit.

It is the glory of the Gospel that it provides salvation for the sinner, and also provides strength for the life which must be lived. One cannot resist the enemy in his own strength, and he is not obliged to do so. Christ comes into the life to fashion it over, and He does His work perfectly.

"There was a steamer which plied from London to Plymouth—such a lumbering, awkward craft that every time it entered the dock it injured itself or the dock-gate. But one day it hove in sight, and while everybody was looking to see what damage would be done, this time it sailed in easily and true. A bystander shouted, 'Well, old Bust 'Em Up, what is the matter now?' to which came

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the reply, 'Same old ship, gov'nor, but we have a new skipper aboard.'"¹

That is what men need, and that is what the Gospel provides. It sets up an ideal and then gives strength to reach it. It is a great thing to preach such a Gospel. It is the only hope of a sin-cursed world.

It is the old cross still, Hallelujah, Hallelujah,
Its triumphs let us tell, Hallelujah, Hallelujah,
The grace of God here shown,
Through Christ the blessed Son,
Who did for sin atone,
Hallelujah for the cross.

There is what men call "A Social Gospel," and it is well to keep it in mind, for there is great danger in neglecting the social side of the Christian life, in being so well satisfied that we ourselves are saved that we shall forget all about the needs of others.

We cannot over-emphasize the importance of personal salvation, but we may easily under-emphasize our responsibility to others less fortunate than ourselves.

¹ Fullerton.

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We are justified *by* faith when we accept Christ as a personal Saviour, and we are justified *in* our faith when we reflect the spirit of Christ in our dealings with others; in other words, when we treat others as Jesus would if He were here and acting in our stead.

It is not to be forgotten that Jesus dealt with individuals first and then sent them forth to heal the sick and relieve the distressed. I am quite willing to say that men ought to show their faith by their works. Indeed, I am willing to say that if our works do not reveal faith, then faith is hardly in existence.

How hypocritical it is to claim to be a Christian and then rent one's property for purposes of shame; how blasphemous to be an officer in the church, to assist in serving the elements which represent our Lord's body and blood, and then grow rich by oppressing the poor! What a denial of Christ it is to profess to follow Him and then stop one's ears to the cry of the needy!

To sum it all up, how impossible it is to be a true Christian, and then be indifferent to

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existing conditions in the social and business world which make for the oppression of the poor. No believer in the "social gospel" could insist more strenuously than I that the consistent Christian should in every way live Christ, in the profession of his faith, in his worship in the church, in his concern for the salvation of his fellow-men, in his distress because of the fact that social conditions make life fairly wretched for so many, in his determination to overthrow, if possible, the influences which cause us much of sorrow in the world—in short, that he should be like Christ; and unless he is, his work will count for little. But at the same time no one could insist more strenuously than I upon the individualistic message of Jesus when He said to one whose moral life was above reproach, "Ye must be born again." I have found that the help extended to others leaves a lasting impression, and is worth while just in the proportion that the one being helped is led to exercise a living faith in Christ and is thereby brought into a vital union with Him.

It must always be kept in mind that the

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Church is a witnessing body, and that a witness tells what he knows to be true, not what he thinks or imagines, and it is not to be forgotten that the final message of the apostolic preacher had to do with Jesus and the Resurrection.

I am a part of the Church and as an individual must be governed by the spirit of the Church. Having witnessed to Christ I must live for Christ, and so long as there is an aching heart, a ruined life, a burdened soul, a wrong that needs resistance, or a cause that needs assistance, there is a call for service.

III

THE MINISTER AS AN EVANGELIST

"A good minister of Jesus Christ."—I TIMOTHY 4: 6.

To be a minister of the Gospel is to occupy the highest possible position in life. A true minister, called of God and separated unto the Gospel, has an incomparable opportunity and privilege to reach and influence others; and in all the history of the Church has had no small part in the development of nations, the quickening of the proper life of a city, the influencing of homes, and the leading of men and women to an acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour.

After an experience of thirty-five years in this greatest of all callings, knowing the world as I do, and appreciating other professions as I must, if to be a minister depended upon one's personal choice, I should choose to be a minister of the Gospel.

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Many years ago I was passing through New York and found it possible to worship in the Fifth Avenue Church, when the late Rev. John Hall, D.D., was the honored pastor. I was but a young minister, and the text he used and the sermon he preached moved me profoundly. His text was found in I Timothy 4:6—"A good minister of Jesus Christ"—and Dr. Hall went on to say that in verses one to six false teachers are foretold and described, but St. Paul writes to Timothy telling him how to overcome the influence of all such when he speaks of being "a good minister of Jesus Christ."

There can be nothing better for a community than that a man should stand in his pulpit as a witness to Christ; and if he speaks as an advocate of the inspired Word of God his words never lose their force. He may die, but his message is not forgotten. The influence of his godly life works on.

The Archbishop of York once told his ordination candidates of a young clergyman who had been appointed to a country parish. His stay in it, as it proved, was not to be for long. He was scarcely more than thirty

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when he died. After an interval had passed, a friend who had known him well visited the place, eager to discover what kind of an impression he had made. Meeting a laborer, he asked him the question, "Do you think Mr. — did any good?" There was no sort of hesitation in the answer: "I never saw that man cross the common yonder, sir, without being the better for it."

Call together a thousand lawyers, a thousand doctors, a thousand merchants, a thousand statesmen, and ask them about their successes and sorrows; you will find that the minister in comparison with these has fewer trials and greater satisfaction in service, fewer burdens of his own to bear and more delight in bearing the burdens of others. He has the advantage of forming beautiful friendships with rich and poor alike; the benefits of culture and wealth are his by virtue of his position; he has greater rewards here and greater promises of blessing in the hereafter, than may be found in any or all of the notable professions. There can be no higher ambition than to be "a good minister of Jesus Christ."

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To be an evangelistic minister, however, is to choose the best in this finest of all callings. An evangelistic minister is one who is conscious of his acceptance with God, who never for a moment questions his own salvation; therefore, he is courageous in speaking to others about their acceptance of Him. He is one who believes that his Master is divine, equal with God in power and in authority, and therefore able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him. He is one who accepts the Bible as the inspired and authoritative Word of God, and therefore in presenting it knows that it will do its work, and that he need not be concerned regarding results, but only concerned as to his faithful presentation of the message. He is one who has yielded himself absolutely to God for service, who has kept back no part of the price, and who, as he has thus placed himself upon the altar by an act of his will, has taken his hands off from the direction of his own life, and has said with the Apostle Paul, "I live, and yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

To sum it all up, an evangelistic minister is a Spirit-filled minister.

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There is no greater need to-day than that the message of the minister should be evangelistic. This is the greatest day for preaching that the world has ever known, and if the minister is a big enough man for his position, from this time on he may do his best work. But if he is narrow in his views, selfish in his spirit, neglectful of his personal appeals to others to come to Christ, and if, with it all, he does not in his preaching impress his hearers with the fact that he is concerned that they should accept Christ and order their lives according to His teaching, then his experience will be sad indeed; for the door of opportunity will open, and he will fail to enter, the hour of crisis will strike, and he be deaf to its appeal.

The spirit of evangelism can make up for many defects in the ministry. Ministers may be ideal in their equipment, so far as elocution is concerned, and yet be purely mechanical in their preaching; they may be well equipped so far as mental discipline is concerned, and at the same time be dry as dust. They may be ethical in all their ideas and ideals, but inspire no one to live a better

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life. But if, while conscious of defects, they are consumed with a burning passion that sinners should turn to God, and if they preach in such a way as to make Christ real and the opportunities of life great, then their hearers will not be unmoved. The evangelistic preacher of the highest type rarely, if ever, fails in his work.

Not long ago a distinguished university professor said, "Our present-day preachers are not deficient in the art of finished elocution, but they have dropped the old theme of sin and salvation. The world knows the one, and wants to know the other."

This is indeed a testing time for the preacher, and the one safe position for him to occupy, the one correct ideal for him to maintain, the one field where he has a complete monopoly, the one line of effort where he is sure of success, lies in an evangelistic ministry. I do not mean to suggest that such a minister should be narrow, that he should cry out constantly after the manner of an evangelist, that he should seek to imitate some one else, and thereby lose the force of his own personality, that he should resign

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his church and become a rover, or that he should criticise everything in sight, as if all this constituted evangelism. I do mean that an evangelistic minister is the broadest, sanest, most consistent, most compelling preacher the Church may possess.

There is danger in these days that we should feel that our message must be softened to please itching ears; that our banners must be lowered just a little. Such a position is far from the correct one; men will not respect us if we lower our standards; they will have little or no regard for our message if it is too soft and easy; they will not seek Christ if the way is made too broad.

The late General William Booth just before his death said, "It seems to me that the chief religious danger of the twentieth century lies in this: Religion without the Holy Spirit, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, and Heaven without Hell."

An evangelistic minister is one who makes no compromise as regards the truth, who has no excuses to offer for his presentation of

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what God has spoken, but who is at the same time so winsome in his appeal, and so Christ-like in his spirit, that few can resist him.

There are two great evangelistic preachers whom we would do well to keep constantly in mind. The first is Jesus. There were certain great principles back of the teaching of Jesus impelling Him to His mission.

SIN. In the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:33) it is said, He "began to be sore amazed." Literally, it is, "He was suddenly affrighted." Sin to Jesus was a hideous thing, and there can be no true evangelism on the part of the preacher, and no proper conception of the Atonement, without an appreciation of the sinfulness of sin.

He was very plain in His message. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out. If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off." And yet He was as gentle as He was searching.

He was very personal in His appeals. He said to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again." Many preachers fail to be evangelistic because their appeals are lacking in this element.

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He was very practical in all that He said. He told the people that prayer, while the heart is out of tune with God, was quite useless. He said, "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." This is ideal preaching, it is evangelistic preaching.

His spirit was wonderful. He was untiring in His zeal. Day and night alike found Him toiling. He was self-forgetful; when a woman who was in need was at His side, He forgot that He Himself was hungry and thirsty. He was so intense that He wept over Jerusalem. Such a passion would move any audience to-day, and one who has this spirit in preaching is evangelistic.

St. Paul is the second great evangelistic preacher. His conception of sin was the same as his Master's. It was so awful to him in his thought that nothing could atone for it but Christ. He, too, was plain, personal, practical. His spirit also was Christ-

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like. He was untiring in his zeal, self-forgetful in all his efforts, and most tremendously intense. Hear him when he speaks to the elders of the Church: "Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews; and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house."¹

If one is to be an evangelistic minister, let him keep in mind the following thoughts:

1. All ministers have the evangelistic gift, and they have only to exercise it in order to be as God intended they should be.
2. Christ is the only hope; men are saved not by character alone, but by Calvary and character; not by what they can do themselves, but what Christ has done for them and their personal acceptance of Him.
3. The preacher himself must be right if God is to use him, for God will speak only

¹ Acts 20: 18-20.

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through clean lips, testify only by means of a consistent life, and entrust His power only to the one who is wholly yielded to Him.

4. Evangelism is never to be separated from prayer. When Edwards prayed, the people trembled. When Livingstone prayed, five hundred turned to Christ in a day. When Moody prayed, they took knowledge of him that he had been with Jesus.

5. The evangelistic minister must ever remember that preaching is a passion, and not a profession. If it is the former, it is great. If it is the latter, it is like sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

6. There must be unquestioned loyalty to Jesus Christ. To question His Deity, or to allow others to do so, is to make the salvation of the sinner quite impossible.

7. There must be absolute confidence in God's Word, for if the preacher is not sure, he cannot satisfy his anxious hearer nor lead the troubled one to Christ.

IV

GOD'S DIRECTION

"This is the finger of God."—EXODUS 8: 19.

God's ancient people are in bondage and He is sending Moses into the presence of Pharaoh to demand their release; the Scripture above quoted being a part of the story of the movement of God to release Israel from oppression. Pharaoh is resisting and his heart is becoming hardened. God is working in signs and wonders. Three remarkable things are done by His almighty power, and the magicians representing Pharaoh reproduce them in imitation. The fourth miracle is also wrought in God's power; and here the magicians fail. It is then that they are forced to the final conclusion that they are dealing with God and not with men, and they report to Pharaoh, saying, "This is the finger of God."

It is my intention to use this expression in

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two ways. First, the Finger placed upon the weak spot in our lives indicates the secret of failure. Second, the Finger points out the way of recovery, or the direction in which we must move to overcome past failure and be sure of future victory.

The work of the ministry is incomparably great, and the wonder of it would stagger us but for the fact that we do not of necessity work in our own strength, and we have God's sure promise that if we are faithful, He will be with us.

If there has been failure on the part of the minister there is some reason for this, and if we are but willing to submit ourselves to God, He will touch the sore spot, indicate the place of weakness, and then direct us in the way we should go. There are some special points at which we as ministers most frequently fail.

Whenever the work of the ministry is considered a profession and not a passion, failure is inevitable. To be professional is to be formal; to preach with a passion is to turn men towards God.

I once heard Dr. Grenfell say that the dif-

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ference between doctors might be indicated as follows: one doctor carries on his work professionally; the other doctor does his work with a passion; and then speaking of his own great ministry to the deep-sea fishermen on the coast of Labrador, he told how he would journey across the ice, with the weather bitterly cold and the traveling dangerous, to set a boy's broken leg or to minister to a patient tossing with a fever; and one could easily see how in his work he felt that he was just as truly preaching Christ as if he stood behind the pulpit in a church.

There must be a *consuming passion* on the part of the minister if his work is to be pleasing to God.

On the door of an English church I have been told the following lines are seen:

“Oh, for a passionate passion for souls,
Oh, for a pity that yearns,
Oh, for a love that loves even to death,
Oh, for a fire that burns!
Oh, for a prayer, the prayer that prevails,
That pours out its soul for the lost,
Victorious prayer in the Conqueror's name,
The Lord of Pentecost!”

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Sometimes ministers fail because they have a wrong idea of approach to men. There are two ways of approach to the life of the one whom we would influence. The first is by the way of the head. In such an approach there must be argument, and people are rarely argued into the Kingdom of God, for the things of God in the final analysis are spiritually discerned and not intellectually: that is, men may think their way up to the boundary line of the Kingdom, but they pass into the Kingdom by faith. The second way of approach is by means of the heart. The greatest preachers have been the men who have used the simplest forms of speech. Moody preached so that everybody could understand him. It is said that one day he was pleading with men to come to Christ. Stretching forth his arms toward his congregation he kept saying, "Come! Come!!" and he said it so persuasively and so naturally that a little child climbed down from his mother's lap and started towards Mr. Moody, thinking that the great preacher was calling him. Such preaching is always powerful.

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There is a place in the pulpit for the strongest intellectual appeal that can be made; but as a rule that sermon goes the farthest, lives in the memory the longest and influences the life the most, which enters man's nature by way of the heart.

When the late Professor William G. Elmslie of London was a young minister scheduled to preach his first sermon, his mother, who was too ill to attend the service, asked a lady of her acquaintance to go in her stead and give some report of the young man's work. In fulfillment of that request the lady wrote the following lines:

He held the lamp that Sabbath day
So low that none could miss the way,
And yet so high, to bring in sight
That picture fair of Christ the Light,
That, gazing up, the lamp between,
The hand that held it was not seen.

He held the pitcher, stooping low,
To lips of little ones below;
Then raised it to the weary saint,
And bade him drink when sick and faint.
They drank, the pitcher them between.
The hand that held it was not seen.

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He blew the trumpet, soft and clear,
That trembling sinners need not fear;
And then with louder note and bold,
To storm the walls of Satan's hold;
The trumpet coming thus between,
The hand that held it was not seen.

And when our Captain says, "Well done,
Thou good and faithful servant; come,
Lay down the pitcher and the lamp;
Lay down the trumpet, leave the camp,"
The weary hands will then be seen
Clasped in His pierced ones, naught between.

Sometimes we fail because we lose the evangelistic note in our preaching. This note is rather difficult of definition. It is in evidence not only because of what we say, but generally because of what we are.

It is said that Whitefield used to say "Oh!" in such fashion that men were convicted of sin. As a student in the seminary I used to hear the seminary preacher, the Reverend George H. Fullerton, D.D., in his sermons, say "Oh, friends," and to this day I can remember the impression which he made upon me.

One may be evangelistic just by the way

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he enters the pulpit, by the way he announces his hymns, by the spirit of his prayer, by the yearning influence of his sermon. In other words, he may be evangelistic because of what he is; but too many ministers have seemed to lose sight of this. They have thought that evangelism was a method, and they must be like other men in order to be evangelistic. In imitating others they have imitated their weakness, and so have lost their own power.

We ought to remember that evangelism is a spirit, and each individual preacher may be evangelistic and just be himself saturated with the Spirit of God.

“There is of course much, very much, to be learned from any one who has really succeeded in anything; but the learning must go far deeper than surface imitation. This is where so many lamentably fail. They set themselves to reproduce externals, plans and schemes; or possibly no more than manners, which at second hand inevitably pass into mannerisms. Then, too, it is essential that we should keep in mind the elementary principle that no two of us were ever intended to

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be exactly alike; so that even were we to succeed in our endeavors to fashion ourselves after the pattern of somebody else, it could only be by the forfeiture of what was distinctive in ourselves, and, as such, a needed contribution to the life around us.”¹

Some ministers fail because the note of authority is noticeably lacking in their appeals. I do not mean that a minister should be dictatorial, that he should be constantly impressing upon his people by what he says that he is their leader, and that they must follow him in all that he suggests; but when one believes in Christ as the Son of God, and the Bible as the Word of God, and that he himself is called of God to preach the Gospel, there is a quiet note of confidence which duly impresses itself upon every hearer, and such a preacher easily influences men and women to turn to Christ.

Many ministers fail because they do not expect results from their preaching. Not long ago a notable address was delivered in England from which I cannot do better than quote:

¹ Robinson: *The Personal Life of the Clergy.*

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“The pulpit may be the centre of overwhelming power and it may become the scene of tragic disaster. Now, brethren, if last Sunday as we had ascended the pulpit stairs, an angel had challenged us, ‘What is your aim? What do you expect to be the result of your sermon?’ what should we, what could we, have replied? Do our sermons save souls? If they do not, what are they worth?

“There is a dearth of conversions. Why? ‘The result of higher criticism,’ says one; ‘The growth of Ritualism,’ says another; while a third replies, ‘The social conditions of the people.’ Brethren, do not let us excuse ourselves. The dearth of conversions is owing to none of these things. The apostles had to meet these same things in another form, and worse than these things, but they got conversions. Wesley and Whitefield had a Church and a nation worse to deal with than we have, and yet they got conversions. Why do not we get conversions? How many conversions did you know about last year? If we cannot save drunkards, harlots

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and prostitutes, then, I say, there is something wrong with us, and the sooner we find out what it is, the better.

“The great need to-day is the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. The cross can never be fully seen until the light of the Holy Ghost is thrown upon it. The ambassador’s instructions are clear. He must be guided by the Holy Ghost. Are we so guided? What influence has He upon our lives? Are we men sanctified by the Holy Ghost? and moved by Him? The other day I heard of a clergyman who was not a great preacher, as the world calls preaching, but whose church was packed to the doors, and to whom God gave many souls, and a friend of his told the secret when he said, ‘We could always hear him saying softly as he mounted the pulpit, “I believe in the Holy Ghost, I believe in the Holy Ghost.”’

“What a responsibility, what a privilege, to be the ambassador of Christ, beseeching men, in Christ’s stead, to be reconciled to God, to have the one, the only message which can put the world right, stop all wars, cure all hearts, purify all lives and save for all

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eternity the souls of men. Oh! magnify such an office, but magnify it upon your knees.”¹

Some ministers fail because they have neglected personal Bible study. All of us must carefully study God's Word in order that our sermons may be properly prepared; but unless we have come to the place where we realize that, quite apart from others, we must study God's Word for our own spiritual development, we shall fail in our attempt to lead our people into a deeper Christian experience. A portion of each day given to Bible study and to meditation upon God's sure Word of promise will exercise a profound influence upon a minister's life. I have studied the lives of successful ministers with great care, and I cannot think of one who has ever risen to prominence, or become known as a leader of men along spiritual lines, that I did not find him to be a patient, painstaking, consecrated student of the Word of God, just for the sake of his own soul.

“The Bible is like a deep well of water,

¹ Dr. Watts, Ditchfield, Bishop of Chelmsford.

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from which men draw and drink and carry away as much as they wish day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, and when centuries have passed away the water is just as abundant, fresh, and pure as it was at the beginning. Here alone ministers must find texts for their sermons, and here they should find the substance of the message they bring to the people who come to hear them preach. Tens of thousands of ministers have been drawing on this fountain for hundreds of years and handing out refreshing draughts to thirsty souls Sunday after Sunday, and the supply is as abundant, clear and pure as it was at the beginning. Men are not tired of it. They find more to comfort, instruct, strengthen, and help them to-day than men ever found in the Bible before. The message is not stale, although it is very old.

“There is a message in this Book for every one. The Bible brings good tidings for the holiest saint and for the wickedest sinner. It speaks at the same time to the heart of the aged pilgrim and of the little child. Here is something for the afflicted,

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and something for the prosperous and happy. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth; come ye to the waters.' 'Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.'

"The more we read the Book, the more we find that which before had escaped our thought. Go again and again to the same passage, and you will find something there you never found before. If you should read it over a hundred times and study it every day for a year, you would not find out all there is in it. If the world should continue to exist for a million years, and intelligent men should study the Bible all that time, they would not exhaust its resources. When you shall have drained the ocean dry by dipping out a cupful each day, you may begin to think of the possibility of exhausting the resources of the Bible."¹

Many ministers fail because they neglect their prayer life. If there is one word more than another that I would speak to young ministers, it would be this—give a portion of each day to prayer. The testimony of men who have been honored of God

¹ Robinson: *The Personal Life of the Clergy.*

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in winning other men to Christ is always to the effect that they have found the most blessing to their own souls in their private devotions.

It is true that in these modern times the minister is an over-busy man, but it is also true that nothing can take the place of prayer if he would maintain his spiritual life at high tide.

“On all sides to-day we have the complaint that there is little power of prayer. How constantly are we being told by one and another, ‘We find it so hard to pray. We can spend time in visiting, in attending committees, in teaching, in managing institutions, with far more ease and satisfaction than we can spend it in prayer. Our prayers are so poor and distracted. When we have been on our knees only a few minutes it seems like an hour. We know that it ought not to be so, yet so it is and we do not seem able to help it.’

“Prayer has been aptly described as ‘the pulse of the soul.’ Where prayer is strong and frequent, there the soul is in health and prospers; when prayer is intermittent and

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feeble, the life flags, moral duties begin to wear a forbidding aspect, and even the practical activities, which at first seemed able to take care of themselves, are found to lack the inward support without which they too, sooner or later, must inevitably fail.

“No one will make much of prayer who does not make a business of it. We may not wait for times of special emotion, ready as we must be to use them when they come. There must be a definite rule. We must win ourselves to our high task by varying the details of it. Subjects must be assigned to the different days; lists of intercession must be kept, and answers must be noted as they are received. A book systematically used for this purpose becomes in the course of years a most unassailable witness to the efficacy of persevering prayer.”¹

Many ministers fail because they do not seem to realize that in the pulpit and out of it their appeals must be direct to men and women for their personal surrender to Jesus Christ.

At the beginning of the present world-war

¹ Robinson: *The Personal Life of the Clergy.*

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it is said that a clergyman appeared before Bishop William Taylor-Smith, Chaplain General of the British Army, and applied for a chaplaincy. Because he was a part of the great Church of which the Bishop was a leader, he felt reasonably sure of appointment.

It is said that Bishop Taylor-Smith looked intently at him for a moment, then taking his watch from his pocket said, "I am a dying soldier on the battlefield—I have three minutes to live—what have you to say to me?"

The clergyman was confused and said nothing.

Then the Bishop said, "I have two minutes to live—what can you tell me to help my soul?" and still the waiting clergyman made no response. Then said the Bishop solemnly, "I have only one minute to live!"

With that the clergyman reached for his Prayer-Book, but the Bishop is reported to have said, "No, not that at such a time as this," and because the clergyman had nothing to say to the dying soldier upon the

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battlefield, he did not receive his appointment.

When our preaching and personal work are without effect as we deal with men and women who do not know Jesus Christ, we fail in accomplishing what God intended we should accomplish. So it would seem to me that as we honestly wait before God, for some of us at least He might well put his finger upon these weak spots and say to us, "My child, here is the secret of your failure."

But there is another great thing for us to remember, and that is that if God points out the secret of failure, He will also indicate the way of recovery. I am quite sure that to some of us He would say, "If you would be true to your high calling, and not disobedient to the heavenly vision, then acknowledge that you are wrong, and ask for help; and having done so, just yield yourself with all that you are to the Spirit of God, remembering that what you yield He will accept, that what He accepts He will use, and what He uses He will make wonderful."

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We have a special obligation to the world, to the Church, and to God, and we ought to say, " 'For their sakes I consecrate myself.' There is the ultimate secret of power; the one sure way of doing good in our generation. We cannot anticipate or analyze the power of a pure and holy life; but there can be no doubt about its reality, and there seems no limit to its range. We can only know in part the laws and forces of the spiritual world, and it may be that every soul that is purified and given up to God and to His work releases or awakens energies of which we have no suspicion—energies viewless as the wind; but we can be sure of the result, and we may have glimpses sometimes of the process.

"Surely, there is no power in the world so unerring or so irrepressible as the power of personal holiness. All else at times goes wrong, blunders, loses proportion, falls disastrously short of its aim, grows stiff or one-sided or out of date—'whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away'—but

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nothing mars or misleads the influence that issues from a pure and humble and unselfish character." ¹

God will surely direct our lives if we are but willing to yield ourselves to Him. He will turn us away from weakness to power, away from failure to victory, away from self to Christ; and a life thus lived will be worth while for time and eternity.

¹ Robinson: *The Personal Life of the Clergy.*

V

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

"I sought for a man."—EZEKIEL 22: 30.

Whenever it becomes necessary to call a pastor to fill a vacant pulpit, the experience both for the church and the minister is replete with embarrassment. Certainly we have not yet found the best plan for securing a pastor for a vacant church. If a committee should decide to hear a man preach in his own pulpit, they might not find him at his best for various reasons. If a minister should be asked to candidate for a vacant pulpit, then it would be quite natural that he should be embarrassed, for in a sense he would lose his self-respect and certainly could not preach effectively under such conditions.

Not long ago I was passing through one of our great cities when a very well-known layman asked me if I could recommend to

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their church a suitable pastor. I assured him that I could. He then told me that they expected to be very careful in their selection of a pastor, and mentioned incidentally that their officers in joint session had drawn up "Plans and Specifications" regarding the pastor needed for their pulpit. This seemed to me a most excellent idea, and I sent for and received the "plans and specifications," which were as follows:

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

The Committee of the W— Presbyterian Church, elected by the congregation to secure a new pastor, have laid down the following general principles which should govern so far as possible in their selection, and have set forth herein points of general information as to the church as follows, to wit:

First. No pastor shall be considered who is not married.

Second. Preference shall be given to young men between thirty-five and forty years of age, and who have had an experience of eight or ten years as a pastor.

Third. The candidate should be a man of culture, and should have had a college training before graduating from the Theological Seminary.

Fourth. In the work to be done in the W— Presbyterian Church the candidate should preferably have filled pastorates in cities, for the reason that contact with the activities of city life would be very helpful in his work as pastor of our church.

It is further considered that it would be very helpful to the Committee to have all applicants furnish the information referred to above, and in addition thereto give a brief history of their previous pastoral connections with other churches, salaries received, and the reason, as far as possible, for change in pastoral charges; also what church and social activities in addition to the regular church

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services were maintained in former charges, and if applicant was active in problems of city community life.

It is further agreed by the Committee that they should endeavor to secure a man at a salary not exceeding \$2500 and the free use of the parsonage.

The field of the W— Church, we believe, is one which a good man could very quickly build up, and soon make it possible for the congregation to make substantial increases in the salary.

The W— Church is a very beautiful and well-appointed church, with one of the finest auditoriums in this city, and is equipped with a splendid pipe organ. It has a pastor's study in the building and well-equipped Sunday-school rooms in the basement.

It has only a small debt of \$1000, which could be easily wiped out.

It had a very large and active congregation in the past, and the Committee believes can be again brought up to its past numerical strength and activity under the leadership of the right pastor.

The usual church societies, such as Sunday-school with attendance of about 200 scholars, C. E. Society, Girls' Guild, Missionary Societies, sewing societies, etc., are fully organized and maintained.

COMMITTEE.

Delighted as I was to receive the "plans and specifications," I could not but find myself asking the following question: "I wonder what sort of man would write out his history as suggested? I wonder how embarrassed he would be if he should tell just what he had done in other churches, or in the community life where he was settled?" I also found myself wondering how a minister who had had a city experience of years would find it possible in these days of expensive living to maintain himself

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and his family so as to hold the respect of the people in the community on a salary of \$2500, and I could not help saying to myself, "Why should not this church, if they find the right man, double the salary as an act of faith?" This would be very cheering to the minister and would go far towards insuring his success. But I learn from these "plans and specifications" that the time has come with church officers when they expect to be exceedingly careful in their choice of a minister, and because this is true, I find an additional reason for the minister being stronger in every way, especially along spiritual lines.

As I study the "plans and specifications" of the W— Church I notice that not a word is written concerning the spirituality of the minister, and that there is nothing suggested as to his ability to persuade men to accept Christ. It is just barely possible that this is an oversight, but it may at the same time be an indication of the fact that in these days we are over-emphasizing the mechanical side of church life and under-estimating the spiritual.

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But why would it not be a good idea for the minister to draw up “plans and specifications” regarding the church which he would be willing to consider and send to the inquiring church officers the following statement:

I am quite willing to consider the W— Presbyterian Church if I may be assured that the church will give me sympathetic support, and if it will offer to me a more attractive and fruitful field than I now possess, and pay me an adequate salary which will enable me to maintain my family and at the same time retain my self-respect.

I will consider the W— Presbyterian Church if the church is willing to make sacrifices as great as I have been compelled to make in order to preach the Gospel for so many years.

I will consider the W— Presbyterian Church if the church is pledged to seek to win others to Christ without respect to their social condition.

I will consider the W— Presbyterian Church if the church stands pledged to support all the agencies of the denomination with which it is associated.

To sum it all up, I will gladly consider this church if it is a true church, and recognizes the fact that it is not to be the minister's field, but his force.

Why would it not also be a good idea for the minister to draw up “plans and specifications” regarding the church officers found in the church which is suggested to him as a possible pastorate? Why could he not say something like this?

I will consider the W— Presbyterian Church if the trustees are Christian men, and not simply chosen because they are men of wealth, without respect to church member-

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ship. I regard it as a very sacred commission to collect and disburse the funds of the church, and the men holding such an office should be as spiritually minded as if they were members of the Session.

I will consider the W—— Presbyterian Church if the deacons recognize the fact that in the beginning deacons were chosen to render such a service to the church as would enable the minister to give himself to prayer and the study of God's Word.

I will consider the W—— Presbyterian Church if the members of the Session promise me that they will support me in every way; praying for me and with me before I enter the pulpit that they may ask God's blessing upon me; and continuing in the spirit of prayer while I am preaching my sermon.

I will gladly consider the W—— Presbyterian Church if the church officers are willing to lay aside any prejudices they may have against certain forms of church work and just give me a fair chance to work out plans of my own, to which I have given much thought and prayer.

I will consider the W—— Presbyterian Church if the Sunday-school superintendent is concerned for the salvation of his Sunday-school scholars, and if he will promise me that he will give frequent opportunity to these scholars to accept Christ.

I will consider the W—— Presbyterian Church if the Sunday-school teachers will promise me that in season and out of season they will make every effort to lead their scholars to a confession of Christ.

It seems to me that it would be just as fair for the minister to draw up "plans and specifications" as for the church officers to do so.

This is a great day for preaching and a very great day for church work, and if the minister and the church members are spiritual, the work accomplished may be truly wonderful.

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I think it well to emphasize the importance of the spiritual side of our work and of our lives. The pressure is very strong to-day in other directions, and a minister must be on his guard, lest he be drawn aside from what is his real task.

“We feel that there is a gain in whatever brings us into living touch with the actual facts of ordinary experience. We see so perpetually the evils that are crying out for redress; and we have reason to know that we have gifts and qualifications which would enable us to deal effectively with them.

“The fact that we may thus easily be drawn into the current which is setting so strongly about us makes it the more necessary to speak plainly of the effects which have followed, and are not unlikely still to follow, in the life and ministry of those who with excellent intentions yield themselves unreservedly to the prevailing tendency.

“No one would think of denying that there are, as there have been in the past, remarkable examples to prove that it is possible for men endowed with exceptional vitality to throw themselves into activities

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of the most varied kinds, and at the same time preserve their sense of proportion, and with it the distinctive tone and character of the sacred office to which they were ordained. But then these are exceptional men. It is only too evident that, for the average man among us, such an attempt is more likely than not to lead to serious failure.

“Instances have occurred in which it is scarcely too much to say that the pastor has been merged and lost in the social leader and political reformer; or, more disastrous yet, in which he has descended to a level at which he has been regarded as little more than a successful provider of popular amusements. Even where things have stopped far short of this—and we freely admit that the extreme cases are rare—it has frequently happened that, in his anxiety to be forward in promoting schemes of practical benevolence, a minister has allowed himself to become immersed in affairs of the nature of the ‘serving of tables,’ to the consequent neglect of the directly spiritual parts of his pastoral work.”¹

¹ Robinson: *The Personal Life of the Clergy.*

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It is not suggested here that the minister be a recluse and feel no responsibility for conditions existing in the community where he lives; not at all.

“It is not meant to suggest that these activities are fruitless; very far from it. All that is deprecated is the supposition—should we not rather say the superstition?—that work is its own justification, and that simply to have got through so much of it is in itself a cause for congratulation. On the contrary, never did earnest workers need more than now to be brought face to face with the fact that it is possible to ‘labor in vain,’ to ‘spend their strength for naught,’ to toil day and night and yet take little or nothing.”

“Spurgeon, addressing young preachers, says, ‘How are they sent of God who bring no men to God? Prophets whose words are powerless, sowers whose seed all withers, fishers who take no fish, soldiers who give no wounds—are they God’s men? Surely it were better to be a mud-raker or a chimney-sweep than to stand in the ministry as an utterly barren tree.’”¹ Dr. Dale once said,

¹ *The Christian.*

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“Perish our learning if we cannot bring our countrymen to Christ!”

Dr. Jowett says, “The ultimate aim of all true preaching is the salvation of men. Salvation from what? Salvation from sin? Yes. Salvation from Hell? Yes. Salvation from infirmity? Yes. From moral stuntedness and spiritual immaturity? Yes. The strenuous purpose of all vital preaching is to lift men out of the bondage of sin and weakness, and to set them in the fine, spacious air and light of the free-born children of God.”

Dr. Parker once said, “The longer I live, and the farther I see into life, the more do I feel that the turning of men to Christ is the sublimest service possible to man.” Some one asked Dr. James Simpson what was the greatest discovery he had ever made, and the quiet, beautiful reply was, “That I have a Saviour.”

“In the cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o'er the wrecks of time;
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime.”

VI

SOME CHURCH OFFICERS

"Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord."—ISAIAH 52: 11.

This Scripture might properly refer to all who are called to positions of responsibility in the government of the Church, ministers and church officers alike, for both must be clean if God is to use them; but I am applying it especially to church officers, men who serve as elders, deacons, stewards, trustees and Sunday-school superintendents, discharging the duties of the pastor's council, his special cabinet, his bodyguard; the men who really make him or break him, the men upon whom he relies, and whose sympathy and support he must have if his ministry is to be fruitful. I can think of no men in the church who help or hinder the minister quite so much as the officers of the church, and ordinarily they do not realize their position of influence, nor do they seem to ap-

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preciate how small a service hinders the minister in his preaching, or helps him to do the work which has been committed to him.

My own experience with church officers has been so beautiful that I am writing this chapter as a tribute to the men who have given to my ministry a measure of success. It would be strange indeed if a few people in the average church, however large or small, would not entirely agree with the minister, and every sensible minister appreciates the fact that he may face this situation; and although he is in a measure hindered by the presence of such a spirit, yet he can push on in his work and do measurably well in the face of silent or active opposition from such a source. But no minister is at his best if he has in his official family men who do not see eye to eye with him, and who for some reason may not be in sympathy with what he is attempting to do.

There are certain reasons, I am quite sure, for the failure of the average minister to get along with his church officers. There is a lack of mutual understanding, for instance,

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which is sometimes due to the fact that the minister sees all too little of his church officers socially.

I heard an elder in a certain Presbyterian church say that their minister made it a rule to invite his Session twice each year to go away with him for an entire day. Ordinarily they visited a comfortable hotel in the country. They talked together about the interests of the church and how they could increase its influence; they enjoyed each other socially as well as spiritually; they prayed and sang together, and came back from the day's fellowship understanding each other far better, and each determined to help the other more faithfully.

Sometimes, also, failure is due to a lack of appreciation of what church officers can do to help, and the minister as a rule makes all too little of his officers. He does the work which he ought to put into their hands. "It is far better to set ten men at work," Mr. Moody used to say, "than to try to do the work of ten men"; and I have never known of a church officer who would not respond to the appeal of the minister when

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service was required, if approached in the right way.

The lack of frankness on the part of the minister in dealing with his church officers is another cause of failure. Ministers too often do not explain their methods to their counsellors. They do not tell them just why they are proposing such a method of work, nor do they explain in detail what they expect to be the result of the working of such a plan. The average layman in the church has respect for the minister who maintains his position with dignity, and speaks to his church officers with the same frankness that laymen use when they talk with their business associates.

I have a dear friend who was pastor of a suburban church near New York City. He is an evangelistic minister of the highest type and his preaching has always been along evangelistic lines. When he had just fairly entered upon his pastorate, one of his elders, a very distinguished man, came to him to say that he did not like his preaching, that it was really not adapted to such a church as theirs, and suggested to him that

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it might be wise for him to change his methods; telling him that, in his own opinion, his ministry would be far more acceptable to the people if he should do so.

The conversation was a long one, and the words of the church officer were exceedingly plain and easy to understand. When he had finished speaking my friend said to him, "Are you through?" and he said, "Yes."

"Very well," he said, "then I will tell you something. I graduated at a certain university and passed through the usual theological training. I had the privilege of a post-graduate course abroad, and I came into the ministry, as I believe, fairly equipped to do the work. I have tried to be a careful student, and I would like to tell you how I prepare my sermons. I ask God to give me a text to meet the needs of my people, and when He gives it to me I study it most carefully and prayerfully. I bring to bear upon it all that I have learned in the past. When my sermon is finished I pray over it; I ask God to help me preach it so that it may help my people. I go into the pulpit with that sermon and in that spirit, and I

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would like to tell you, sir, very frankly, that all the Presbyterian elders in the world could not make me change my method of preparation and my manner of preaching, unless I thought that God wanted me to do so."

The distinguished lawyer looked at him for a moment and then said, "They wouldn't want you to."

From that frank conversation a friendship began which was most beautiful. One of the most faithful attendants at all the services conducted by the pastor was this same church officer. One of the most devoted admirers my friend had was the elder who might have been easily alienated from the minister and the church, if he had been treated unwisely.

When the elder died my friend was by his side. Their fellowship had been unbroken. Their parting was pathetic. It would have been a great mistake for the minister to have lost his elder in their early acquaintanceship. Speaking in wisdom and kindness, he drew a true friend to him with hooks of steel.

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I would like to picture in this special message "some church officers I have known." There was one I shall never forget—Mr. John H. Converse, President of the Baldwin Locomotive Works in Philadelphia, in every way a prince. He was really one of the greatest men, not only in the business world, but in the church. When he became the Chairman of the Evangelistic Committee of the church, of which Committee I was Secretary, and the funds were needed for the prosecution of the work, his initial subscription, made very quietly, was \$25,000. As the years passed by his generosity was boundless. He contributed to denominational work and to general evangelistic work the world over, not only in this country, but abroad, in Australasia, Great Britain and elsewhere. He never said "no" to any appeal which I presented to him.

He used to be my guest in the summer at my home in Winona Lake, Indiana. One day I came suddenly upon him when he was talking to a minister; they did not know that I was near; I could not retreat without disturbing them, and so unintentionally I

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heard the conversation. The minister was telling Mr. Converse of his heavy debt which was really crushing him, and the great elder was saying, "I can help you bear this burden; that is one of the great privileges which I have in my life; and you have only to report to me what the debt is and I will gladly assist you." When the minister attempted to thank him Mr. Converse said, "Do not thank me, sir; it is just one of my joys. God has entrusted me with money for just such a purpose as this." Then they prayed together and the picture was beautiful.

The last time I saw Mr. Converse, just before his death, he told me he had never appreciated his wealth until he realized that he held it as a sacred trust, and I used to say for him to business men everywhere that life was only worth living when one appreciated the fact that he was a servant of the Master in the distribution of money and the using of time.

We cannot all have this great man's wealth, but we may all have his spirit; and when we have, the church is enriched by our

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presence and the minister cheered by our lives.

I had a church officer in the city of New York who was one of my very best friends. I used to go frequently to his private office to talk with him when I needed counsel. One day I was kept at least three-quarters of an hour waiting, then a little white card came down from the office door; the door was opened and I entered the private office.

I think my friend detected a spirit of impatience in the way I entered his room, for he said, "You told us the other day in one of your sermons that if we knew how to pray we could bear our burdens more easily, and business would be more of a delight to us, and I have proved that that is true. It is not so easy to be a banker in the city of New York and always be true to your Christian profession, and I am learning to pray." Then he added, "When you see me in my pew drop my head in my hands, always remember that I am praying for you, and sometimes when you are preaching, if you see me do this, do not forget that I am asking God to bless you as you preach."

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His eyes were full of tears and my tears answered his. I never saw him in his pew afterward that my heart did not go out to him, and thus he helped me to win others and to make my preaching work very easy. If every minister had church officers like this, he could preach with power. Even though his ability might be ordinary, his work would be effective in the extreme.

When I began my ministry in New York City I came from the Bethany Church in Philadelphia. My church officers had agreed that if I would come they would assist me in every way, and they specially promised that they would pray for me and with me; and they kept their word. Morning and evening and usually before the mid-week service they met for prayer. They would stand about me in a circle. One of them, as a rule, stood with his arm about my shoulder. He not infrequently prayed last; prayed that God would strengthen me and bless me and help me to win some one for Christ. Is it any wonder that there were results? Preaching in that church was a perfect delight, and it will be so for

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any man who has such assistance as this.

A band of church officers pledged to pray for their minister can multiply many times his ministry for good.

In the early days of my ministry I was pastor of the First Reformed Church in the city of Albany. I succeeded a most distinguished and conservative man in that pastorate. The attendance of the church when I began my work was by no means large, for a considerable time had elapsed between Dr. Clark's pastorate and my own, but I was not disturbed, for I was flattered by my position. Many of my people were exceedingly well-to-do financially, and my ideals of preaching were not so high as they should have been, but I was satisfied to have the smaller congregation and feel that they were people of unusual force.

One day Mr. Moody came to tell me that I was making a very great mistake, that my church had a strategic position and a commanding influence, and that I ought to fill it to overflowing. When I asked him how, he said, "If you cannot do it with your preaching, then do it with the singing," and

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suggested that I should use Gospel Hymns in my evening services. I assured Mr. Moody that this was not possible, that my people would not support such a movement, but he agreed to send me some hymns if I would have them sung.

He sent the hymns on to me, and I was distributing them through the pews when one of my best elders, Mr. George W. Carpenter, came into the church, saw what I was doing, examined the hymn sheet and told me that I could not sing the hymns, that they were not in keeping with the spirit of that church. I took the hymn-sheets out and wrote Mr. Moody that I knew the church people would not consent to the innovation. I received a letter from him in return which read something like this: "Dear Chapman:—You do not know how to get along with church officers. Slip those hymns in when they do not know it and sing them. D. L. Moody."

I was much more afraid of disturbing Mr. Moody than any church officer I had seen up to that time, so I put the hymn-sheets in, announced the song service, and the church

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was crowded. The first hymn was "Ring the Bells of Heaven." My church officer looked for it in the church hymn-book, and when he could not find it there he began to sing the song with another officer who stood by his side. When the service was over he came to ask me what sort of a hymn it was we had been singing, and when I told him that it was one of Mr. Moody's Gospel Hymns, he said it was beautiful, and he thought we might do well to sing such hymns occasionally in the morning service of the church. Turning to the church officers who were standing near him, he said, "I move that so long as this man is in our church we give him all liberty to do everything he wishes." Then he was so conservative that he must put in one qualifying clause when he said, "within the bounds of reason," and concluded with—"in order that the people of this city may know that this church is not without interest in them."

My ministry in Albany was changed by the spirit of Mr. Carpenter and those who were church officers with him. I look back on the happy days I spent in that church

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with peculiar delight. They were among the very best in all my ministerial life. In this story I have no criticism at all for the man who prefers the old standard church hymns to Gospel music; so do I as a rule, but I speak of my friend because he rendered me a great service. He gave me my chance in that distinguished church. If church officers would just say to their ministers, "We do not know that we approve exactly of what you are doing, but we approve of you, so let us try your plan out, and if it will work, let us adopt it," they would greatly hearten the minister. With such a spirit he has great freedom; without it he is handicapped in the extreme, and so I say again: a church officer can easily make or break his pastor.

I succeeded Dr. Arthur T. Pierson in the Bethany Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. It has always been a very remarkable church. It stands to-day as the outgrowth of the Bethany Sunday-school, and the Sunday-school is a monument to the indefatigable and consecrated labors of the Honorable John Wanamaker. The Sunday-school has

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had an attendance of thousands, and the church for years has had a membership of at least four thousand.

Shortly after the beginning of my pastorate, Mr. Wanamaker, returning from London, told me that he had found the secret of Spurgeon's power, and when I asked him what it was, he said that Mr. Spurgeon's church officers prayed with him, came into the church with him, sat near him and cheered him on as he stood pleading with the people. When I suggested that the Bethany officers should do this for me, they quite readily agreed to do so. Sometimes as many as twenty-four of them would be sitting on the platform with me as I preached. This gave me very little space in which to move, but I got so I would draw near one of my elders while I was preaching and hear him say, "Amen," and then near another and hear him whisper, "God bless you," but I used to stand as a rule quite near Mr. Wanamaker. We had a rail around the pulpit platform, and just to get nearer the people I used to lean on that rail at Mr. Wanamaker's side and I would hear

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him say, commenting upon my preaching, "That is splendid! God bless you"; and sometimes he would reach out and rub his hand up and down my arm in an affectionate manner which I very greatly appreciated. What a beautiful thing for a church officer to do!

I was holding a conference one time with some Scotch ministers in Glasgow when I said to them, "I had an elder in America who used to rub my arm up and down like this" (showing them how Mr. Wanamaker did it), and one of the ministers said to me in broad Scotch—which I have never been able to imitate—"It is all right when your elder rubs you that way, but what are you going to do when he rubs you the wrong way?"

I did not know then what to say in reply, but now I would say that if I had an officer like that, I would talk with him kindly, or I would try to do something for him. I would seek in some way to win him. I am quite sure of this, that the most ordinary preacher in the world could be an interesting preacher and a helpful preacher—indeed, I think he

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could become a powerful preacher—if he were surrounded with men who would pray with him, and pray for him, as the elders of the Bethany Church prayed for me.

The fellowship and affection which may bind the minister and his church officers together is to me exceedingly beautiful.

My friend whose elder told him that his ministry was not satisfactory, and suggested that he change his methods, had another elder in the same Session, Mr. Walter M. Smith of sacred memory, who went almost every day to his business in New York. He was great in his treatment of the minister and in his devotion to the church. Not infrequently on his way to the train he would stop at the minister's house, and opening the door would say, "Good morning," filling the house with fragrance; and sometimes the minister would see Mr. Smith drive up when he could only stop and wait long enough just to wave a "Good morning," and perhaps to say, "I will be home at four o'clock this afternoon and will see you then; good-by."

One day the elder was dying, and his pastor, Dr. Ford C. Ottman, was away in

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Maine. They telegraphed him to come home. He came quickly and found Mr. Smith unconscious. He sat near him for some time, but consciousness did not return. Then he took his hand and held it. Soon by a pressure of the fingers of the dying man Dr. Ottman knew that he was coming back to talk with him. Mr. Smith's eyes opened, and gazing up into his minister's face with a heavenly smile, he said in a whisper, "Jesus was never so precious as now. Good-by." The minister bent over and kissed him, and the great elder was gone.

I do not know of anything more beautiful than the affection which binds together ministers and church officers when they are both true, when each longs to help the other, when each is fair with the other.

It is a great thing to be a minister of the Gospel, but to be an officer in the church, ever loyal to Christ and striving to make the minister's work easier and his burdens lighter, is a position which one might well covet.

VII

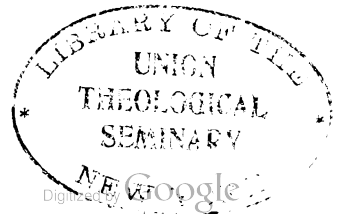
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"And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost."—JOHN 20: 22.

Only a word of explanation is needed concerning this text of Scripture. We must understand that it has to do with the first day of the resurrection of our Lord. We must also keep in mind the fact that His disciples have gathered in an upper room in the city of Jerusalem and are speaking about Him, when suddenly, the door being shut, He stands in the midst of them, His first words being, "Peace be unto you; and when He had said this He breathed on them and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

This is a subject which is easy of outline, and there are three divisions which we would do well to keep in mind.

- First : What a day;
- Second: What a company;
- Third : What a message.



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I am greatly interested in this text of Scripture because it gives to me a greater conception of the person and work of the Holy Ghost. I have always thought of Him as ushering in His dispensation on the day of Pentecost, and from that day on carrying forward His special work, and of course this is true, for He did do this; but here, in this upper room before Pentecost, He is present. Jesus breathes upon His disciples; they are filled with the Holy Ghost; they go forth wonderfully transformed to magnify Him; and thus Pentecost is possible.

Peter's explanation of Pentecost is clearly given in Acts, second chapter and thirty-third verse: "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."

There is a sense in which Pentecost can never be repeated. It is a date in church history. It is an event clearly marked in the progress of the Kingdom. But there is also a sense in which Pentecost is always re-

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peated when Christ is honored. This explains the barrenness of the ministry of some men. They are well equipped intellectually; they are socially distinguished; they are geniuses of the highest order; and yet their pews are empty and their efforts are barren, and all because consciously or unconsciously Christ is not honored in their preaching.

It also accounts for the marvelous success of others.

Wesley was filled with the Spirit of God, and preached with a passion almost indescribable.

They pointed out to me in Glasgow the spot where Whitefield stood when, from five o'clock in the morning until late in the afternoon, he preached to the thousands. The multitudes were moved and hundreds of people were converted. He was filled with the Holy Ghost.

Charles G. Finney preached, and in the midst of his sermon men cried out, "What must I do to be saved?" He was filled with the Holy Ghost.

Moody preached with an irresistible

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power. We began our meetings in Edinburgh forty years to the day after he had closed his services, and the converts of his meetings were the workers in ours. He was filled with the Holy Ghost.

Whenever Christ is honored, the Spirit of God is always poured out. If this were not true, God would violate His promise, and He cannot do that.

I am also interested in this incident, because it is in the Gospel of St. John. The whole Bible is true. I am sure that this statement is correct. I accept it from Genesis to Revelation, and I find no reason why I should in these modern times turn from it; but I will not be misunderstood if I say that St. John's Gospel has always seemed to me to be especially true. It is a part of my life. In it my Master walks and talks with men. He lives with His disciples and loves them tenderly. When Jesus stood in the midst of His disciples, as indicated in the text, they seemed afraid, and we read: "But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a

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spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.”¹

Later when He came to remove the doubt of Thomas, who was not with the original company when He appeared in the upper room, we read: “And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.”²

And just as Jesus said to them, “Handle me, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have,” and as He said to Thomas, “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side,” thereby giving evidence

¹ Luke 24: 37-39.

² John 20: 26, 27.

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that He was real and could be handled, so is this Gospel according to St. John to me. I love it dearly.

WHAT A DAY

There has been no day like this in all the world's history. This is the day of His resurrection. Without this day of days, hope would be in vain.

Have you ever noticed the difference between a spiritual gathering where Christ is honored, and the occasion of a great lecture, however famed the lecturer might be? The one is interesting and may be instructive. The other is vibrant with a spiritual atmosphere and enlarges one's vision, until Christ is really near.

Without this day, preaching is vain. The preacher is a mere lecturer or a reader; but with Jesus and the resurrection as His theme, preaching is powerful, lives are changed by means of it, and souls are saved.

Without this day of days, "ye are yet in your sins." There is no message for the lost except that which is based on the resurrection; but with this as a foundation, there is

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hope for the hopeless, and none need ever despair.

What a wonderful day! It began with the opening of the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea and ended with His standing in the midst of them, with side bared and hands outstretched, and He so near that they could feel His breath upon their cheeks.

It is well to keep in mind the order of His appearances on that great day. He was seen first by Mary Magdalene. "But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain."¹

When she had turned herself back she saw Jesus, but she supposed that He was the gardener, and she said unto Him, "Tell me where thou hast laid Him," and we read: "Jesus saith unto her, Mary! She turned herself, and saith unto Him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master."²

When the women were returning from the

¹ John 20: 11, 12.

² John 20: 16.

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tomb He appeared once again, and we read the account of this meeting: "And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him."¹

He appeared to Peter, probably in the afternoon. We do not know just where the meeting took place. Their hands clasped the same as of old, except that His hands had been pierced by the nails since they separated, and I know Peter well enough to believe that he began to confess his failure; and if he did, I think Jesus must have wiped away his tears with His own hand and led him gently back into fellowship.

When the disciples were on their way to Emmaus, just as the shadows were lengthening and the night was coming on, He walked with them, and we read: "But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them. And it

¹ Matthew 28: 8, 9.

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came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight.”¹

So when all these had met in the upper room they must have been talking about Him—surely they were greatly excited—when suddenly He was in the midst of them. One of the best ways to secure His presence is always to talk about Him; one of the best ways to have Him in a church is to preach about Him.

What a busy day it was for Him; from morning till night He was walking and talking, and what a rebuke He is to us in our idleness. I have always thought that this first day of the resurrection was a pattern day, and so given to us in order that we might know how we should live, inasmuch as we are “risen with Him.”

WHAT A COMPANY

Naturally we ask ourselves the question, “Who was there in that upper room?” The

¹ Luke 24: 29-31.

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New Testament tells us: "Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen."¹ I am told that this does not simply mean the eleven, but may have been descriptive of an indefinite number, and perhaps more than the eleven, but of this I am sure—one person whose face we have seen with them before was not present, and that one was Judas Iscariot. He had sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, and he was absent; and to this day we cannot sell Jesus for money, or fame, or pleasure, or sin, and still expect to have Him with us, or be in fellowship with those who love Him.

In the Burgoyne monument at Schuylerville, N. Y., there is a striking illustration of this. One of my pastorates was in that village and I was taken one day to see the monument. As you climb the stairway within, in hammered metal on the sides of the monument you read the story of the struggle and surrender, but as you step outside the monu-

¹ Mark 16: 14.

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ment you will notice that in three niches on the sides of the monument are statues of generals, while in the fourth niche no general is found. It occurred to me that the monument was not completed, but my friend whose guest I was, said to me, "Yes, indeed, it is completed. That is the niche which might have been filled by Benedict Arnold; but he was a traitor and the niche is vacant." Judas Iscariot, also, was not of the company; his niche was not filled.

There is another word regarding this company. "And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures? And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them."¹

Evidently it was a considerable company of friends and followers that had gathered in that upper room. Perhaps Joseph of Arimathea was there, and if so, I think I hear him saying, "I am so glad I gave Him the use of my tomb. For three days He had

¹ Luke 24: 32, 33.

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perfect rest. My tomb shall never again be the same, because Jesus has rested in it."

Perhaps Nicodemus was there, and if so, I can hear him say, "I am so glad that I helped to take Him from the cross"; and perhaps he may have told how swollen was His body and how awful His wounds.

Perhaps Simon, the Cyrenian, was there, and if he was, I think I hear him saying, "I am so glad that I helped Him bear His cross; I wish I had taken all its weight."

Some day we shall see Him, and how glad we shall be if we have just been faithful; not always successful, but just faithful.

What a day it will be when He speaks to us, saying, "Well done, well done," because He will see not only what we have done, but what we wanted to do, and reward us for that. But what if we have failed? God pity us if we stand at that day with hands empty and lives unfruitful!

WHAT A MESSAGE

It is necessary for one to read carefully John 20:19-22 to have the sweep of this message. Note carefully His words.

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First: "Peace be unto you." I never so fully realized as recently that this was also a part of His last message which He was giving to His disciples just before He went to the cross, when He said: "Peace I leave with you,"¹ and now that He is passed beyond the cross and come forth from the tomb, His message is still the same, "Peace be unto you." This is His message to me; because I have accepted Him, I have the peace of pardon, the peace of sins forgiven, the peace of His gracious presence, the peace of His never-failing promises.

Second: "He showed them His hands and His side." What a wonderful vision! A British clergyman, a guest in my home, told me of a titled lady across the sea who always went about her home with hands covered. One day her daughter entered her room unexpectedly and found her hands uncovered. They were so scarred and marred that the girl sprang back in alarm, and the mother said: "My dear, it is time I told you about those hands. You were a baby and the house was on fire, and I found that you

¹ John 14: 27.

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had not been taken out of danger, and I fought my way through the flames and found you, carried you to the window and dropped you into arms upreaching to receive you; when I turned to escape, escape was impossible because a wall of flame was in front of me. So I climbed out of the window and attempted to climb down the trellis work on the side of the house, and with my hands burning I missed my hold and slipped, and I tore my hands in the fall, but I tore them for you." And my friend said the daughter took her mother's hands in hers and covered them with her kisses, saying over and over, "They are beautiful hands!" and so I say about His hands which were nail-pierced. They tossed the worlds into space; they set the stars in position in the skies; they parted the sea for Israel; they wrote a woman's forgiveness in the sands; they blessed little babes; they touched the eyes of the blind; they are beautiful hands. They brushed away my tears when I was in sorrow; they held my heart and kept it from breaking; they steadied my feet and kept me from falling; they were nailed to the cross for me.

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Beautiful Hands! It is in memory of what they have done for me that I preach.

Third: He said, "As the father hath sent me, even so send I you." It is a wonderful thing to be sent of God. This gives dignity to preaching; this gives power to one's testimony. After He had said this, He completed their equipment by the gift of the Holy Spirit. This was necessary; for if we preach in our own strength, failure will be inevitable.

Fourth: "He breathed on them." How near He was! And just as some of us have the memory of a mother's breath upon our cheeks as she held us in her arms, in the same way He is so near at times that we can feel His breath upon our faces. The Christian life is just breathing in what He breathes out, and growth in grace is just keeping on breathing in, for if we should ever breathe out more than we breathe in, defeat is sure.

Fifth: He said to His disciples, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." This is the secret of power. From this room St. Peter went forth a preacher and writer, a wonderful

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man. So did the others receive power. What if a church had this marvelous power; how the world could be shaken, what victories could be won!

For the first time the number of members of religious bodies in the United States has crossed the 40,000,000 mark, according to 1916 statistics compiled by Dr. H. K. Carroll and recorded in "The Year Book of the Federal Council of Churches." Think of 40,000,000 people on fire; 20,000,000 people on fire; 10,000,000 people on fire; all ministers on fire; all who read this message on fire; no task would be too difficult. The call for service is great to-day. I wonder if we have not lost the heroic element in our serving.

Have you read the story of the British approach to Bagdad? The last battle before Bagdad is likely to become historic mainly on account of the fighting at the crossing of the Diala, about eleven miles from Bagdad. It was necessary to cross opposite the village of Diala, where the stream is about one hundred and twenty yards wide, in the face of an enemy sheltered behind thick houses, walls and gardens, armed with machine guns

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and rifles. There were two days of desperate fighting before the crossing was effected.

The attack on the night of March 7, 1917, was checked, but the quality of courage shown has never been surpassed in war. Immediately the first pontoon was lowered over the ramp, the whole launching party was shot down in a few seconds. It was bright moonlight and the Turks had concentrated their machine guns in the houses on the opposite bank. A second pontoon reached the middle of the stream when a terrific fusillade was opened on it. The crew of five rowers and ten riflemen were killed and the boat floated down stream. A third boat got nearly across the river, but was bombed and sunk; all the crew were killed. But there was no holding back. The orders still held to secure the passage. Crew after crew pushed off to an obvious and certain death. The second and third groups of pontoon crews were exterminated in the same way, and their pontoons drifted out into the Tigris to float past the British camp in the daylight with the freight of dead. The pontoon parties were

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volunteers, so chosen that all battalions of the brigade should share the honors of the night. The loss of all the available pontoons finally stopped the efforts to cross the river. On the second night the attempt was resumed with equal gallantry, and for almost three days went on. On the morning of the 10th, British troops upstream had begun to turn the Turkish flank, and a general retirement began. By 9:30 o'clock in the morning the whole brigade had crossed and the fate of Bagdad was sealed.

This is an illustration for us all. Would that we had the same courage for Christ and the same spirit of sacrifice! There have been some notable illustrations along this line.

There was John Wesley. When he was in this country in Georgia his name was a by-word and a hissing. He could not move the country in which he lived, but he returned to England and shook three kingdoms. He says it was just because he took God at His word and accepted Him in all His fullness.

Mr. and Mrs. Henry F. Durant were the

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founders of Wellesley College. Mr. Durant had legal aspirations and success, until before the Supreme Court of the United States he was recognized as the leader of the New England Bar. Then he had a great financial ambition which led him to wrestle with small men, and then with bigger men, and finally with the biggest men in the financial life of his day. Then came the complete renunciation of his professional aspiration. Never again pleading a case in court, he became an evangelist, pleading instead with young and old to follow the meek and lowly Galilean. At the same time he lost his ambition for wealth, and devoted his financial talent to the best investment of it in providing opportunities for young women to secure a Christian education.

When asked to explain this change in his life he said, "I have had an experience."

There are missionary stories without number to illustrate this truth. One came to me the other day. It was the story of Dr. Arthur Jackson, who gave up his bright young life in the bubonic plague at Mukden. "A medical missionary, he volun-

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teered at once for the post of extreme danger. He was thoughtful for others. 'Keep back! Keep back! Don't take any risks!' he cried to his assistants. But for himself he had no concern. 'Not many fellows get such a chance as this,' he said, on his last working day. Next morning he was feeling ill; how it happened nobody can tell. He had been inoculated against plague, was closely masked, and in other ways protected against infection; but it found entrance to his lungs somehow. In the evening the bloody spume appeared—a fatal sign. He was alone at the moment, but his unselfish courage did not fail. As long as consciousness lasted his concern was for the safety of his attendants. In twenty-four hours he was gone. His death produced a great sensation. The Chinese newspapers dwelt wonderingly on his heroic self-sacrifice. The Viceroy sent ten thousand dollars to his mother 'for the use of his family.' She at once gave it to the Medical College at Mukden, that a part of the building might form a memorial to her son. The Viceroy was deeply moved on hearing this. 'What a

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mother! What a son!' he exclaimed, and immediately added a personal gift of four thousand dollars to make the memorial more worthy."

There is a call to service to-day such as has never been heard before in all the world's history. In loyalty to Him and in love for Him we ought to answer this call.

Shall we do so?

When God has complete control of a life He can use it for His glory. It is not so much a question as to who you are or what you have been. It is rather a question as to whether you have in sincere and honest repentance and by faith accepted Christ as a Saviour, and then completely surrendered to Him, that He might fill your life with blessing for yourself and for others.

VIII

WONDERFUL GRACE

**"She hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."—
ISAIAH 40 : 2.**

If this text is put in contrast with numerous New Testament narratives, it seems to give us an altogether wrong conception of God, for I remember that Jesus said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," and therefore, if properly understood, the God of the Old Testament is the same in spirit as Jesus in the New Testament. And when I see Jesus forgiving the woman who had sinned so grievously, and when I watch Him as He writes in the sands at His feet the forgiveness of her who had been taken in her sin, telling her to go and sin no more, in contrast with those two stories this Old Testament text certainly demands an explanation.

The explanation is my message, and I know of no better subject to give to this

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message than "Wonderful Grace," for I have found God's grace in the New Testament and His love in the Old Testament to be very much the same.

This text is a part of the comforting message which God sent to His people while they were still in darkness and almost in despair. It is associated with their deliverance from captivity, and at once teaches to me the lesson that God did not permit His people in the Old Testament to suffer beyond a certain point, nor does He permit us to-day to be tempted beyond that we are able to bear.

The story of the captivity of the children of Israel is thrilling, and at the same time pathetic in the extreme. When we speak of their captivity we usually think of the seventy years between the first invasion of Judæa by Nebuchadnezzar and the permission for their return to the city they left which was given to them by Cyrus. This bit of history is found between the years 605 and 536 B. C. Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, began his attacks on God's people and his depredations upon the city so dear to them. At first he carried away only a few

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prisoners, but among them we find Daniel and his companions.

In B. C. 598 he came again and took away ten thousand people. The seventy years' captivity really began in the year 588 B. C., when for the fourth time Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judæa. He took Jerusalem after a siege of eighteen months, and the King Zedekiah and his people were transported to Babylon. The distance between Jerusalem and Babylon, the scene of their captivity, is about seven hundred miles. It was a remarkable procession which moved from one city to another. Families were not separated but marched together. Many of the people driven into captivity walked in fetters, and the picture of this strange company of people moving from Jerusalem to Babylon is one of the most interesting in history.

We must keep in mind the experiences from which they came. The picture of the city of Jerusalem at this time is distressing indeed; for many months the siege had been waged, and as a result of this siege desolation was complete.

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Upon the streets of the city were to be seen suffering children, stricken princes, groups of men with sullen faces, heaps of the slain, mothers actually feeding on the bodies of their infants whom their breasts could not keep alive. Cries of agony were heard everywhere, and forth from such despair they moved towards captivity of another sort.

The picture is however, almost, if not quite, equalled by the rush out from Siberia of the prisoners who for so many years had been held there by the autocratic government of Russia. With the overthrow of the Czar 100,000 dead men and women rose from their tombs of imprisonment so fast that the blacksmiths were too few and too slow to break off their shackles. A picture is given of 60,000 men jingling their leg and arm chains to celebrate their deliverance. Fifty thousand soldiers were driven westward as fast as possible before the snow and the ice could melt and the roads become impassable, and the great throngs of the once hopeless formed such a pageant as the world has never seen, except we have in mind the

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moving into captivity of God's ancient people.

It is stated that the Siberian liberation has only begun; that there are thousands more to move southward. The difference between these two throngs of people, however, is this: God's people, whose story is found in the Old Testament, are moving towards captivity. The Siberian people, with the abdication of the Czar, are moving towards freedom.

In their captivity the people of Israel suffered year after year. Their consciences must have troubled them, because they knew that their captivity was due to their sin; yet they were not without hope, because while many of them had forgotten God in the olden days, yet they still had a memory of His dealings with them, and they knew that sooner or later their sufferings must end.

There was a certain amount of freedom given to them in captivity; some of them rose to positions of freedom given to them in captivity; some of them rose to positions of power and influence; others became extremely wealthy. But they were a disor-

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ganized and distracted people, and of themselves could do nothing. Man's extremity, however, is God's opportunity, and it is always true that the darkest night is just before the dawn.

It was upon the ears of such a people that the word of God, like a chorus, broke in, and these words recorded in Isaiah 40:1, 2—“Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins”—remind one of nothing so much as the angels' song which aroused the sleeping shepherds just outside of Bethlehem:

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in

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the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." ¹

When we come to the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, in our study of this prophecy, there is a most significant break, and there is indeed a remarkable change in the spirit of the prophecy. That is why it has been suggested that there are two Isaiahs, but this does not follow of necessity. The change, to my mind, is not at all remarkable, for in the first thirty-nine chapters of the prophecy, Isaiah is writing of the sins and captivities of the people, and of course his message is pitched in a minor key; but beginning with the fortieth chapter he is telling the story of their deliverance. Therefore he is exultant and joyous as he speaks of their redemption.

This second verse of the fortieth chapter of the prophecy, which reads as follows: "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins," is most wonderful.

Sir Robertson Nichol has said concerning

¹ Luke 2: 8-11.

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it, "The very grammar of this verse is eloquent with grace," and he says that the verse should literally be translated thus: "Accomplished is her warfare, absolved is her guilt, expiated her sin"—and at least this is the meaning of the verse. It is to be noted that the warfare is not mentioned first, neither is the guilt, nor the sins, but God in His grace is speaking first of the accomplishment of the warfare, the absolving of the guilt, and the expiation of the sins. This is wonderful grace indeed.

With this thought in mind let us go back to the text—"She hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." Does this mean "double punishment" inflicted for wrong-doing? That could hardly be in accordance with God's nature. Certainly it is not in line with His dealings with wandering men whose stories run from Genesis to Revelation, and so I say again the explanation of this text of Scripture is my message.

DOUBLE PENALTY

I am wondering if this text may not mean that when one sins there is always a double

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penalty. That is, we do not live to ourselves alone, and alas, it is true that we do not sin to ourselves alone, and the innocent always suffer with the guilty.

The other day there came to me a paper from the far-away land of Australia in which the following striking and awful sentences are found: Fully twenty-five per cent. of the sick children in Melbourne are touched by disease because their parents have sinned. Every tenth child in Australia, it is said, carries in its blood the poison of its parents' vice. What fact more terrible can be imagined!

This is proved not only in the Word of God, but in everyday life.

There is the story of David and Absalom. David sinned against the wife of Uriah, but his sin reached farther than that. It is true that he hurt Uriah and injured his wife, but he injured himself as well, for he was a king, and he sinned against his position as a king; and not only was he affected by his transgression, but his own household was affected. And when we see him staggering down from between the gates, crying, "O my son Absa-

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lom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" I feel like saying, "David, it would have been better for you if you had lived for Absalom, and if you had been brought to understand that everything that was wrong in your life would react against his life, and would make it more difficult for him to live as he ought to live."

When a boy's father goes wrong we can quite understand how the son would go astray; and when the Jews pass Absalom's tomb to-day and hurl stones against it in evidence of their contempt for him, Absalom is reaping a harvest of his own sowing, but he is also reaping the harvest forced upon him by his father; and his rebellion against his father is in part the result of his father's weakness, and his hanging by the hair of his head from the boughs of the tree, with the darts shot through his heart, is just what we might expect from a boy whose father had been faithless to his position. The pity of it is that we do not need to sin many times to start a wave of evil influence which may ruin and wreck the lives of children yet unborn.

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It is also made exceedingly plain to us as we read the newspapers and keep our eyes open and look about us that there is this double penalty, the innocent suffering with the guilty.

In one of the meetings where testimonies were being given a woman, white-haired, suddenly rose and said:

“I was married to a drunkard. Look at me! I want to speak to the young women still unmarried.” All turned around and looked at her. She was a pale woman with dark, sad eyes. Her white hair was combed back from her forehead, and there was something pathetic about her. “When I married a drunkard, I reached the depth of misery. I was young and happy. I married him because I loved him, and because he said he loved me. He was a drunkard, and I knew it, but I did not understand it. To love and marry a drunkard is the crown of misery. I have gone through the deep waters, and I know what I am talking about. Do you wonder that my hair is white? It became white in one night. I am not yet forty years old, but seventy years’ snows rest

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on my head, and I cannot say how many years of sorrow.

“My husband was a salesman. His business took him away from his home quite often, and when he came home he was always intoxicated. He gradually gave way to the temptation, and after a little while he was seldom sober. I had two lovely girls and one boy. One night my husband had been drinking much, and I had not seen him for two days. I sat by the bedside of my sick boy. In the next room my two girls were sleeping, and next to this room was also a room. I heard my husband come in. I cannot say why, but an indescribable fear crept over me, and I was not sure that my daughters’ lives were not in danger. I ran to their door. It was locked. I rapped at the door, but received no answer. With an over-natural strength I threw myself against the door, and it finally gave way and I was in the children’s presence. Oh, what a sight I saw! My husband stood beside the bed with a lunatic’s gleam in his eyes and a knife in his hands. ‘Take them away!’ he screamed, ‘take them away! They crawl all over me;

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take them away, I say!' and he swung the knife high in the air. Without seeing the danger I was in, I ran over to the bed, and my heart seemed to stop beating suddenly. There lay my girls killed by their own father. In a second I could not utter a sound; I was dumb in my sorrow. Then he suddenly screamed, and the servants came running. When my husband saw them coming he quickly drew the knife over his own throat, and I fainted. I was carried unconscious from the room. The next day my hair was white and my mind so confused that I did not know any one.

“Two years ago I received again my mind, and I then started to take good care of my boy. But the father's sin was upon the boy; he also became a drunkard, and six months ago I put my eighteen-year-old boy in a drunkard's grave. When I, his mother, stood there and saw the earth put on his grave, I said, 'I feel that I would rather see him there than that he should live a drunkard.' I went back to my home, a childless woman upon whom God's hand had rested heavily.”

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But, true as may be the statement that the innocent pay the penalty with the guilty, yet I am quite sure that this is not the meaning of the text.

DOUBLE SUFFERING

It is also true that we do not suffer alone in this world. The guilty, of course, suffer. When they walk in the way of the transgressors, conscience condemns them and remorse overwhelms them.

In an Ohio city a man came to me insisting that he must have a private interview. His face was deathly white, and when alone with me he said, "I am a forger. I have been able to cover my sin for years, and I thought I was going to escape judgment; but I am being found out, and every day I am expecting to be arrested. When the doorbell of my house rings I am in torture, for I say to myself, 'Is this an officer?' As I walk the streets of the city I am afraid to look men in the face, lest a detective should be searching for me, and, sir, it is true that I am literally in hell and do not know how to escape."

While it is true that the guilty suffer, yet

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others entirely innocent suffer with them. A man becomes a drunkard, and his wife's heart is broken. A boy sins, and his parents are crushed. A girl goes astray, and the shadow falling across the household is blacker than midnight.

There is the story of the Syro-Phœnician woman who came into the presence of Jesus, saying, "My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil," but when she had been in His presence for a little while she said, "Lord, help me," for in her sorrow she needed the touch of the divine nature quite as much as her demon-possessed child. This is the pathos of life; this is the tragedy of sin. We do not suffer alone; others suffer with us.

We have no right to make them suffer, and yet true as this is, I am persuaded that this is not the meaning of this text.

WHAT THEN ?

It was a rule under the law in the olden times that for all manner of trespass, a man condemned by the Jews should pay double.

"For all manner of trespass, whether

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it be for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, or for any manner of lost thing, which another challengeth to be his, the cause of both parties shall come before the judges; and whom the judges shall condemn, he shall pay double unto his neighbor.”¹

But this verse in Exodus is not to be put over against my text in Isaiah, which reads, “She hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.”

Some one has said that in this text God is considering the sufferings of the sinner, and if this be true, how full of pity God is to take into account the suffering sinners have brought upon themselves, and how wonderful it is that He would reckon these sufferings as being double in force and power for the sins committed. And yet if that were true, the suffering of the sinner cannot atone for sin.

I remember an old-fashioned hymn they used to sing when I was a boy:

Working will not save me.
Purest deeds that I can do,

¹ Exodus 22: 9.

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Honest thoughts and feelings, too,
Cannot form my soul anew.
Working will not save me.

Weeping will not save me.
Though my face were bathed in tears,
That could not allay my fears,
Could not wash the sins of years.
Weeping will not save me.

But there is a way of escape, and the way of escape is indicated in this Old Testament text: "She hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

Some years ago I was holding a meeting in the city of Denver, and Rev. Dr. Bailey, pastor of the Congregational church, an Arabic scholar of note, came to me one day to say, "Here's a beautiful subject for you," and this text of mine was written on a piece of paper, and the explanation was given which my friend considered in harmony with the context, and certainly with the plan and purpose of God:

When we read the expression, "She hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins," we are reminded of the old custom which prevailed in the days of God's an-

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cient people of providing for an obligation. It was done in this way: A piece of parchment was taken, across this piece of parchment the obligation was written, and the debtor signed his name. Then the parchment was folded and it was indented in the center, it was torn at the place of indenture, and half of the parchment was taken by the debtor and half by the creditor. When the obligation was met, then the debtor received from the creditor the second piece of parchment, and he had his double, and it was the rule to take the double parchment and nail it to the door so that all passing by might see that the debt had been paid and the obligation removed.

It seems to me that this interpretation must be permitted, because I have read that the expression which immediately precedes the text, "her iniquity is pardoned," really means, "her iniquity is paid off," just as a debt is cancelled.

It is a very striking thing to me that in the New Testament text a Scripture may be found which carries this same teaching from the Old Testament to the New. It

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is in Colossians 2:14, and reads as follows: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross." Is this not a striking picture?

Think of it! The handwriting that was against us blotted out, the charges on the book of God met, things which might face us at the judgment day completely erased! for to be blotted out is a chemical expression, and thus I am taught that even the marks of sin may be removed by divine forgiveness. It is a mathematical expression, and as the payment of a sum of money provides for a debt, so by His marvelous atonement my sins are put away forever. It is a judicial term, and because one is in the presence of God who has met all the claims of the law, I am justified freely and forever, and stand acquitted before God.

But the text is even more remarkable than this. I am told that the handwriting that was against us has been taken out of the way and nailed to His cross. If it is out of the way, then I shall not meet it again, nor can it overpower me again.

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Naturally we say, "What are the sins that have been nailed to the cross and for which we are so freely and so fully forgiven?"

First: Sins against God. There is the sin of rebellion, the sin of being at enmity against God, the sin of rejection and resistance, the sin of unbelief which drove Jesus to the cross and broke His heart. This sin is nailed to the cross. There is the sin against God of ingratitude; He has given us everything, and we have given Him nothing; He has loved us, and we have trampled His love beneath our feet; He has given us a countless number of blessings, and we have not said "Thank you."

At the age of eighty-one years there died at Burbank, California, in the person of Rev. Edward W. Spencer, D.D., one who at a particular moment of his life seized the great opportunity and filled it with daring and skill. He was the hero of the wreck of the *Lady Elgin*, a Lake steamer that foundered off the shore at Winnetka, Illinois, just above Evanston, upon the morning of September 8, 1860, and nearly 400 of the crew and passengers perished. Dr. Spen-

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cer was at the time, with his brother William, a student of Garret Biblical Institute. Hearing of the wreck, he hastened to the scene, and in the work of rescue saved seventeen of the imperilled passengers before he himself fell in a delirium of exhaustion. Just before passing into unconsciousness he repeated over and over again to his brother, "Will, did I do my best?" This question was taken up all over the country, and furnished the theme of many an editorial and the text of many a sermon.

One of the most striking things I know, however, in connection with the above incident is this: In a meeting, said to have been conducted by Dr. Torrey in a Californian city, Dr. Spencer was noticed in the audience, and desiring to pay tribute to one who had wrought so heroically in the days of his youth, Dr. Torrey asked Dr. Spencer to come to the platform. He was cheered to the echo. When he took his seat beside a friend of mine, who was also upon the platform, my friend turned to Dr. Spencer to say, "Is there anything special that you remember in connection with the seventeen

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persons whom you saved from the wreck of the *Lady Elgin?*” Dr. Spencer hesitated a moment, and then said, “Only this, that not one of the seventeen ever thanked me.”

And we have not thanked God for His goodness to us, and this sin has been nailed to the cross.

Second. There are the sins against one’s self, sins which undermine character, sins which weaken one’s will, sins which blight and blast our lives: these sins, countless in number, are nailed to the cross.

Third. There are the sins against society, against our friends, against our parents, against our loved ones; sins which have made tears flow from the eyes of mothers and fathers until the eyes have become red and the faces hot with the scalding tears. These sins are nailed to the cross. No amount of effort on my part can undo the sins which have been mentioned, but faith in Him who died that we might live—this is all-powerful. And so when I read, “He hath taken my sins away,” it is as if He had held these sins of mine in His own hand, and as He made His way to the cross to die, the Innocent for the

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guilty, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, it is as if the nail had gone not only through His hand, but through my sins as well.

Sins nailed to the cross are just as deadly as before they were thus imprisoned, but the difference between the sins nailed to the cross and the sins which I encourage in my life is this: the one are deadly; the other, because of what Jesus Christ has done, have lost their power.

My sins like a chain have fettered my soul;
How can I take them away?
They buffet my life as sea billows roll;
How can I take them away?

My sins long ago are haunting me still;
They must be taken away.
They hinder my life, they weaken my will;
They must be taken away.

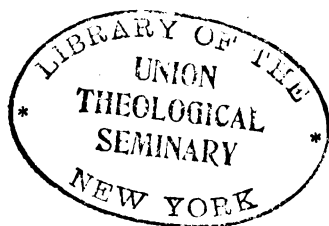
My sins like a cloud have covered His face;
Will He not take them away?
They turn me aside from God and His grace;
Will He not take them away?

He blots them all out by shedding His blood;
Now they are taken away.

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Assurance I have in God's holy Word,
Now they are taken away—

All cast away, blotted out and forgot,
Such wonderful, wonderful grace,
His death on the cross redemption hath brought,
Hallelujah, wonderful grace!





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AUTHOR

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