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FROM LOVE TO PRAISE



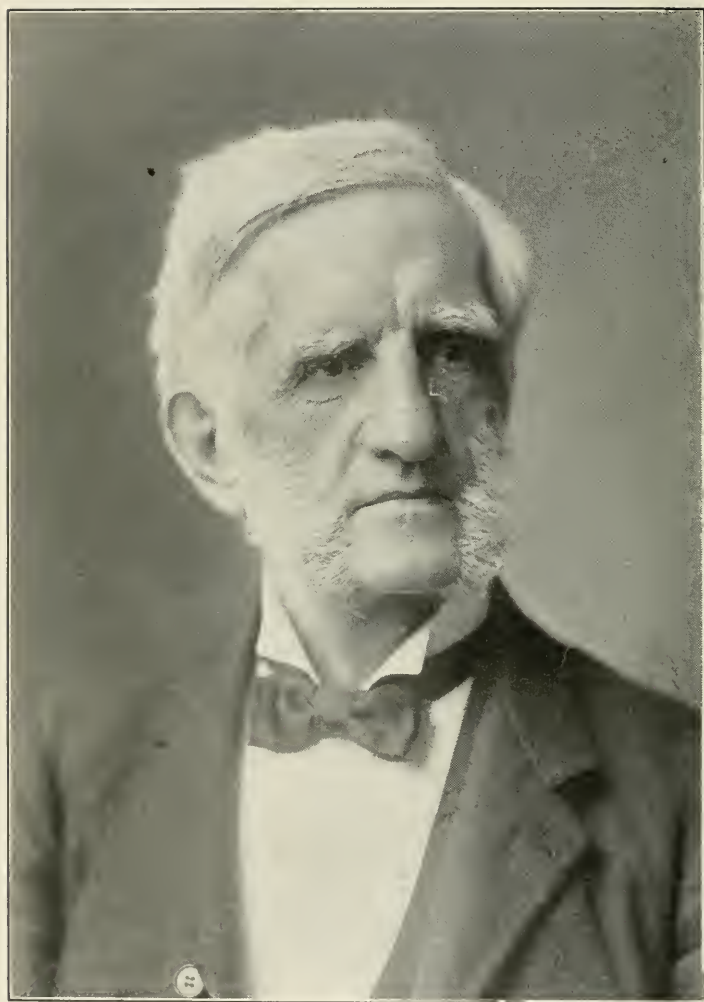
BY
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FROM LOVE TO PRAISE



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BY

HERRICK JOHNSON, D. D., LL. D.

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I

THE LOVE OF GOD FOR EVERY
MAN

FROM LOVE TO PRAISE

I

THE LOVE OF GOD FOR EVERY MAN

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”—JOHN iii. 16.

“ORTHODOXY staggers at nothing that will fill hell” is the somewhat startling statement made recently to a Sabbath audience by a clergyman in good and regular standing in one of our evangelical churches. This same “orthodoxy” is also charged with “always facing a graveyard,” and with making human wills simply cogs in the great wheel of the universe, moving machine-like with the irresistibility of fate.

At the root of a good deal of misconception and misrepresentation in this matter are two notions of God that are somewhat prevalent and quite opposed to each other, but equally erroneous. The one is that God was bribed to mercy by Jesus Christ; the other is that God is too merciful to punish anybody, no matter what he may do with Jesus, or what he may think about Him.

Let it be frankly admitted that God has sometimes been so presented to men as to give seeming warrant for both the one and the other of these erroneous notions of God.

So this great gospel truth of God's love for the world is here and now used, not to compass its immeasurable boundaries nor to fathom its fathomless deeps, but, in the first place, to correct these two false conceptions of God; and then, to show in what relation the great truth of the text puts the two parties most concerned—which two parties are God and man; and then, to use the truth as an inspiration to world-wide evangel and conquest; the key-word in the movement to make this opening century signal in the historic succession as the century of the coming of the kingdom of God. Incidentally, throughout the discussion, it will be our aim to vindicate orthodox belief from the aspersions that have been put upon it.

I. Let us seek, first of all, to get rid of misconceptions in this vital matter.

One of the quite prevalent but false notions of God is this: that God is a hard, inexorable being, who has been made mild and forgiving only by the death of Jesus Christ. This great gospel truth we are now to consider teaches just the

contrary. It represents God as in love with men already before Christ came—with all men—with every man. “God so loved the world.” And this is not any elect or select portion of the world, but the whole world of human beings that ever have lived, that live now or that ever will live on the face of the earth: not the world of the elect, but the world of sinners.

This is a most blessed truth. And yet it has sometimes been put in shadow. Christ has been so preached as to seem to make God a being of resentments to be mitigated by the prayers and tears and blood of His own Son. And this text has been so twisted as really to read, “God so hated the sinful world that He could be propitiated only by the death of His beloved Son.” But this word of Christ does not read so. It tells us of a loving gift from a loving God, not of a sacrificial gift made by somebody else to placate an angry God. It tells us that Calvary’s sacrifice did not appease God.

How can you appease love? How can a loving God propitiate Himself? Read this text with this thought of a propitiation of God injected into it, and see how it sounds. “God so loved the world that He gave His beloved Son to abate His own wrath and to placate Himself!” Or, “God so

loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that He might stop hating it." This is simply suicide by self-contradiction! What folly to talk of bribing to mercy One who is bent by every instinct and prompting of His heart to the exhibition of mercy! Will you bribe a mother to love her child?

From Christ's own lips, then, we have the blessed truth that God the Father so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to die for it. And from the same blessed lips we have the story of the lost boy that illustrates this love of God the Father. The father saw the returning prodigal a great way off, and ran and fell upon his neck and kissed him. And the welcome given to this prodigal God is willing to give to any prodigal.

You see He is not a stern, harsh judge. You cannot look at this heart-of-God truth now under consideration with any sense whatever of its meaning and think of God as unforgiving and unloving. You cannot see the father in the parable of the prodigal son and believe for one moment that God is relentless and vindictive. For the story tells you—and remember it is Christ who tells the story—the story tells you God is waiting to see the prodigal son turn to Him—peering out into the darkness and waiting—that He may meet him

and kiss him and fold him to His heart. This is His attitude toward every sinning prodigal in this wide world. And this gospel of Scripture is the gospel of Presbyterian orthodoxy: the orthodoxy which is charged with "always facing a graveyard" and looking to a dead past!

But there is another false notion of God quite as prevalent in our day as the one just named, and probably quite as mischievous. It arises from the swing of the human heart to the opposite extreme of thought. God is conceived of as a being whose love is so vast and sweeping as to make punishment at last impossible. Instead of being thought of now as a stern judge who will by no means clear the guilty, He is thought of as a Father too loving to punish, and so full of mercy that it will not be in His heart to deal with men according to any rigid standard of justice.

But this notion is as false and unscriptural as the other, and to this notion as well as to the other the great gospel text we have before us stands opposed. In the bosom of this heavenly message we not only find the beat of an infinite heart, but the imperial majesty of a holy will. There is no more warrant here for the dear God of sentimentalism than for the hard malignant God of railing unbelief, and there is no warrant

whatever for either. Let us carefully read the text again. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish." Whosoever believes. But suppose men do not believe and will not believe. Do you not see the inevitable, irresistible next step? If men still will not believe, then they still will perish. God's love does not save everybody, although it goes out to everybody. Some men will not take its great gift. And if the sacrifice is rejected, how can it help the sinner it is made for?

So law still holds. Penalty still falls. Men still perish. They need not perish. Whosoever believes shall not perish. Whosoever believes shall have eternal life.

But the resplendent brightness of this world-wide love makes the very shadows all the deeper. And men know that the meaning of this amazing sacrifice is a deeper condemnation to those who reject it. "Of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God."

We are not to think, therefore, that in God's moral government love overrides law—that mercy abates by one jot or tittle the claims of divine justice. God is not divided against Himself. One

side of His being is not at war with the other side. And no sentimental notions of His love must be allowed to smooth out His hatred of sin or dim by the faintest shadow the splendid glory of His holiness.

The truth is, in any definite and deep thinking on this subject we reach the inevitable conclusion that capacity of love and of wrath lie in every great nature. It is this that gives majesty to character and sets the soul in principled resentment against wrong. So the apparent incongruity becomes the deepest consistency.

A strong lover makes a strong hater. It is the sickly, sentimental, namby-pamby love that never has any righteous indignation. Christ is God manifest in the flesh; not one side of God come into the world to pacify or placate the other side. The God of the gospel is no new God or better God or more loving God than the God of the law, but a more fully revealed God. And it is in His tender and beseeching gospels that we hear the deepest thunder of the two eternities.

Human bosoms were never before shaken by such sanctions of sovereign majesty and such words of doom as fell from the lips of Him who ate with publicans and sinners and who died to make men good.

Now, having sought to correct the very prevalent misconception of God—that God was bribed to mercy by Jesus Christ; and the equally prevalent misconception of God, that God in Christ is in a mere gentle way of goodness, doing only smooth and soft things, with no capacity of righteous indignation and no function of wrath—let us consider

II. In what relation this great gospel truth puts the two parties that are in disagreement.

Clearly, God is here set forth as a lover; loving men, all men, every man. “God so loved the world.” Let us then at once make an addition to the first avowal of the Apostles’ Creed, and say:—

“I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and lover of the whole world.” We sing, “Jesus, lover of my soul.” We have equal right and warrant to sing, “God the Father Almighty, lover of my soul.”

How do we know love? We know love in two ways—by its manifestation and by its results; by what it exhibits and by what it accomplishes. How can I possibly know that another loves me except by what he shows to me and by what he secures for me?

Let us then look at God’s love both in manifestation and in achievement if we want to know

what kind of a lover He is. Love must find expression. Love will out in some way or eat up its own heart. Love must do something or die. But there is no way thinkable of showing love in which God has not shown His. Go round about the possibilities and see. Go to the word of God and see.

Let us look at God the Father's love in manifestation. It is the love that throbs through all the Scriptures, from the first promise in Genesis to the last beseeching word of The Revelation, where all God's heart is in the "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." It is the love that stands with a great, patient, yearning heart and says to all the bruised and burdened by sin, "Come unto me, . . . and I will give you rest." It is the love that represents itself as plying men with one agency and another, and sending at last a beloved and only Son, saying, "Surely, they will reverence My Son." And when they do not reverence Him, but stone Him and scoff at Him, and shout, "Away with Him!" it is the love that still cries out in words full of pathos and tears, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not." "Ye would not"; and while the

words die on His lips, unbelief rails and scoffs and tramples mercy under its feet. Thus, by the very warrant of a weeping and bleeding and dying Saviour, assurance is given the whole sinful world that the love of God the Father is a brooding love, yearning in a measureless way to gratify the feeling of paternity in His bosom, and to fold about with an infinite tenderness all the wayward sons of men, who nevertheless persist in their waywardness and never come under the sheltering covert of the Almighty.

Here then are all the possible and conceivable moods of love. Try to think how otherwise love could show itself, and see how variety is exhausted in love's matchless exhibition as we have it in the gospel. It is a tender, compassionate, forgiving, pursuing, beseeching love. It is a patient love. Oh, the infinite patience of the love of God! It is a suffering love. Mothers, you know love's divinest office is to suffer; and God's heart broke on Calvary's cross.

But love is known by what it secures for us, as well as by what it shows to us. We have seen how God's love for all the world has been marvelously manifested. Has it achieved anything? If love is impotent to secure, something of the glory of its exhibition is taken away.

See, therefore, what God's love has done. This world-wide love of God has secured for all sinful men some very definite and specific things, some infinitely precious and momentous things.

In other words, God's love in Christ did something. What? It provided an atonement sufficient for every sinner of all the world. It was no commercial affair—just so much for just so many. There would have been no greater sacrifice needed if all the world were to be saved. There would have been no less sacrifice needed if only one sinner were to be saved. Whether one soul or millions multiplied by millions, the sufficiency is just the same. Hence it comes to pass that no man ever perished, or ever will perish, for want of an atonement.

Well, what else did God's love in Christ do? It provided an atonement for sin adapted to every sinner of all the world. It is of such a nature as to fit into every human need. It suits each sinner's case. It has an appropriateness born of its inherent and infinite worth. No matter who the sinner is, or what he is guilty of, or how far he has gotten from God, or how near the mouth of hell—beggar, debtor, sinner, leper,—the gift of God's love is adapted to his case. If he will only take it, it is his, fitted completely

in its nature and in its conditions, to his utmost need.

But is there anything else this great love of God in Christ did? Yes, a third great thing—a most remarkable thing. It took every obstacle to salvation out of the way of every sinner of all the world.

Men have sinned—all men. Sin is lawlessness—without law, against law, in spite of law. And the sovereignty of law is like the sovereignty of God. We all know it cannot be trifled with. Law must be upheld, human or divine. Anarchists were making sport of it a few years ago at Chicago. They jeered at its penalty. They grew bolder and bolder. Men trembled for their homes. A very riot of passion and lust threatened to take the city by the throat. But what a hush came upon that frenzied anarchistic mob when law in her majesty took a few of them and hanged them by the neck till they were dead!

Now sin is moral anarchy, a spiritual revolt against the law of God. And law is nothing without penalty. So there stands the divine law, in its imperial majesty, and with its high behests and changeless penalty—a bar to every sinner's salvation.

By God's love that bar has been taken away.

Jesus tasted death for every man, and so bore the sins of the whole world. How He did it is not now the question. We enter into no discussion of the nature of the atonement or the philosophy of the atonement. We press no theory of the atonement. The blessed fact is what we are after—that somehow, somehow through Christ's death, every legal obstacle to salvation is removed; so that God can be just, yet justify anybody who will believe. Law is upheld and vindicated, justice is satisfied, the Devil is silenced, holiness is kept untarnished, sin gets no license, and yet sinners can be saved! Any sinner, anywhere and at any hour, can step toward heaven, assured there is nothing in the law, nothing in hell, nothing in the universe—nothing outside his own heart—that can hinder him from being saved. While outside every sinner's heart that hears the gospel stands the compassionate and patient Saviour, whom the love of God has brought to that heart's door, yearning to take the poor bruised sinner to the bosom of His forgiving grace, if he will only open the door.

“There the pierced hand still knocketh;
And with ever patient watching,
With the sad eyes true and tender,
With the glory crownéd hair,
Still a God is waiting there.”

This is the attitude in which this great gospel text puts the infinite God with respect to the unsettled difficulty between God and man. It represents God as seeking the sinner until He finds him, and there waiting outside the heart's door, saying, "If any man—*any* man—hear My voice and open the door, I will come in."

God could come in if He wanted to, by riving that door in twain, by trampling down the will behind it, by unmaking the man He has made. But what would such a shorn, discrowned thing be worth, with no choice and no power of choice! What would man be to God if robbed of that which makes him only a little lower than God—his will? So God says, in entire respect for the sinner's will, "If any man will open the door—I will not force My way. He must let Me in." This is God's attitude.

And it brings clearly to view the sinner's attitude. Inside the heart's door we find it—inside every heart's door that has not been opened to Christ! Call the attitude what you please. The Bible calls it "enmity," "hatred," "rebellion." These may seem harsh terms. You may claim they do not represent your real attitude, and that your feeling toward God is not enmity or hatred. Well, name it as you like. Say that you are self-

satisfied, indifferent, unconcerned, that you don't care—that you are merely preoccupied. Whatever it is, that attitude represents your will. It keeps your heart's door shut against God's love. And it is the only thing in the universe that will ever keep you out of heaven. And this is true of everybody. The love is for everybody. The adaptation is for everybody. The sufficiency is for everybody.

Does this sound like a narrow and bigoted creed? Is not this a wide-open and liberal gospel? Well, this is Presbyterian orthodoxy: preaching a "whosoever" invitation and trying to fill heaven, yet charged with "staggering at nothing that will fill hell."

But what about election? Well, what about it? There is nothing in this text about it. God so loved the world—not a portion of the world—not the elect. Oh, no! The elect are only a part of the world and chosen out of it. But this love of God is world-wide, for everybody, without a hint of election in it. It sweeps away out beyond election, and has no metes nor boundaries; no limitations; no reservations. God so loved the world!

I believe in election. It is one of the great basilar truths of Scripture, and a most blessed doc-

trine, charged with infinite stay and comfort for God's believing children. It puts the Father's everlasting arms about every child of His, and makes it certain he will never perish. But while it clearly and definitely includes somebody, it just as clearly and positively excludes nobody. It makes heaven sure for the chosen, but it keeps no one out of heaven. It is no chain gang bound about the necks of men, dragging some to salvation and some to perdition.

To illustrate. Here are two hundred men in prison for violation of law. I make provision for their pardon, so that justice is satisfied and law vindicated, while yet the prisoners may go free. The prison doors are unbarred, the bolts thrown back, and promise of absolute pardon is made, and assurance is given every prisoner that he can now step out a free man. But not a man moves. Suppose now I determine that my provision for their pardon shall not be in vain. So I personally go to one hundred and fifty of those condemned and guilty men, and by a kind of loving violence persuade them to come out. That's election. But have I kept the other fifty in? The provision for pardon is still sufficient, the prison doors are still unbarred, the gates of their cells are still unlocked and open, and free-

dom is promised to every one who will step out and take it; and *every man in that prison knows he can be a free man if he will*. Have I kept the other fifty in?

But what about that other doctrine—one of the great bulwarks of the Reformed or Calvinistic faith—the doctrine of God's eternal purpose? We Presbyterians believe and say that God in infinite knowledge and wisdom did from eternity determine all that comes to pass. "Well, then," it is said in reply,—“Well, then, if everything is included in this eternal plan, and all events are certain to come to pass as God has purposed they should come to pass, what room is there for human liberty?”

Just the room God made for it when He put it in His eternal plan. The same God that ordained all events ordained human liberty in the midst of all events. The freedom of man's will is therefore just as surely fixed in the purpose of God as anything else is fixed, and is just as certain to be as anything else is certain to be.

Here is His plan, infinite in variety and complexity, reaching from everlasting to everlasting, and in the midst of it are millions of free wills, acting and interacting and reacting, all in the plan and a part of the plan placed there of God, He

having determined in His almighty power and infinite wisdom that these millions of human wills shall keep their liberty under His sovereignty. Thus His eternal purpose for ever makes their freedom sure, so that neither man nor devil nor any other creature in this world or in any world can take that freedom away.

Hence it comes to pass that the Scriptures can say, as they do say, that Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles and the people of Israel "were gathered together to do whatsoever God foreordained should come to pass"; yet these same Scriptures can say that these men crucified and slew Christ with "wicked hands." Listen to the babel of hell round the cross, and tell me if those men were not free! Yet read all the forecast and prophecy and record of the tragedy and tell me if every incident of it was not ordained of God!

Certainty, therefore, is not necessity. Certainty was not necessity in the crucifixion of Christ. And if it was not in that case, it is not in any case. But are there not dreadful things in the eternal plan of God? Surely! Surely! But you do not get rid of the things by denying the plan. You believe in God, do you not; in an all-wise, all-loving, all-mighty God? But you must square

this belief with the facts. Here is sin, right here in this world. Here is a very hell on earth. Here are deeps of anguish and broken hearts and curses. Here are all the tragedies and all the infamies and all the cruelties of sin, plan or no plan.

Now, either God did not know these things were to be, and so was an ignorant God; or, He knew and did not care, and so was an indifferent God. Or He knew and cared, but could not prevent, and so was an impotent God. Or He knew and cared and planned in infinite wisdom and love and power, with sin and hell and Calvary and the tragedies and the infamies and the damning cruelties all in the plan, embraced of God in His eternal, wise, holy, and loving purpose, but so held in His resistless and measureless leash that while the freedom of man is not taken away, nor is God the author of sin, yet in His providence all things are made to work together in fulfillment of His sovereign design and in manifestation of His glory.

So it is we believe we can have, and do have, freedom under sovereignty; liberty in the midst of certainty; personal responsibility yet divine and changeless purpose; millions of wills doing as they will under and in an eternal plan.

So it is we stand on the foundation rock of

God's sovereign and eternal purpose, yet preach that Jesus Christ tasted death for every man; and that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

And so to-day we blaze our banner anew and in richer color, with the broad and blessed device, "God so loved the world." We propose a new chapter for our Confession of Faith, and it begins and ends and is all aflame with "God so loved the world." We make a brief restatement of our doctrinal beliefs, and we put these doctrinal beliefs in Scriptural proportion and perspective, and bathe them throughout as they are bathed in Scripture with God's ineffable and immeasurable love for the world.

What then? Is all this to end in mere credal statement? God forbid! What is to follow? Are we to say, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another"? No. Great as that truth is, and clear as is the sequence, it is neither the truth nor the sequence for this hour. The truth that faces us here in this gospel message is not God so loved us, but God so loved the world. And if God so loved the world the inspiring sequence is, We ought to be stirred with a mighty eagerness to let the whole world know

about it. Did He not tell us to go and do this thing? Have we been swift to do it? It is nineteen hundred years since Christ came and died that His disciples might go and preach His gospel to every creature, and hundreds of millions in this world of sin have not heard it yet. O God, how long! Church of the living Christ, how long! How long!

Presbyterian men of wealth, at the fore in vast commercial enterprises, captains of great industries, hesitating at nothing in the way of venture for the kingdom of the world; and Christian women of affluence and influence, acknowledged queens of fashion, setting the pace in high social functions, and hesitating at nothing in the way of indulgence for the life that now is; in the name of God, will you not call a halt on these things long enough to listen awhile to some voices of God in this matter!

Listen! "God so loved the world." What does that mean to you? Hear Paul, the apostle of a flaming evangelism, saying, "Brethren, the time is short—literally, the opportunity is narrowed in; that those that rejoice may be as though they rejoiced not, and those that buy as though they possessed not, and those that use this world as not abusing it, for the fashion of

this world passeth away." Hear James, the practical man-of-business writer of the New Testament, saying, "Go to now, ye rich men. Are your gold and silver rusted by disuse? Then the rust shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as fire." Hear the beloved John, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Hear the Old Testament prophet, "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me." Hear our Lord Himself, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man, trusting in his riches, to enter into the kingdom. Be not anxious what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, or what ye shall wear. These things the men of the kingdom of the world seek. But seek ye first the kingdom of God." Oh, that in the swing and sweep and conquering power of God's love for a lost world, amidst the mighty combinations of these captains of material industries, we might have a vast combination for the kingdom

of God! Why should not this opening century witness a great trust organized by Christian millionaires and organized exclusively for Christ! Not to advance the price of the gospel, for heavenly merchandise is without money and without price, but to help get this free gift of God at once to the whole world of dying men! Not to control the market, but to get into the markets of all the world with the wares of the kingdom of heaven! So that into every mart of trade, into every industrial center, into every palace and hovel of sin, into every wild moral desert on earth where men know so much Devil that they do not believe in any true God, shall be sent the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Christian man or woman of wealth, is it not easily possible that God is calling you to the kingdom for such a time as this?

Why not take the lead, and concert a movement that shall be organized wholly with a view to a world-wide evangelism beginning with this opening century—a movement that shall make the century preëminently a kingdom-of-God century, so that instead of prophecy we shall have history, and the shout shall ring around the world, “the kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ!”

II

EMPTYING THE SEPULCHRE
OF A DEAD SOUL

II

EMPTYING THE SEPULCHRE OF A DEAD SOUL

“Lazarus, come forth.”—JOHN xi. 43.

MIRACLES have been called parables in action. Some writers maintain that in the bosom of each great miracle of the New Testament lies a great spiritual truth; that over and above the evidential purpose of these divine interpositions there is a clear design of instruction on some vital point pertaining to the kingdom of God. In this record of the resurrection of Lazarus the allegorizing interpreters have found a fruitful field, claiming that “the whole process of the sinner’s restoration from the death of sin to a perfect spiritual life” is here shadowed forth. Without attempting to determine how far, if to any extent at all, an allegorical interpretation of the miracles is justified, it will not be questioned by any that these mighty and divine deeds of Christ are often beautifully illustrative of spiritual truth. Thickly scattered through the Scriptures are figures of speech that make this unmistakable. How often spiritual

states are represented under physical aspects and conditions! Sin is a leprosy—the sinner a leper. How natural, therefore, in the miracle of the healing of the leper, to trace the striking analogies between that and the spiritual healing by which a soul is rid of the leprosy of sin. Sin is a blindness, and the sinner is represented as groping in the darkness, “feeling after God.” How clearly warranted, therefore, it is, in the use of the miracle of the healing of Bartimæus or of the man born blind, to note and emphasize the beautiful and effective correspondences between those restorations of physical sight and the exercise of that power by which a blinded soul is led to see God. So in the Scriptures, sin is death—the sinner is said to be “dead in trespasses and sins.” Unquestionably, therefore, the miracle of the raising of Lazarus must furnish some marked points of resemblance to the miracle of the resurrection of a dead soul. Indeed, right in the bosom of the record of Lazarus’ resurrection we find that the material fact is made, by Jesus, the occasion of expressing the profound corresponding Scriptural truth, “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die.”

With this clear warrant for our course, let us see how a sepulchre was emptied at Bethany. Possibly we may the better see thereby how some sepulchres of sin about us, where our loved ones lie spiritually dead, may be spoiled of their possessions.

It is apparent, at the outset, that under this figure of death we shall find nothing answering to the sinner's own agency in securing eternal life. That corpse in the tomb of Bethany will remain cold and stiff until the word of Christ thrill it again with new vitality. The dead can take no steps for their own resurrection. So the miracle will give us nothing illustrative of the sinner's sense of need and penitent confession and cry for mercy.

Vital as these are if a sinner is ever to be saved, let it be borne in mind it is under the fact and figure of death the sinner is here represented. And the dead can tell no need and make no cry.

Remembering, therefore, that no single miracle or parable or teaching of God's word brings out all sides of any great truth, let us see what there is in this record of the raising of the dead Lazarus that finds a voice for our instruction and spiritual profit.

The incidents of the resurrection group themselves under three heads:—

I. The human antecedents.

II. The divine quickening.

III. The human consequent.

I. *The Human Antecedents.*—(I) *Prayer* was one of them. Jesus was sought. “Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick.” A message. A prayer. A request. Lazarus was sick—probably dangerously sick—and it was the instinct of these loving, sisterly hearts to tell their Lord about it. They knew He had power to help, for had He not healed many? Surely He would hasten to put His healing touch upon Lazarus, and bid the fever depart. But the Lord did not hasten; “for He loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus,” and “abode, therefore, two days in the place where He was.” Because He loved, therefore, He waited. Marvelous sequitur. Yet it is often the Lord’s way. Whom He loves He seems to refuse, that they may grow to something more Godlike in the fiery trial of unsatisfied longing and strange delay, and that they may see the greater glory of God as the issue of the matter.

Yet Jesus must be sent for. Delay may come by that road, but help will come by no other. It is said of the disciples of John the Baptist when

he was beheaded that "they took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus." That is the one thing we are to do in any difficulty, and especially in a difficulty of death—as when a brother or sister lies spiritually dead and friends hopelessly weep at the sepulchre. Restraint, reformation, watch, care—the use of these, even with suffering and sorrow—cannot raise the dead. As well lift a mountain from its base with wisps of tow. If in any home or church or place of toil and tears we would see one of these spiritual sepulchres emptied, we must send for Jesus—"Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick."

(2) *Faith* was another human antecedent in this miracle of resurrection. Jesus was sought and brought. He was sent for and He came. He was so sent for that He was led to come. It was the faith embosomed in the message that made it efficacious. The word of these troubled sisterly hearts to Jesus breathed a loving and reverent trust. And all the incidents of the touching narrative show that Martha and Mary confided in the Lord in a beautiful and undisturbed way, even though He had delayed His coming until their brother Lazarus was dead and buried four days. "Even now," says Martha, "even now, I know that whatsoever Thou shalt ask of God, God will

give Thee." And again she says, "Yea, Lord: I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

"All things are possible to him that believeth." This seems a wide sweep for so human a thing as faith. But it is just the "wideness of God's mercy." Read the roll call of sainted worthies in the eleventh of Hebrews and see how the record of achievement stretches to the broadness of promise. "Kingdoms," "lions," "fire," "sword," "floods," "armies," succumbed to faith. Even "death" was no exception. "Women received their dead raised to life again." Faith commanded Christ at the door of the tomb of Lazarus, and Christ commanded the dead. Faith is just as surely the human antecedent to the resurrection of a dead soul. Prayer is our message sent to Jesus, but faith must throb through the prayer if the message is to bring Him. The form of the prayer is nothing. The spirit of the prayer is everything. It may be a broken cry, a groaning "that cannot be uttered"—a sweet, low, humble "Help me, Lord"—a mere statement, "He whom Thou lovest is sick," thus "giving the Lord information," as this kind of prayer has been derisively called by those who would have prayers hewn to a certain line, as if manufactured

in a shop. How these critics of the letter have flung their shafts of wit at the praying that tells God something! But Martha and Mary prayed so. And Jesus read between and beneath the lines; saw their faith, and came.

But what must faith grasp in pleading with Christ to raise the dead? Two distinct things. "Believest thou this?" Christ asks of Martha, standing by the tomb of her dead brother. His question is definite. It passes on beyond the material fact to the spiritual truth; from the resurrection of the body to the resurrection and eternal life of a dead soul. He has pointed out a specific thing faith is to take hold of. It is in the words, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me, shall never die." And his question is, "Believest thou this?" The specific thing is power. Christ is able. It is this faith is to grasp. Not simply that whatsoever Christ asks of God, God will give, but the deeper truth, that Christ Himself is the resurrection. Almightyness is in the good right hand of Him whom we summon to raise our dead. This we are to believe when we send for Him. Mark now how this point gets emphasis in this miracle of the raising of Lazarus. Remember,

this is the miracle that links itself closest with spiritual resurrection. Embosomed in the record of it is Christ's great, fathomless word, "I am the resurrection." And hence this is the miracle in which His power stands out conspicuous. There are other resurrections. The daughter of Jairus comes back to life; but possibly that was a swoon, says unbelief. The son of the widow of Nain is made to rise from his bier; but that, too, may have been a case of suspended animation, urges the doubter. Lazarus, however, has been dead four days—dead and buried. The case is to be signal. There shall be "no hinge or loop to hang a doubt on." Next to Christ's own resurrection, this is the miracle of power. "Take ye away the stone." "But Lord," says Martha, "by this time he stinketh." The revisers have done well to keep this old Saxon word. It is an element in the record adding to the proof of power. Suppose it be true that corruption is already there fastened on that dead body. "Take ye away the stone." Back corruption must go. The Lord of life is at the tomb.

The case is extreme, and we may well add, purposely extreme, that Christ's power over death may be put to the utmost possible proof. And the point for faith is that there can be no case of

a dead soul so bad, so dead in sin, so given over to corruption, as to be beyond the might of Christ's resurrection. This is one distinctive thing faith is to grasp in asking Jesus to raise our dead—that He is able. "Believest thou this?"

The other distinctive thing is this: that He is willing. We have seen that the exceeding greatness of the mighty power of resurrection is with Jesus. Is there with Him also that other subtle, indispensable thing—sympathy? We make bold to say the record of this miracle gives, and was meant to give, the most precious and questionless proof of it.

Mark the message itself by which these sisters summoned Jesus: "He whom Thou lovest is sick." We can say that, and be sure we are not going too far in saying it, when we send for Jesus to come and raise our dead. Does He not love those who are spiritually dead in our homes? How was it with us when we were "dead in sins"? Was it not His love for us that brought Him to our sepulchre? Is it not our joyful and unbroken testimony that we love Him "because He first loved us"? And did not His original unbribed love for the world that was dead, lead Him to that dreadful travail of death by which He was made "the resurrection and the life," so that now,

whosoever, whosoever believeth in Him, shall never die? See, too, how along the track of the record of this miracle the sympathy of Christ gets most special and tender mention, the signs and tokens being so varied and beautiful and affecting that the tomb of Lazarus, by consent of Christendom, has come to be the place where Christians oftenest go when they would see Jesus "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Note His quick assurance to Martha, as if to relieve her troubled heart, "Thy brother shall rise again"; and the deeper truth that follows. See how He "groaned in the spirit, and was troubled" when He saw the weeping of Mary and her friends. And who that reads the story does not feel that the sweetest juices and flowers in all God's garden of consolation have been brought together and made to yield their balm and fragrance in those two words, "Jesus wept"? And if His cheeks were indeed wet with tears, and He groaned in the spirit, and His heart was full to weeping in the sympathy of sorrow as He came to answer the prayer of Martha and Mary; and if He tied that bodily resurrection, with all its marvelous setting of power and tenderness, to the spiritual resurrection; and if He is Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; then the sympathy

no less than the power, then that He is willing no less than that He is able, is a distinct thing that our faith is to take hold of when we ask Him to come and raise our beloved dead. Child of God, weeping at the sepulchre of some dear soul dead in sin, "believest thou this?"

(3) *Effort* was a third human antecedent in the miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus. Prayer and faith were not without "works." Jesus was not only sought and brought, but obeyed. "Take ye away the stone." And not until that stone was taken away by human hands did the divine quickening come to the dead.

But could not this Man who brought Lazarus from the sepulchre have brought him right through the ribbed rock? Certainly He could. And "could not this Man who opened the eyes of him that was blind have caused that this man also should not die"? Certainly. It was not a question of power in either case, but of wise and gracious design. The death of Lazarus was for the glory of God. But it is not to the glory of God for Him to do a thing that man could do. God never performs a superfluous work. He could raise crops without plow or harrow or sowing of seed, but let a Christian farmer, who believes in God and prays for a good crop,

attempt to get a harvest by prayer and faith without "works," and see if God will stock his granaries! If God has tied his blessing to any one law, it is to the law of the use of means. Search the Scriptures through, and not one instance will be found of God's doing a work that could be done by man. "How many loaves have ye?" "Five, Lord; but what are they to feed five thousand?" No matter. It is in the use of the means at our command we find the miracle of enlargement and life. It is on the basis of the natural God builds the supernatural. "Work out your own salvation, . . . for it is God which worketh in you." "Take ye away the stone." If that had not been done we may fearlessly say Lazarus would not have been raised.

Now at the door of many a spiritual sepulchre there is a stone that needs to be taken away—a stone of doubt or indifference, a stone of prejudice or enmity, a stone of false security, a stone of lying refuge—some stone that human hands—your hands—may roll away from the door of the tomb, so as to make an open way for the power of Christ's resurrection. The power that can empty a sepulchre and thrill the dead with life, can certainly rive a stone at the mouth of the sepulchre, and cleave a way for the new-born soul

through any refuge of lies or rock of offense. But it is not a question of power. It is a question on God's side of gracious design and wise command; on man's side of trust and obedience. "Take ye away the stone," He says to Christian parents who have asked Him to raise their dead child. Something is to be done, and done by them, before Christ will work His work of resurrection. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word." And it may be Christ waits for that word to be spoken by these Christian parents before He will speak. Breaking the silence will then be "rolling away the stone"? A tender, loving, urgent, faithful personal word from the heart of a mother to an impenitent son, from the heart of a teacher to a wayward scholar, from the heart of a wife to an unbelieving husband, may be the human antecedent for which God waits ere He bid the dead come forth.

"Lord, he hath been dead four days." That was the suggestion of Martha's unbelief. Her faith staggered at the command to take away the stone, in view of the time corruption had been allowed to do its work. But does not this scene often repeat itself at the sepulchres of the spiritually dead? Jesus has been sent for by some believing mother. And all her heart has

gone out in the message, "Lord, He whom Thou lovest is in the bonds of death." Her faith, too, has taken hold of the two specific things that faith must grasp. She believes in the power and she believes in the sympathy of Him who is the resurrection and the life. He has come in answer to her message and at the command of her faith. He is at the tomb of the dead soul. And He says to the weeping mother, "Take ye away the stone." "But Lord, he has been hardened by years of impenitency and unbelief. He is embittered against the truth. I fear he will not brook a word concerning this matter of personal religion. I cannot speak to him." What is this but Martha's "Lord, he hath been dead four days."

Surely the lesson is plain. The human antecedents of the work of God in salvation include the use of all appropriate, possible means. Prayer, faith, and effort are the triple obligation. We must seek for Christ, believe in Christ, and obey Christ, if we would sing our joyful Easter song over the risen. Prayer, however importunate, and faith, however seemingly confident, if they shrink from possible service and halt at opportunity and neglect legitimate means, and turn away from any open door of influence, are leaving the stone at the door of the sepulchre. Who shall

say how many sepulchres that now hold beloved dead would have been emptied long ago if those who wept and prayed there had taken away the stone!

II. *The Divine Quickening*.—Let us get back to Bethany and contemplate the next step in this miracle of the resurrection. It is the step of God—the fathomless mystery of life from death, the divine quickening. We have seen how Martha was staggered at the command of the Master to take away the stone. Listen now, every heart doubting and weeping at some spiritual sepulchre—listen, and see with what answering word Christ quiets Martha's fears and dissipates her doubt! "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou believedst, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" And the record is, "So they took away the stone." And now the human antecedents—the prayer, the faith, the effort—are complete. These can no farther go. There is no more that they can do. The case is between Christ and the dead. Will He prove Himself indeed the resurrection and the life? He breaks the silence of that just-opened tomb. And more: He pierces the deeper silence beyond. Back into life He summons the body; back into the body He summons (from what world, who can tell?) the immortal spirit. "Laz-

arus, come forth." And he that was dead is alive again, and comes forth, the living proof that the Lord of life and death is at that sepulchre's door. This is the divine quickening. It is instant, immediate, personal, absolute, exclusive of everything human, calling for no intervention or adjunct, and allowing none. The process, the method, how corruption is spoiled of its prey and the dead Lazarus is made alive, we know not. One thing we know—the tomb is empty, and there stands the living Lazarus.

How like this is to the divine quickening in the spiritual resurrection! Prayer must be offered, faith must be exercised, every possible influence must be brought to bear—Jesus must be sought and brought and obeyed—we must send for Him if we would have any power of resurrection wrought, we must believe that He is able and willing to raise the dead, we must take away the stone from the door of the sepulchre; but we reach a point in every case where it is between Christ and the dead alone—no human hand to help, no word from our lips, no intervention of prayer or faith or instrument of any sort, but the immediate, instant, and almighty power of the Spirit of God on a dead soul, thrilling it at once and for ever with the power of an endless life. We cannot explain

it. We cannot understand it. To be born out of this death in sin into this life with Christ by the Holy Spirit of God is the profoundest of mysteries. The method, the process, we know not. But the fact we know. There is the vacant tomb. And there is the living Lazarus. And there are the two sisters with the tears still in their eyes, but the glory shining through, saying, "This, our brother, was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."

III. *The Human Consequent.*—Is the process complete? No. There is just one more step in the scene of this resurrection. "Loose him, and let him go." This is the human consequent of the divine quickening. Lazarus "came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin." Surely Christ, by His lightning word, could have torn those cerements of the tomb to shreds. What were they, compared to death's bands! But death's bands could only be loosed by God. These grave-bands any man could unfasten. And so Christ's command is, "Loose him, and let him go."

Here, again, we have apt and striking illustration of what is true in spiritual resurrection. When a soul dead in trespasses and sins is made

alive in Christ Jesus it is still bound by a great deal that belonged to that dead past. God plants life, and hence resurrection. But God does not change outward conditions, and hence the ceremonies of old habit and old association are still wound round and round that risen soul. It is wrapped in the grave-clothes of silence and ignorance. It is tongue-tied and foot-bound and hand-pinioned, unfitted yet for the toil and song and high liberty of Christian discipleship. Oh, how many risen Lazarus's there are that have never been loosed and let go by the Christian Church! They have come forth out of their graves; they can no longer be numbered among the dead; they show the signs of resurrection, but there they are, largely useless to the church, dumb Lazarus's, "bound hand and foot with grave-clothes." They may like to hear, but they do not "love to tell, the old, old story"; and they could not tell it if they liked, for their faces are "bound about with a napkin."

The duty is clear and imperative. Divine quickening should have this human consequent. Resurrection should be followed by loosening. To see a living soul tied about with these trappings of the tomb is a gross unseemliness. It is robbing the Church of efficiency. It is lessening

the power of a witnessing discipleship. It is binding feet that should be running in the way of God's commandment. It is silencing tongues that should be eloquent with unrestrained and loving speech.

"Loose him, and let him go" is Christ's command to the living whenever the dead arise. Be swift, O Church of God, to help each newly risen soul that comes forth from the sepulchre of sin! By instruction, by encouragement, by sympathy, by counsel, by new association, by judicious stimulus, by incitement to service, by removal of hindrance, *loose* him! Let the resurrection life have resurrection liberty. Then, indeed, will each resurrection scene be complete. Human antecedents on the one side; human consequent on the other; in the midst, Jesus only. At the initiation, prayer, faith, effort—human agency—"Take ye away the stone." At the conclusion, still further effort—human agency—"Loose him, and let him go." At the supreme, central, transcendent moment, nothing but the exceeding greatness of the mighty power of God—"Lazarus, come forth."

III

THE WORD OF GOD
AS A CHARACTER-BUILDER

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“And the word of God abideth in you.”—I JOHN ii. 14.

THIS age is robust. It is marked by a prevalent study of force. Athleticism is having its say in all realms, and with a will. Weakness is deemed ignoble—almost a crime. Young men of to-day and young women, too, are fairly assaulted with the idea that they must get a great deal of vigorous, tenacious fiber into their character, or go to the wall. And the suspicion is abroad, lurking secretly in many minds, openly avowed by others, that the Christian religion is not equal to the emergency; that Christianity does not furnish the stuff the character for our times needs to be made of. Let us look at this matter. It will be doing good service to vindicate the Bible to intelligent judgment as a formative force in character. Our theme is, the Bible as a character-builder.

If a ballot were taken, asking any given number of men or women of average intelligence to

name the elements that go to make up the noblest character, there would probably be considerable diversity of reply. But, without a doubt, the great body of them would include, in one or another form of statement, at least these three elements: Heartiness, Fixedness, Aggressiveness. If to these three were added three others—viz., the Courage of Repose, the Power of Reserve, and Self-sacrifice, we should have a fairly full list of qualities for fine character-building.

Physical force is not named in this category, for, while that is a good thing to have, it is a brute thing, and often associated with meanness and cowardice. Character pertains to spirit, not to muscle. As a base and instrument for exploits, too much cannot be said in favor of physical force. But, after all you have said of it, you have scarcely touched the hem of the garment of real character. See the morning papers chronicling the university boat-race or football game of the day before, voicing their eulogy after this fashion: "Muscle has won and won in gallant style." "It was beef, ample, well-trained beef, overmatching younger stuff, equally well trained and far better coached, but there was not so much of it." Surely an ideal character is not to be characterized as "beef." So we leave out physical force.

Physical courage is not named as an element of character, for that every bulldog has. Moral courage is not named, for that interpenetrates the whole group of desirable qualities, and is comprehended in each and all.

I. *Heartiness*.—Say what we will about the glory of the intellect, after all, the heart is the man. Call the roll of deeds that have made the world ring with applause, and you will find it was the heart behind them that put into the deeds their immortal quality. The seal of Martin Luther represented a rose; and in the rose a heart; and in the heart a cross; symbolizing this—that a fragrant and beautiful life, the rose, is born of love, the heart, spending itself in sacrifice, the cross. Whitefield's seal had as a device a winged heart soaring above the clouds. And the men of truly heroic mold, the men of great achievement, the men that have lifted multitudes of their fellows to higher altitudes of joy and sweet peace, that have sprung to the leadership of imperiled causes, and carried them for God and truth, have always been men of the winged heart.

For a man is not all a man till some great love possesses him. Love lifts weary feet and makes them hinds' feet. Love nerves endeavor and

puts steel into it. Love thrills the whole being through, and brings out all its unguessed possibilities of power. Love performs deeds and conquers where even duty fails. Order, law, right, duty—love is all these and more—for God is love. When the glory of God appeared in the face of Jesus Christ, and men saw that transcendent marvel of manhood, the Son of man, what did they say of Him? No evangelist or apostle speaks of His intellect or even of His conscience. Think of this strange thing,—four writers, writing the life of Jesus of Nazareth, and making that life concededly the truest and manliest ever lived out before men, and all absolutely silent as to His intellectual powers! He had these, but they go unmentioned in the presence of the glory of His heart. It was this that taught His lips and gave them their wonderful rhetoric. In His infinite tenderness were the very hidings of His power. The winning, persuasive, love-commanding, and inspirational elements of His personality all drop out of His speech and life when we drop His heart out. He had wisdom, indeed, the highest wisdom. In Him were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Yet in Him wisdom never overtopped love; or rather, love was His chief wisdom. His heart taught His mouth and

gave His word such power, and His manhood such mingled majesty and grace.

Clearly, the heart is the man. This does not belittle thought nor abate by the faintest shadow those splendors with which the head is crowned. But the chief assault of the gospel is on our hearts. Love is its commanding commandment. It brings a great love's inspiration, wakens a responsive love, and incites to love's holiest and divinest deeds.

And yet—and yet, it must be admitted—there is altogether too little downright heartiness in the mass of the Christian young men and women of our times. Why? Is it because they handle the Bible too much with their heads? By no means; but exactly the contrary. It is because they give it so little thought. The word of God would put heartiness into their character if they would let it abide more in their minds. "Ye are strong," writes the apostle to young men, "because the word of God abideth in you." Thought begets interest—"out of mind, out of heart." It is true, interest leads to thought. But the reverse is also and more widely true—thought leads to interest. Set a man to thinking deeply and he will feel deeply. It is said that Dante, while writing his "Inferno," looked as if he had been in hell. It

was thought on the condition of the Holy Places in the East that stirred all Europe with crusadic ardor. It was thought on a single truth of God's word that made Martin Luther the flaming apostle of the Reformation. It was meditation on a few great Scriptural ideas that gave such fervor to early Methodism. It was pondering the condition of the heathen in the light of the Bible that sent those young men at Williamstown from the shadow of the haystack into the shadow of paganism with their hearts all aflame.

This is the very philosophy of God in the gospel. "How love I Thy law!" sang the Psalmist; "it is my meditation all the day." His love undoubtedly led to renewed meditation. But his daily meditation stirred new depths of love, and gave to David that heartiness which breaks out everywhere in his song, and which has made him the leader of God's singing hosts ever since.

You may be sure of it, young men, young women, the Bible used will put heartiness into your being and life. Make room for it. Give it a chance. Let it abide in you. And its varied, profound, transcendent, and every way marvelous themes, with their divine tenderness and eternal sanctions, will fill and fire your hearts with some deathless affections.

II. *Fixedness*.—This is another quality that enters into a robust character, and the word of God is peculiarly fitted to give it. It is the staying quality in character.

A merely emotional make-up is not stable. Feelings are as the waves of the sea. Love is simply a spasm of enthusiasm until it is intelligent, discriminating love, based in knowledge. The weakness and unreliability of so much of the piety of to-day is owing to ignorance. Far too many Christians are content with pleased sensibilities, emotional frames, and gushes of feeling. Their religion consists in "feeling good," rather than in righteous living springing out of profound conviction. "Melting moods" are to them like Paul's "third heaven." Ecstasies are Christian evidences, and tears are Christian testimonies. The æsthetics and art and pathos of worship move them more than any truth of God in worship.

Now pathos is good, and there is an infinite pathos in Christianity. But it is the flush and aroma, the flower and finish, of religion, not its trunk and root. Just as the vegetable kingdom is buttressed up by the vast ribs of the mineral kingdom, so is character made to have rootedness and stay, as it is ribbed round about and

penetrated through and through with Bible truths. Weakness and want of knowledge go together, the world over. Spiritual ignorance is spiritual babyhood. You will find this illustrated in society to-day. It is quite the fad in a certain set. They go about issuing little declarations of independence, and they call them doubts. But doubt is not a declaration of independence. Doubt is looseness. Doubt is weakness. Doubt is unmanliness. It takes the best fiber out of character. It leaves one to be tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine. Anchorage is gone where conviction of truth is gone. If not one clear, distinct, imperishable truth of God has ever had a real abiding-place in one's soul, is it any wonder he lacks fixedness?

Go to the word of God, then, if you would have rootedness. Determine that you will not rest until you have grasped definitely some of its great truths. If you want staying quality in your character, get some things settled, clearly defined, things that you know. A nebulous belief has no heroism in it. A brave, bold faith is a definite faith. Look steadily into the word of God, grow familiar with it, bring it out of the shadows, know just what you believe and why.

Such knowledge, born of conviction, gives us

character of the fiery-furnace sort, like Luther summoned to Worms, and ready to go, though the tiles on the roofs of the houses were changed into battalions of opposing and malignant devils. Like Latimer at the stake, saying to Master Ridley: "Be of good courage, Master Ridley; we shall this day kindle a fire that will light all England!" Like Bunyan in Bedford jail, who will stay there "till the moss grow on his eyelids" before he will recant! Like any loyal disciple who lives by the faith of the Son of God, and who will stand fast in that faith anywhere, at any cost!

Surely the times need such men, and such women too—men and women of fixedness, unbreakable, untemptable, unmoved by the greatness of this visible world, and unbribed by its social pomp and glitter and glory, believing in eternity and in some distinct truths that reach out there, and able to point to some parts and aims of their lives in very proof of their belief in eternity.

III. *Aggressiveness* is a third element that the indwelling word of God gives to character. Fixedness is a grand quality, but for moral conflict we need something more than to "hold the fort." Holding the fort simply holds the fort. But

battle with wrong means push, stir, jostle, attack, charge, conflict, victory.

Now nothing puts aggressiveness into character like the word of God. It bristles all over with appeals to a stirring, challenging activity, that shall threaten every stronghold of iniquity and every refuge of lies. Its commands are, Go ye, Go ye; Go forth; Go labor, strive, fight. Life is a race, a wrestling, a battle. The opposing combatants are not only flesh and blood, but principalities, powers, rulers of darkness, spirits of wickedness in high places, the Prince of the power of the air. If you think there is no personal Devil, I do not see that it much matters. I once heard a paper read at the Literary Club on "The Rise and Fall of the Devil." And the writer was sure he had summarily disposed of his Satanic majesty. And I was glad to congratulate him on his lack of familiarity with his subject. But what boots it, I thought, that we get rid of the Devil, if the devilish remain. And the devilish is here—the infamous, hellish, devilish. Who will deny that the possibilities of it are right here in any fair garden of God? If you Christians, who are content to be lapped in the folds of a silken and easy life—if you think there is no fight—go on with the dance. You'll find out by and by, in the

evolution and devolution of society, that life means something more than a lullaby.

Now the word of God is the only weapon of attack in all the armor of the Christian soldier. There is other armor, but it is defensive—a shield, a helmet, a breastplate. We can't fight down foes with these. But the word! The word! When we once get in possession of it, become familiar with it, know the stuff it is made of, and grasp it for use, it takes an "S" as a prefix, and the word is a S-word—a *sword*. And this is the kind of sword—living, powerful, sharper than any two-edged one, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and discerning the very thoughts and intents of the heart.

Who would not be stirred to do some good battling if once persuaded in his heart of hearts that his hand could grasp always the hilt of such a weapon! Who can grasp the profound and everlasting realities of the word of God, appreciate at all the reach and significance of its tremendous alternatives and eternal sanctions, and not get built up in this quality of aggressiveness, and feel a "woe is me" to be still and dumb amid these sounding retributions and mighty inspirations of God!

Look at the early Christians. They meditated

on these things—the word of God got in their hearts—and against the three vast establishments of Judaism, Idolatry, and Imperial Rome, they hurled themselves, and brought them to naught.

Look at the missionaries, men and women both, that are pushing their way to-day to the heart of Pagan continents, inspired and armed only by this word of God!

Look at Moody, the very incarnation of aggressiveness, who crossed seas and continents, and flung himself against the worst classes and forces in our great crime centers, with that well-worn Bible under his arm, which he had studied and pondered and prayed over until its truths were inwrought in every fiber of his soul, and his Christian manliness was of the sort that the roughest criminal of the street would recognize. It laid no claim to scholarly and æsthetic culture, but there was no weakness about it. And everybody knows that aggressiveness is a most vital thing in a good cause. Nothing puts it into life and character like the Bible.

IV. *The Courage of Repose.*—This is another constituent of worthy character. We commonly associate courage with action. But it is a question whether the top of human courage is not found in self-restraint rather than in self-abandon

—in repose rather than in action. It would not be strange if hearts that naturally feared and trembled should grow brave in the rush of a grand charge, and the roar of an impetuous onset, when whole regiments were breast to breast, and the fire of a loyal enthusiasm swept down the lines. Even a coward might be brave there. But it tests all there is in a man to creep slowly and singly in the skirmish line toward a hidden enemy, out of whose ambush at any instant and with unerring aim may be hurled the deadly rifle ball.

Tennyson has immortalized the “Charge of the Light Brigade”—

“Cannon to right of them, .
 Cannon to left of them,
 Volleyed and thundered.
 Into the jaws of death,
 Into the mouth of hell,
 Rode the six hundred.”

There it is; the courage of action; the blood astir, the eyes aflame, the thrill of comradeship, the whirl and rush and roar of onset. Magnificent courage!

But what of the courage aboard the Merri-
 mac; the men going without a word of cheer,

quietly, silently into a seemingly inevitable doom of death? And there they lay on the deck, as the ship passed steadily into that storm of shot and shell, hidden mines beneath them, hissing shells raining on every side of them, a very hell of fire and wrath—there they lay without action or word; not a man moved, looking death in the face, waiting their doom, obedient to the order of their chief. The courage of repose. Is not this, too, magnificent?

Hear Christ, when only twelve years of age, in that strange scene in the temple saying to His mother when she sought Him sorrowing, "Know ye not that I must be in My Father's house?" It was the first flashing out of the Godhead in Him and betokened the consciousness of His divine mission. Yet back He went to His father's carpenter bench and waited in silence eighteen years ere He declared Himself. And when in the wilderness, tempted of the Devil, it was still the high courage of inaction He showed. "If thou be the Son of God," said the tempter, "make these stones bread, and end your hunger." "No, it is not the time and the way to show My Messiahship. I must wait."

To stand and wait; to bide the time; to be still in God's hand; to be silent and patient in

the silence; without a murmur to arrest activities that would leap to service—this is the top and crown of courage, the courage of repose. There is no stimulus to action in it. It is obedience, and even unto death, without one circumstance of inspiration or one thrill of used and blessed endeavor.

The word of God, as nothing else, puts this power of repose in character. Do you ask me how? By dwarfing the present and magnifying evermore the eternal future; by belittling the instrument and exalting God; by giving us the true estimate of things. For it leads us to see that nothing can be best, nothing can be of service, nothing can be wise and right and useful to us, which is not in God's time and by God's will. We come to realize more and more that God is never in a hurry; that He has a great while to do things in; that meanwhile, whoever stands and waits, God's eternal thought moves on. And so we learn that "truth is a part of the celestial machinery of God; that whoso puts that in gear for mankind has the Almighty to turn his wheel"; and that when God turns the mill men may stop, but the mill will not. So, steadily, little by little, as the Bible is studied and pondered and made familiar,

this quality of character, the courage of repose, gets fixed and rooted in the soul.

V. *The Power of Reserve.*—This is still another element of the noblest character. It is the quality of unused force—that power of character which comes from having the consciousness and giving the impression of being able to do more. You know action sometimes seems to exhaust itself, as if the utmost possibility of power were put forth and the end of the tether reached. There is weakness in that sign. The manhood has been put to all the tension it will bear.

Action is of an altogether different sort when it seems to tell, in every form and expression of it, “The man could do far more if he wanted to—if he thought there were need.” We all know what power there is in the ability thus to impress men. It is the power of reserve in character. It is the calm consciousness of having that at command which will make one equal to any occasion. It impresses others with the conviction of unused force. And the effect of this conviction on men’s imaginations has been prodigious. It has made mobs cower. It has enabled one man to quell a tumult, and to harness to his will the passions of men wilder than wild beasts.

Jesus is again the preëminent example. He

knew all power was given to Him. He knew He could summon legions of angels to His aid. He knew He could make stones bread. Yet He often answered not a word. And His very silence awed men. "If Thou be Christ, save Thyself," the scoffers shouted beneath the cross. He was dumb amidst that babel of hell. Yet somehow men went home from the crucifixion smiting their breasts—smiting their breasts.

Now, just as the word of God abides in you, my friend, as its truths cease to be mere notions, and become positive and profound beliefs, will this power of reserve get built up in you. Take some of the great Scriptural truths—that all things are possible to faith; that the world, life, death, things present, things to come, are the property of the believer, and made to work together for good to them that love God; that invisible troops of God cover the mountains, and may be marshaled any hour or instant to shield God's own elect; that there is no possibility of achievement beyond which there is not possibility of infinitely greater achievement. Let a believing soul get hold of these truths, grasp them, transmute them into living convictions, and what an exhaustless battery of spiritual dynamics gets stored away as reserved force, and what possible

limit can be put to its unused yet usable power! In the supreme moments, in the crisis hours, such a soul is able to say without the least hyperbole, "I can do all things through Christ."

VI. *Self-sacrifice*.—This is the crowning glory of character. It enters into the innermost life of all real greatness. No manhood or womanhood is complete without it. The spirit that is not ready for a voluntary vicarious sacrifice can never go to the greater heights. Old Ben Jonson said:

"Fear to do base unworthy things, is valor.
If they be done to us, to suffer them
Is valor too."

Put Christ into that terse apothegm, and you have heaven's topmost sign and proof of high and fine character. Christ pleased not Himself. He gave His life for others. He was rich with the riches of God, and He became poor that we might be rich. "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem!" was the sob of his broken heart, as He wept over the city that cast Him out. "Father, forgive them" was the prayer that died upon His lips as He gave up the Ghost.

Through and through the word of God is this shining example. The Bible lifts up the cross as the symbol of God's best—love in sacrifice. And

the young disciple takes his Bible and reads, and looks up into the face of the Crucified, and reads again, and again he looks on the mystery of that scene, and somehow, as he looks and reads, more and more he gets molded into the image of that divine passion—bathed in the spirit and power of that sacrifice. And behold! The miracle of Christianity! Perfect manhood or womanhood in Christ Jesus!

Here, then, are the elements of the finest character: heartiness, fixedness, aggressiveness, the courage of repose, the power of reserve, and self-sacrifice. The character of such fiber, you will all admit, is no mean thing. It will do to be tried in the fire and it will come out gold. It will do to be weighed and, in any true balances, it will make wealth and wit and family descent kick the beam.

Oh, young hearts! it is a great thing to be called to the kingdom for such a time as this. The hour is big with opportunity. Do you mean to enter into the age-long struggle to right things? Are you determined to get more wrong on the scaffold and more truth on the throne? You'll want the best fiber of character to make a good fight. The Bible will give it to you. Old Izaak Walton looked into it and said:—

“Every hour
I read you kills a sin,
Or lets a virtue in
To fight against it.”

It built Gladstone—taken all in all, the foremost man of the last century. It built Florence Nightingale, that queen of charities; and Frances Willard, who kept her gentle womanhood in the midst of high debates and in the full glare of long and wide publicity. It built England's late queen, who gave to the British Isles their peerless reign. And it built Lincoln, the unique personality in American history.

Whatever of conscience incarnate there is among men to-day is due to this Book. Our naval heroes got anchorage in the word of God before they anchored at Manila and Santiago. The best modern scientific research turns to this Book and reads to-day the first chapter of Genesis, written thousands of years ago, and says, in the light of the most recent investigation, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” Lower criticism looks into this old Book, and while discovering many errors, avows it to be the most marvelous and unmatched preservation of textual purity; the errors touching nothing fundamental to faith. Higher criticism—that modern nineteenth century

blowpipe—directs its hot blast to this bit of sacred literature, and blowing upon it with its fierce breath, detects and consumes some gloss and dross, but leaves it still in its unique and peculiar glory as the word of God.

Heartiness, fixedness, aggressiveness, the courage of repose, the power of reserve, and self-sacrifice: these are the elements of character it is fitted, as no other book or influence or man is fitted, to build into character. My friend, you cannot have these qualities in anything like fullness, you cannot have them for inspiration, and stay, and conflict, and obedience, and witness, and victory in this life—nor can you have them as an heirloom for eternity—unless you have the word of God abiding in you.

“The forces of the dark dissolve;
The doorway of the dark is broken;
The word that casts out night is spoken.”

That word is in this Book—and it abideth for ever.

IV

THE LABOR QUESTION
IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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The Parable of the Laborers.—MATT. xx. 1-16.

“To every man a penny.”

The Parable of the Talents.—MATT. xxv. 14-30.

“Faithful over a few things. Set over many things.”

The Parable of the Pounds.—LUKE xix. 11-27.

“Ten pounds”—“ten cities.”

“Five pounds”—“five cities.”

ONE of the great questions of the hour, in the world, is the labor question; and one of the great questions of the hour, in the church, is the labor question.

In the world, vast combinations of capital are being followed by vast combinations of labor. Trusts were never so far reaching and comprehensive. The sons of toil were never so numerous and so united. The attitude of each to the other should be friendly; for their interests blend. In the long run it is always found that putting one end of the chain round the neck of toil puts the

other end of the chain round the neck of him who enslaves toil. Employers and employed have mutual interests. Let us pray God that the way to a happy adjustment of these interests may speedily be found. Arbitration and the golden rule are on the road to world-wide triumph.

But what of the labor question when connected with the kingdom of God? No one can read the New Testament without being struck with the emphasis it everywhere puts upon grace and faith. Yet the gospel is nothing in all its splendid speech if not a gospel of works. Listen! "Faith without works is a dead faith." How this strong word puts faith and works in close and vital alliance! Listen again! "We are laborers together with God." This is the divine partnership Christian work gets us into. And again, "Work out your own salvation, . . . for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work." This makes it sure our work shall not be in vain. And still again, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them." This marks the double eternal purpose of God—viz., Christians fashioned in Christ for good works, and good works ordained beforehand for their doing.

Consider also how Christ puts in the bosom of

His most gracious invitation and promise this thought of labor, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." How will He give rest? "Take My yoke upon you, . . . and ye shall find rest." A yoke is the sign and symbol of toil. It means obedience, subjection, service. Hear another word of the Master, "If any man would come after Me, let him . . . take up his cross, and follow Me." Christ is not playing with speech. Cross-bearing means burden-bearing. In other words, the true road to rest and peace is through service.

Clearly, the labor question is a transcendent question in the kingdom of God. We cannot escape it. We ought to understand it. When God calls a man into His kingdom He says, "Go work. Go work to-day in My vineyard. Work while the day lasts. Work for the night cometh." But this labor problem bristles with interrogation points. What of grace, if works are due? How can salvation be a gift, and yet we be asked to work it out? Are we to serve God without thought or care of reward? Or does God pay wages, and urge us to toil by the promise of them? Are the wages alike to each? Or do the wages differ and make an eternal difference in the eternal inheritance?

Let us consult God's word and see if we can find it giving answer to these questions.

There are three labor parables spoken by Christ and recorded in Scripture that are distinctly fitted and unchallengeably designed to throw light on this question.

Before we consider them let us try to have in mind what a parable is, and how it is to be interpreted.

What is a parable? A story, at the heart of which is a great truth. It is truth in scenic form—in fiction. It is a verbal picture, embosoming, embodying, illustrating a great thought of God, or a process of redemption, or a lesson of duty. Its purpose is commonly determined by its context. The point of view of anything goes far to determine views. This is as true of a parable as of a bit of landscape or a work of architecture. If we get Christ's point of view we are already at the heart of the story He is telling; we know the purpose of His telling it, and we know what is mere dress or drapery and what is vital as embodying central and essential truth. For example, it is said He spake a parable unto them, "That men ought always to pray, and not to faint." And then follows the story of the unjust judge and the importunate widow. Now we do

not know who the unjust judge is, or who the pleading widow is, or what her personal grievance. We don't need to know. What we do know is that this story was told to encourage us to persistence in prayer. If an unjust judge, from even a selfish motive, will hear a poor unknown widow persisting in her plea to be avenged for a mere personal grievance, shall not God, the just Judge, avenge His own chosen and beloved child that cries day and night unto Him, and for something concerning His own kingdom? The question answers itself.

Take another example: "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them," sneered the Pharisees. Certainly. And Christ's answer to the sneer is the matchless allegories of the lost sheep and the lost coin and the lost son. Now whatever in these parables reveals the sinner far from God, and God's heart of seeking, searching, and welcoming love for the sinner—that is the soul of the parables—that is the purpose of their telling. And all the other details are mere accessories, setting, verbal dress, simply to heighten the contrast, and of no spiritual significance whatever.

Another thing about a parable. It has one specific, definite purpose, always. It presses one distinct phase of truth, not a dozen phases. It

treats one specific side of a given truth, not all sides. In illustration, take the parable of "The Pharisee and the Publican." It does not attempt to teach everything about prayer. It brings out the beauty and glory and divine estimate of humility in prayer, but nothing else; just as its companion parable of "The Unjust Judge" brings out the power and victory of persistence, or importunity in prayer, but nothing else.

Again, in illustration, take the parable of "The Lost Sheep." It shows us a seeking, yearning, compassionate shepherd, out on the mountains or out in the desert, seeking until he finds that lost sheep, and then putting it on his shoulder and carrying it all the way home. We all know that this touching allegory was meant to tell us how a lost sinner is saved. But it is only Christ's side of the saving that it tells us. Must not a sinner do something in getting back to God? Oh, yes! But in this parable not a word is said of the sinner's agency. His side of the saving comes out in the parable of "The Prodigal Son." There the lost son, of his own will, is off in a far country, feeding on husks, and while perishing with hunger, he thinks of home, resolves to go back, and goes back, to find a welcome when he gets in sight of his father's house. This parable, also,

was meant to tell us how a lost sinner is saved; but it is only the sinner's side of the saving that it tells us. The sinner comes to himself, is conscious of his need, resolves to go to his father and to confess his sins, and arises and goes and confesses, as if God had nothing to do with his coming home. You must read the two parables together, the lost sheep and the lost son, to get the full truth, both the divine and the human side, of how a lost sinner is saved. Either, alone, is only half the truth.

With this light on our path, let us now go to the labor parables to see what they teach. At the outset we are sure no one of them will tell us all the truth about labor in the kingdom of God. This is manifestly not Christ's way, as we have already seen. We shall probably need the three to give us the whole truth. The first is "The Parable of the Laborers." And in substance it is as follows: The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. And he hired some and set them to work for a penny a day. And about the third hour he went out again and found others idle, and said to them, "Go to work, and whatever is right I will pay you." And about the sixth and the ninth hour he did the same.

And even about the eleventh hour he went out and found men waiting for work, and he sent them into his vineyard. "When even was come," he ordered his steward to pay the men. The eleventh hour men were paid first, and received "every man a penny." And all the rest, the ninth, the sixth, the third hour men, and even the early morning hour men likewise, received "every man a penny." Those that had worked all day supposed they would receive more, but they did not. Those that worked twelve hours and those that worked one hour got just the same. Now wherein is all this, or any of it, like the kingdom of heaven? It seems very unlike. God does not appear to do things in this way.

But let us get Christ's view-point. He stood there with a few disciples. He had just told a rich young man, who had come asking what he must do to have eternal life, to go and sell all that he had and give to the poor, and he would have treasure in heaven. And the young man went away sorrowful, for he was very rich. And Christ said to His disciples: It is hard, it is impossible, for a rich man, trusting in his riches, to enter into the kingdom of heaven. And Peter said, "Lo, we have left all, and followed Thee; what then shall we have?" Jesus saw their hearts, and knew they

loved Him, and He said they should have a hundred-fold more. But He also saw in their query a spirit that might breed infinite trouble if not checked and repressed. What shall we have? "What shall we have?" asked the disciples, betraying a spirit which, if much indulged, might lead them to think more of what they were to have or get than of what they ought to be. So Christ answers, "Ye shall have eternal life indeed," but—look out—"many shall be last that are first, and first that are last"—*i. e.*, have a care, lest in being too intent on reward, you miss the very spirit of My cross and passion, and lose everything.

We need only to recall what Christ said on another occasion, to see what fearful possibilities lie along this road. "Many will say to Me," are His solemn words, "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by Thy name, and by Thy name cast out demons, and by Thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me." Do you wonder at Christ's warning word? As if He had said, "Take care! take care! lest ye be found following Me for the loaves and fishes."

Now the parable of the laborers was spoken to

meet this exact condition. And it was clearly told to show that it is not amount of toil, but acceptance of a condition that gives us heaven or eternal life. "A penny a day" was the agreement with these laborers; but, mark you, the parable knows only one day. "When even was come," the record says, they settled up. That one day, therefore, represents human life, and the different hours of the day, the different periods of human life. And "the penny" represents what each laborer receives, no matter at what hour he begins his toil. Each gets just the same. In other words, it is not given for requital of toil, but for acceptance of a condition. We see now the perfect adaptation of the parable to teach this one great truth—that eternal life, salvation, heaven is not gotten by labor, is not paid for by much toil. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ. To speak of earning a gift is a contradiction. Salvation is solely of grace. To talk of paying for grace is to despoil grace of all its glory and to make it a debt. The condition of securing salvation is willingness to be a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, to take up the cross and follow Him. "He that believeth"—not he that worketh—"he that believeth hath eternal life." The hour a sinner believes, heaven is his, whether

the hour is the third, the sixth, the ninth, or the last. The penitent dying thief is as sure of heaven as the dying apostle, though behind the thief is a life of sin, not a moment of which has been given to God; and though behind the apostle is a life of service packed to the full with work for God. By faith alone Rahab, the harlot, and by faith alone Moses, the seer, went home to God. By faith alone the dying penitent thief, and by faith alone the dying Paul, went home to God.

Works do not win heaven. Each of all the toilers for God goes through heaven's gates singing:

“I'm a poor sinner and nothing at all,
And Jesus Christ is my all in all.”

But is there not a difference? There is an immense difference. Does Christian work bring us nothing? Christian work brings us something wonderful. Heaven is not reward for work done here, but there is reward in heaven for work done here. The parable of the laborers tells us a part of the truth concerning the labor question in the kingdom, but it does not tell us all the truth.

We turn to the second of the labor parables, and we find it giving us further light on this question of toil in God's kingdom.

It is known as “The Parable of the Talents.”

The kingdom of heaven is as when a man, going into another country, commits to his servants his goods, giving to one five talents, to another two, and to another one. After a long time the lord of these servants comes back and makes a reckoning with them. He who had received five talents reports that he has gained five more. And his lord says, "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord." The servant with two talents reports that he has gained two more, and his lord says exactly the same to him that he said to the first, "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

Here now is not only distinct recognition of service, but specific reward for it. Fidelity over a few things here puts us in trust of many things there. Our toil does not give us eternal life, but it enriches our eternal life. Our work for God on earth does not open heaven to us, but it makes a different heaven—a wider heaven; may we not reverently say it, a richer heaven. Faithful over a few things—set over many things. That's the story. And it exactly fits into other Scripture, and is gloriously corroborated thereby.

“Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.” What does this mean if it does not imply possibility of enrichment in heaven by the character of our life and the quality of our doing on earth? “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely. Rejoice and be exceeding glad.” Why? “For great is your reward in heaven.” For very proof of this, borrow John’s eyes and look into heaven, and see the shining ones with white robes and palms in their hands. And then listen, that you may hear the angel saying, “These are they that come out of the great tribulation.” But it is not alone the great trials and the great deeds that shall have reward. He who gives a cup of cold water for Christ’s sake shall in no wise lose his reward. So it shall be, says the apostle, if any man’s work abide after the trial of fire, he shall receive a reward for it. Over and above admission to heaven and participation in its common glories and common joys will be these gifts of God in reward of toil. Thank God, while it is written of the wicked, “The wages of sin is death”; it is also written of the righteous, “He that reapeth receiveth wages.” He that works for God shall not work for nothing, any more than he that

works for the Devil. And think of the difference in the wages! Christian work is better paid than any other work. God is not a hard task-master, reaping where He has not sown, or gathering where He has not strewn. "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

By this parable of the talents one thing is thus made unquestionable as to the labor question in the kingdom of God: labor is to be rewarded. Not the least fidelity is to go without recognition.

But is all reward to be the same? Is each toiler to get what every other toiler gets? Is there no discrimination in the wages to be paid? Here is the servant with five talents, who has gained five talents more. "Well done," says the master. "Thou hast been faithful. I will reward thee. Enter into my joy." But the lord says the same thing, exactly the same thing, to the servant who had two talents and gained two more. Is there then to be no gradation in reward, whereby it is proportioned to service? Suppose that the man with one talent, who buried his lord's money and put it to no use, had so traded with it as to put it to great use, and thereby had gained ten talents more, and, bring-

ing it to his master, had said, "Here, lord, the one talent thou gavest me has gained ten."

Now is it all one in the kingdom of God, whether a man with five talents gains five talents more or gains fifty talents more? Is it all one whether a man with three talents gains three talents or thirty talents? No, it is not all one; and the third of the labor parables brings out this truth by introducing the principle of proportion in the awards of the kingdom.

It is known as "The Parable of the Pounds." We are distinctly told it was spoken because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear. No, it is not immediately to appear; and you are to suffer and to lose your sacred city. But be faithful, keep true to the trust I have committed to you. And at the last, when I come, your eternal reward shall be exceeding great and proportioned to your fidelity. And here is the story: A certain nobleman was going to a far country; and he called his ten servants, and gave each of them a pound, saying, "Trade ye herewith till I come." And when he returned he asked for an account of what his servants had done, "that he might know what they had gained by trading." And the first said,

“Lord, thy pound hath made ten pounds more.” And the lord said, “Well done, thou good servant, . . . have thou authority over ten cities.” And the second came, saying, “Thy pound, Lord, hath made five pounds.” And the lord said, “Be thou also over five cities.”

Beyond all question the vital thing here is, not what we are put in trust with, but the gains we make for God by it. Fidelity, activity, efficiency, are not only to have reward in heaven, but to have reward according to their productivity. If your one pound has gained ten, that means a trust of ten cities. If your one pound has gained five, that means a trust of five cities. And don't you see that from one pound to ten cities, and from one pound to five cities, is not only immense promotion, but promotion proportioned to gain?

This is God's law of labor everywhere—in the kingdom of nature and in the kingdom of heaven; in the natural world and in the spiritual world. The man that puts his money to good use, gets both more capacity to gain and more gains. He gets paid by increase of capital for his employment of capital. The blow of the blacksmith tells both ways. It tells on the iron, fitting it for greater profit. It tells on the muscles of his arm—

fitting that for profit, too. He gets power while expending power.

So it is in the kingdom. They that do the most for God become the most, not arbitrarily, but by an inevitable law. They do, even now and here. I have heard it said that God does not pay wages day by day, but in the end He pays. Ah, He does both! He that works receives wages day by day. He gets more soul as he deals with souls. He gets more of God as he deals with God. His Christlike work begets the Christlike spirit. He puts Christ into his word and deed, and Christ comes back to him and into him in the very effort. He gets Christ by giving Christ, just as the blacksmith gets power by expending power.

The measure of the return? There is no measure. There is absolutely no limit to growth in the knowledge and love of God—in the gifts and graces of godliness—in faith and love and patience and spiritual power—in capacity for joy and blessedness. And when the Christian toiler and his Lord meet for settlement, what is his full reward? Why, it is the great capital of capacity for joy and blessedness and high place and comprehension of God which he carries into heaven, and the great capital of treasures laid up, and

sources of glory and joy prepared and reserved by God as his reward, which awaits him there. Two capitals, therefore: one within the soul and one without; one, capacity for joy and blessedness, and one, sources of joy and blessedness. A double portion, exceeding great and precious, each making the other a richer possession by being itself possessed.

This is no mere fetch of fancy. Think of Paul, counting all things but loss to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, sounding out his warnings night and day with tears, willing to be all things to all men that he might save some, in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, and robbers, and city and wilderness, and false brethren, in labors, in prisons, in stripes, fighting the good fight, finishing his course and keeping the faith, and then going home—think what he carried into heaven, and what met him there—think of the wages paid him day by day while he toiled, and the wages paid him when he met his Lord over the river. And then place beside him in your thought the effortless, aimless, dyspeptic, kid-gloved Christian of his day or our day, never grasping a sickle and thrusting it in to try and gather a sheaf for Christ, never moved with compassion at sight of the

unsaved multitude; never bearing a cross or fighting a battle or turning one sinner from the error of his way—with just enough of the grace of God in his heart to secure his being borne to heaven at last as if by ambulance; he himself saved indeed, yet so as by fire. Tell me now, is heaven a dead level, a kind of macadamized road, a vast flat prairie, without a mount of vision or a gradation of joy, where these two souls shall be in equal as well as everlasting content? Or is the heaven of the one so much more rich and high than the other, so much more comprehensive of God, so treasure-stored and capable of a ministry of joy as to make it seem by comparison as if there could be such a thing as *poverty in heaven*?

Thus do these three parables embody and enforce three great truths concerning labor in the kingdom of God. Let us re-state them. Embosomed in the parable of the laborers we have found this truth,—that amount of labor has nothing to do with our getting into heaven. “A penny a day” means heaven alike for the first-hour Christian and the eleventh-hour Christian.

Nevertheless, labor has a good deal to do with our heaven. For the parable of the talents teaches that for labor done on earth wages will be paid in heaven.

In the parable of the pounds we find this voice of God; that reward for labor will be exactly proportioned to the quality and the quantity of labor.

Some great and precious lessons are thus brought home to us.

This, first: It is right to do God's work for pay. Let us dare to believe and say that the promise and prospect of reward for service in the kingdom of God is a true and worthy stimulus to toil.

It is not the highest motive to service. If the only motive, it is selfish and so condemnable. But if, along with the motive to do right and serve God for right's own sake irrespective of consequence, there is also the motive to serve God for the wages He pays, are we blameworthy? Then is God blameworthy for telling us that they who turn many unto righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever? He has made the way of toil all "wooly soft with promise." He has used the most brilliant and gorgeous possibilities of color in painting the rewards of the righteous. And if God thus holds out to us promise of pay, surely it is right to care for and think of and desire the payment.

Oh, brethren, in lifting up an ideal of Christian character, let us take care that we do not try to

build better than our Lord, lest our ideal cast a shadow on Him! He, "for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame."

A second lesson is: Our works are immortal as well as we. We are not done with our works when we have done them. We are to look them in the face again. And one of the most impressive scenes in Scripture is that which pictures life as a procession of witnessing works preceding and following the doer to judgment. Here it is: "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid."

Let us stand before this picture for a moment and try to take it in. Some men's sins have such a dark and woeful prominence that they cast their shadows before to judgment. Some men's sins are under covert—in secret—but "they follow after." They are on their track. "Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand." Such is the splendor of their radiant glory that it is shot on ahead, the prophecy of their coming. "But the good works that are otherwise cannot be hid." Works done off the

highway and in quiet paths where the violets and the pansies bloom, almost hidden from sight—the lowly deeds of toil that make no noise in their doing, and never sound a trumpet before them, the mites of the widow, the cups of cold water—these cannot be hid.

Oh, the sighs and sobs, heard only by God, that shall be changed into songs of deliverance! Oh, the tears of the heart, seen only by God, that shall be as jewels in the crowns of the ransomed! Oh, the little cups of cold water handed out in Christ's name, that shall be living fountains of joy in the better country! Oh, the flowers, scarce daring to look up into the face of one of God's fair days on earth that shall bank the river of the water of life with their beauty, and make an addition even to the fragrance and bloom of heaven! Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord—for their works do follow them.

A third lesson is this: We who go through heaven's gates shall all "enter into the joy of our Lord"; but as to the depths we shall go into the Lord's joy, what a difference there will be! A little child is satisfied with the rhymes of the nursery, and its joy is full. But into the joy of a Beethoven symphony or a Handel's "Messiah" it cannot go. It has no capacity for the deep and

delicious harmonies. So a Christian that has touched only the hem of Christ's garment shall enter into the joy of his Lord. But what a surface thing that will be compared with the joy of him who has walked and talked with Jesus on many an Emmaus way, and with a burning heart—who has toiled for Him, suffered for Him, sought and found intimacies of communion and so has greatly grown in capacity for fellowship—and to whom the Master shall at last say at the end of the journey, "Enter thou into My joy."

And here is the final lesson: The Church is not a nursery, nor an arbor of rest, nor a land Beulah. She has these, blessed be God, and into them any believer may go to be comforted and rested. But the Church *is*—*by the very law of her life and the very purpose of her being—a force in action, a power for ever making for righteousness.* How can she be true to her mission, and fail of this? What is her mission? Go, do, suffer, obey, witness, testify, spread the news, scatter the seed, preach the word, seek, save, capture, conquer. This is what she is in the world for. There is no reason why she should stay here a day except for this. Do you remember how the letters to the seven churches begin? "I know thy works." "I know thy works." "I know thy works." Do

you remember the basis of reward in the last great day? "I was sick, I was hungry, I was in prison, and ye ministered unto Me." Does it not almost look as if works were everything?

In the light of all this, what must we think of a Church or a Christian content with downy pillows and couches of ease, or busy with external material matters, busy with business, busy with social functions, busy, it may be, with devices to make the outward appointments of the sanctuary artistic and imposing—but busy with no real work for God! Oh, the shame of it! The sin of it! The folly of it! And the fearful risk!

V

THE INESCAPABLE CONCLUSION

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V

THE INESCAPABLE CONCLUSION

“And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?”—I PETER iv. 18.

DIFFICULTY of process does not mean uncertainty of issue. The end may be sure while the way there is hard. This thought, in one form or another, has been set in proverbs. “The mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small.” That is the divine side of it. The grinding is slow and difficult, but God’s mills never fail. “Perseverance conquers all things.” That is the human side of it. Indeed, in a burst of enthusiasm, resolution has been declared “omnipotent.” Turning to the Scriptures we find the thought phrased thus: “Through much tribulation we enter into the kingdom of heaven.” The way to heaven is at a cost. It is over mountains and through seas. It is by hard battling, fierce conflict, struggle and heartache, stress and pain, loss and cross, with exceeding great difficulty. But it is heaven at last, sure! It is through much tribulation the righteous enter into the kingdom,

but they enter. "I give unto them eternal life," says Jesus, "and they shall never perish." Peter, therefore, is not casting any doubt upon the salvation of the righteous by his frank admission of the difficulty of it. He tells the Christians to whom he is writing that they are to meet fiery trial; that they are to be reproached for the name of Christ: but he bids them rejoice at this, pronounces them "blessed" for it, and says "the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God resteth upon you." Of course, if they suffer because of their evil doing there is no such consolation for them. "See to it that no one of you suffer as an evildoer" is Peter's warning word. But if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this name. For the time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God. Yes, Christians must suffer. There are times at hand to try men's souls. But if judgment begin first at us, if we who love God and are trying to live righteous lives through faith in Jesus Christ, have a hard time of it getting to heaven, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel? If the righteous be scarcely saved—*i. e.*, saved with difficulty—where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?

The difficulty of salvation to the righteous is

thus made an argument for the impossibility of salvation to the ungodly.

Is the argument valid? Let us, without fear or favor, test it now and here.

How about the premise? Is that good? Are the righteous through faith in Christ saved with difficulty? And if that be true, how about the conclusion drawn from it—that the ungodly cannot be saved at all? Is that also true—the inexorable, inescapable next step? And if the argument be flawless, the premise good, and the conclusion irresistible, what then?

The righteous are saved with difficulty. Of course, this cannot be because God is weak. If it were a question of mere omnipotence, there could be no difficulty about it. For nothing possible to omnipotence can be difficult for omnipotence. But God in this matter is dealing with a voluntary and rational creature whom He has made. He has endowed man with a free will, giving him the power and therefore the responsibility of choice. He must respect that will. Its voluntariness is its existence. A compelled will is a contradiction,

“And He that looketh high and wide,
Nor pauses in His plan,
Will take the sun out of the sky,
Ere freedom out of man.”

The power that created the will can annihilate the will, but even though it be the power of the infinite and almighty God, it cannot force the will. The moment the will is forced it ceases to be free; it ceases to be will.

So it is not because of any divine impotency that the Christian is saved with difficulty. It is no weakness of God that makes the process hard.

Nor is the difficulty because of any inadequacy of the atonement. God in the atonement makes it impossible there should be any necessity of sin or demand of law the atonement does not meet. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should be saved. Saved with difficulty, indeed, but not because of any defect whatever in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. By that gift of love God made an atonement sufficient for and adapted to all the world. It is adequate to every case. It covers the worst sinner and the weakest and wickedest saint. The difficulty of saving the righteous is not from any lack of amplitude of provision for their salvation.

But there are three reasons why the righteous man is saved with difficulty: because of the deceitfulness of his old nature; because of the

weakness of his new nature; and because of the power and subtlety of Satan.

His old nature still clings to him, even though he is a new man in Christ Jesus. He is justified, but he is not sanctified. He is freed from sin's condemnation, but not wholly from sin's power and pollution. A new principle has been planted in his bosom, but the old principle has not been driven out. The mastery has been begun, but it is not complete. That old nature is deceitful still and clamorous for indulgence. The tides of the old passions and appetites sometimes run high. Every righteous man knows what subtleties of treachery and falsehood are still wrapped up in this old heart.

Add to this the weakness of the new nature. It is just born. The currents of the new life have not been set. Principles are not established. Faith's vision is dim. "Babes in Christ" is the Scriptural phrase that tells the exact situation. Growth in grace has just begun.

Now, to this deceitfulness of the old nature and to this weakness of the new nature, join the power and subtlety of Satan, and you have the three-fold reason why the righteous is saved with difficulty. The Devil is committed by every instinct of his nature to the overthrow of the child of

God. He goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, and is especially set to the destruction of Christians. If any one is disposed to deny the personality of the Devil, he does not thereby get rid of the evil that is in the world—intense, abounding, and malignant—a foe to everything good. And the Scriptures impersonate this evil, call this person Satan, Apollyon, the Dragon, fill him with all subtlety, malignity, and craft, and represent him as Prince of the power of the air and Lord of hell. Christ said to poor, tempted, storm-tossed Peter, "Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat."

Paul, so often buffeted of Satan, says, "We wrestle not only against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spirits of wickedness in high places."

These are the forces, led by an alert and mighty foe, arrayed against every believer in Christ Jesus, and bent upon his destruction. They are represented and given a potent personality in their insidious and malignant leader, Satan. The evil is made the Devil. And the Scriptures declare that the Devil tried his hellish arts on Christ, tempting Him by the lust of the flesh, the

lust of the eye, and the pride of life. The word of God also declares that the Devil "sifted" Peter, that he "hindered and buffeted" Paul, that he "resisted" Joshua, that he "accused" Job, that he makes war on the saints, that he is a murderer from the beginning, a liar and the father of lies, clothing himself as an angel of light, and deceiving, if possible, the very elect.

Surely we see now why the righteous are saved with difficulty. The deceitfulness of the old nature, the weakness of the new nature, and the power and subtlety of Satan make it clear. And every child of God knows something of the difficulty. The knowledge is born of experience.

Constant struggle is one phase of this experience. Frequent defeat is another phase. Divine chastening is another. The end is sure, but the road is rough. The issue is certain, but the conflict ceaseless and sometimes intense.

Take the constancy of the struggle. With the old nature and the new nature ever in strife for the ascendancy, what else than a field of battle could the Christian heart be until the field is won! Will against will, desire against desire, lust against love, passion against principle, "I don't want to" against "I ought." This double personality is no fiction. There is an "I" and an "I" at variance;

two wills that are locking horns. What a transcript of this common experience is the seventh of Romans! "The good which I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I practice. I find then the law, that, to me who would do good, evil is present. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?"

This is no exceptional experience. Paul's testimony is the testimony of Christendom. Read the roll call of God's heroes in the eleventh of Hebrews. They had trial of mockings and scourgings, of bonds and imprisonment. They were tempted, they were stoned, they were destitute, afflicted, evil-entreated, fightings without and fears within. Recall Bunyan's representation of the pilgrim Christian on his way from the city of destruction to the city of God. What struggles, conflicts, bitternesses, sore straits, he gets into! He is shut up in Doubting Castle, kept by one Giant Despair. And multitudes of other Christians have been there, too. Who does not know Doubting Castle? He meets Apollyon, who

swears by his infernal den that he will spill his soul. And never, until he crosses the river and enters into the heavenly city, does the trouble cease.

Do you say this is the talk of a dreamer? The play of poetic fancy? Read Bunyan's "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners," and see how terribly real it is, copied literally out of his own heart. Read any record of deep spiritual experience—David's in the fifty-first Psalm, that sob of a broken, penitent heart; Peter's in the gospel, struggling Peter, rebuked, smitten, falling, rising again, weeping, rejoicing, and writing at last to other struggling and bruised Christians, "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial . . . which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you." Not strange. No; it is the common lot. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." Deny thyself, and take up thy cross daily. Watch. Be sober. Put on the armor of God. Fight the good fight of faith. Quit you like men. These are the everyday battle orders. They betoken constant struggle. The Christian who knows anything of Christ knows how very real this inner and outer conflict is—how terribly real it sometimes is.

Frequent defeat is another phase of Christian

experience. The victories are not always on the side of the new nature, as every child of God is painfully aware. They might be, through Christ, and they ought to be. But they are not. While the fire of some old passion is burning, the Devil pours oil on the flames. When the old longing for the flesh-pots of Egypt comes back, he makes the savory dish of some worldly delight smell exceeding sweet. He prepares so covert a pitfall for our unwary feet that we get tripped and hurt even where we walked most confidently. Ah, who that has ever started on the highway of the King has not known to his sorrow these discomfitures and humiliations, and how he must needs go every day—every day—with the cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner!”

Divine chastening is still another phase of Christian experience. The Lord loves whom He chastens; and He chastens because He loves. The chastening is the sign and seal of love. But the chastening hurts. No affliction for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous. God allows it for discipline. Sanctified afflictions are spiritual promotions. Fiery trials make golden Christians. Affliction would not trouble a child of God if he but knew God’s reason for sending it. But he does not know the reason. And

meanwhile the furnace is hot and the fire burns. It costs the Christian something—this dross-consuming, gold-refining process.

“ God comes and lays the heart all heated
On the hard anvil, minded so
Into His own fair shape to beat it,
With His great hammer, blow on blow.”

Surely, surely, the righteous is saved with difficulty. He is saved; this is made unmistakable by God's almighty and redeeming grace; but through what temptations, out of what pitfalls, back from what wanderings, in spite of what weaknesses, and after what shamefulnes of doubt, and sinfulness of indulgence, and humiliation of defeat!

It is the old story. It has always been so down through the centuries. Struggle, defeat, chastening—struggle, defeat, chastening. Not these alone, but these right on through, till the battling and suffering saint is called home. And because of the deceitfulness of the old nature, the weakness of the new nature, and the power, the craft, and the malignity of the Devil. You who fear God and try to keep His commandments, who believe in Christ and try to fashion your lives like His, I appeal to your own heart's record, and if I could

copy it here this day, would it not testify to conflicts, weaknesses, backslidings, repentances, forgivenesses, repeated so often that you have come to marvel more at the patience than at the kingdom of Jesus Christ? And you have wondered and wondered how He could ever again patiently and forgivingly hear your old, old story of sin and sorrow.

If this, then, be the way of all the righteous, if they are saved with difficulty, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear? How can it be possible that it is to be all the same on the other side for the righteous and the wicked, the godly and the ungodly, if the road there is made so hard for the righteous? It is impossible.

For otherwise, these four following absurdities and contradictions are true:—

I. *God makes the way to heaven hard for the righteous and easy for the wicked.*

We have seen how the Christian life is a battle, not a hymn; a struggle, not a rest. "Sure I must fight if I would win," is the Christian's daily song. He has deep joys, but they are from the swing of deep sorrows. He climbs glorious heights and gets beatific visions along his wilderness way, but he must needs pass through valleys of humiliation and up the rugged steeps of toil to

reach them. And even these sunny mountain tops are swept by fierce storms that threaten to undo him, that make it seem as if Satan would blast the eyes that had just seen "the coming of the glory of the Lord," by letting loose upon them all hell's rage.

Whereas, the ungodly are not so. They take their ease. They are not at cross-purposes with themselves; their wills are not athwart their desires. They are in this world to get the most out of it, and let the next world take care of itself. They are not in trouble as Christians, neither are they plagued like Christians. Away back in the centuries, the Psalmist of Israel was perplexed about this. He saw the eyes of the wicked stand out with fatness, and that they had more than heart could wish. And he was troubled until he went into the sanctuary of God and considered their latter end, and how at the last destruction came upon them. That righted things. That made the balances of God even. But suppose their latter end is just like that of the righteous. Then it comes to pass that the godly are saved with difficulty and the ungodly are saved without difficulty, that the godly must "fight to win the prize and sail through bloody seas," while the ungodly are "carried to the skies

on flowery beds of ease." And this is so flat an absurdity as to be beyond the possibility of rational belief.

II. This further absurdity follows: "*Let us eat and drink*" is better philosophy than "*Deny thyself.*" Paul uses this very argument in his great chapter on the resurrection. If there be no resurrection and no immortality, preaching is vain, faith is vain, self-denial is vain. What is the use of self-denial if we all land at last in the blank of everlasting silence? Why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? reasons the apostle. If, after the manner of men, I fought with beasts at Ephesus, what doth it profit me? If the dead are not raised, if death ends all, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.

So I reason, if salvation is alike to the godly and the ungodly, what boots it that the righteous should be at such pains in a life-long struggle to attain their end, when the unrighteous are to come in among them at last without a single battle! Just as it would be difficult to prove we ought to live like angels if we are to die like brutes, so it would be difficult to prove we ought to be fighting beasts in the desert instead of eating and drinking in the palace, if the path of self-denial and the path of self-indulgence are equally

sure ways to heaven, and we get there at last by either road.

III. But we are faced with another absurdity on this strange hypothesis: *A beautifying trust is false and a railing unbelief is true.*

Say what men may about the credulity of the Christian believer and the childishness of his belief, there is something very beautiful about it, and something wonderful in its transforming power. Implicit, confiding trust of heart in heart we hold in dear regard, and count it the heavenliest thing of earth. Distrust in the home makes a hell of it. Distrust in business makes a wreck of it. Distrust in government makes a mob of it. Distrust in God makes a liar of Him. Trust antidotes all this—makes home a heaven, business possible and profitable, government orderly and secure, and God a Father.

Now mark the beautifying trust of a child of God. It is the creature taking his Creator at His word; the sinner taking the Saviour at His word. God says, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." The sinner answers, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." From that time on a new relation is established—the relation of affection and sonship. The man begins to walk by faith. He trusts God,

He learns submission. He grows patient under trial. The old hardness of nature gets softened by grace. Passions come to be subdued. Trials that once provoked murmurings and repinings and possibly curses, or which, at the best, were only borne with stoical indifference, are now accepted with a sweet and Christlike patience, and even taken to the bosom and held there as a gift of God. When a blow falls, Trust says, "Even so, Father." When a sepulchre is made in the heart's garden, Trust takes Christ into the sepulchre, and it becomes the dearest spot in the garden, sacred to the beloved dead and to Jesus. When in the presence of "a frowning providence," Trust sees behind it "a smiling face." When sitting down at a barren board, Trust says, "My Lord can feed me with hunger, and make me fat with wants and desertion." When told that lions are in the way, Trust answers, "God can stop the mouths of lions, and He has promised never to leave me—never to leave me." Trust sings the sweetest songs in the night, gets nearest God under the cross, climbs mounts of sacrifice as if they were ascents to heaven, and goes through death's door like a child going home.

What does unbelief do? Unbelief sneers at God's warnings and tramples on His entreaties;

counts Calvary a useless tragedy and the atonement a butchery; rejects Christ and murders mercy; makes God a liar instead of the Devil; climbs up to heaven some other way than by the way of a crucified Redeemer, and sings for ever the glories of its own righteousness rather than of the Lamb that was slain.

If now it is all one with the righteous and the wicked, the godly and the ungodly, when they die, what becomes of this beautifying trust and this railing unbelief? The trust is become false, and the unbelief is become true. In other words, this trust, which is the noblest thing in thought and life, is born of a pitiful delusion, and this unbelief, which empties life of its transcendent meaning and which challenges the ways of the Almighty, is proved to be the child of wisdom and forecast. A railing unbelief is vindicated and a beautifying trust is put to an open shame.

IV. But still another absurdity follows on this strange hypothesis of things happening alike to the righteous and the wicked on the other side—viz., *The cry of blasphemy and the cry for mercy strike in the same ear and get no proper answer.*

If Job had cursed God and died, it would have been as well with him as to say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Job was saved

with difficulty as a righteous man who feared God and eschewed evil. If he had only been an ungodly man he might have been saved without any difficulty. One of the blessed things about God is that He hears prayer. But if He hears any kind of prayer, and one cry is just the same to Him as another cry, and "God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are" gets the same answer as "God be merciful to me a sinner," then that God hears prayer is not a blessed thing at all. It were better that He were deaf to any cry than that He make no distinction between a cry of blasphemy and a cry for mercy.

Surely He does make a distinction. These absurdities and contradictions cannot be true. If they *are* true, if God makes the way to heaven hard for the righteous and easy for the wicked, and if "Let us eat and drink" is better philosophy than "Deny thyself," and if a beautifying trust is false and a railing unbelief is true, and if God leans with equal favor to the cry of blasphemy and the cry for mercy, then up is down, and in is out, and white is black, and heaven is hell, and God is Devil!

But if these things and things like them are impossible, being at war with our primary beliefs and self-contradictory, then there is none other

name under heaven given among men whereby we can be saved but the name of Christ ; then it is the wildest delusion to think there will be no final difference between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not ; then the question of the text has only one answer : If the righteous are saved with difficulty, what possibility of salvation is there for the ungodly ?

VI

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE

VI

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE

“For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”—2 COR. v. 1.

WHAT do we know of the life beyond the grave? What is the state of the soul after death? Where are the dead who die in the Lord? How are they conditioned who sleep in Jesus? Is there an intermediate state? a paradise, as distinct from heaven? or a purgatory, as distinct from hell? or a shadowy region, neither the one nor the other, where all souls go and wait for the final judgment? Is the state after death one of unconsciousness? or of sleep? or of filmy, shadowy, evanescent, and half-conscious life? or of wakeful and active joy and of intelligent and holy companionship? These are questions that have been of absorbing interest to men in all ages. They often recur to us in the presence of death. They assume an intense and personal consequence when we are brought face to face with our own dying or with the dying of those near and dear to us.

Does the word of God answer these questions? Does the apostle in the text and in its nexus throw any light upon them? Let us see.

“For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” It is agreed by all that the apostle here refers to death—the death of the body. He calls the earthly house—the material body—a tabernacle—*i. e.*, a frail temporary abode as opposed to a structure permanent and abiding. If by any means this were dissolved, its component parts separated either by violence or decay, so that the soul could no longer tenant it, we know, he says, we know “we have a building from God.” Now what is this building? There are but three answers to the question. It is either an intermediate body or place, the resurrection body, or heaven itself.

It clearly cannot be an intermediate body or place, for it is “eternal.” It is so declared to be by the apostle in this very passage. Now that which is intermediate, which comes between what precedes and what follows after, serving a temporary purpose, tiding a naked soul over a certain period and then being laid aside, cannot be eternal. No such term would be applicable to a body spe-

cially fitted for the intermediate state. The same is true of a place, fitted up of God as a kind of passageway or anteroom, where holy souls wait till the morning of the resurrection. Paul speaks of no such place, for that would be temporary—serving a present purpose, lasting only through time—while he distinctly declares that this building from God, which we have as a substitute for our earthly house, is eternal. It cannot, therefore, be an intermediate body or place.

Is this body from God, to which the apostle refers, the resurrection body? We think not, and for the following reasons:—

The resurrection is a future event, everywhere so represented in the word of God. It is to be at the final consummation of affairs and just prior to the great judgment; at the end of the world, the crisis period; at the second coming of the Lord with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel and with the trump of God. Jesus Himself said on one occasion, "The hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment."¹ Again, He said, "It is the will of the

¹ John v. 28, 29.

Father that every one that believeth on the Son may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”¹ Martha says of her brother Lazarus, “I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”² And Paul, speaking of those who shall be alive at the second coming of the Lord, says that they shall not anticipate those who are in their graves, but the Lord descending from heaven, the dead in Christ shall rise first—then those which are alive and remain “shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.”³ These passages put it beyond all question that the resurrection body will be taken simultaneously by all the dead in Christ at the end of the world, at the last day, and not when each individual believer dies. Yet the apostle is speaking of something each individual believer will have when he dies. We know that if our earthly house perish, if we die—die now, die at any time through the pressure of trials and worn out by afflictions, or if from any cause whatever these bodies fail—still we have a building from God; a house in heaven. The apostle is after a present consolation in view of a present loss. In prospect of death, provided this frail and temporary house should perish,

¹ John vi. 40.² John xi. 24.³ 1 Thes. iv. 17.

what was he assured of as an immediate consequence and an occasion of comfort and joy, and that would furnish ground for triumphing in afflictions? Was it that after a long and indefinite period, either of unconsciousness or anything else, he should have a resurrection body? By no means. But that the perishing of his frail earthly tenement would be no loss to him, in his assumption at once of another and unspeakably better habitation. His eye is on an investiture at death—not ages beyond death. Something in heaven, heavenly, not made with hands, a building of God and eternal. The whole passage presses us to this conclusion and fortifies it.

A second reason why we judge this “building from God” is not the resurrection body is this: Paul speaks, in close connection, of being “absent from the body.” “Absent from the body” clearly does not mean and cannot mean present with the body. It means present with the Lord, and present in a distinctly different sense from that in which He is now present. For it is a presence that is secured by death—by parting with the body—a loss indeed, but for which a greater gain is substituted; as to depart and be with Christ is far better than to stay in the body and have Christ as we have Him now.

A third reason for not regarding "the building of God" as the resurrection body is that Paul speaks of it as "in heaven," as now in heaven. We have in heaven this building, so that if we should die we would enter upon it. It waits our arrival. Places there are, buildings of God, not made with hands, ready for all that die in the Lord. We know, says the apostle—looking away to the heavenly city—we know if we die we have a mansion in heaven. Now the resurrection body is not in heaven and will never be there until the Lord gives a body to each saint of His, and they enter the gates of the city with songs most jubilant, to go out no more for ever. Meanwhile, just as, if we die, we know we have a Saviour in heaven; just so, if we die, we know we have a house in heaven. But language like this has no application to our resurrection body.

To what then is it applicable? What is this building from God, eternal in the heavens, of whose assured possession Paul had not a doubt? What else but heaven itself! Not heaven as a state or condition—nor yet as a place, in the wide sense of the word, comprehensive of the entire circuit of the New Jerusalem, but as a home prepared for us in the royal palace—a dwelling-place in our Father's house. This answers all the con-

ditions of the passage, meets every difficulty, and is a source of transporting joy. It is a great thing to know. It goes to the profoundest depths of our being as a consoling and satisfying truth. It meets and answers the questionings of our doubt and unrest as we stand by the shrouded dead and the open grave, this precious doctrine that the soul of the believer in Jesus does not cease to exist at death, nor, what is much the same thing, sink into a deep unconsciousness or sleep, nor stay in a shadowy, dreamy realm, houseless and homeless, waiting for the resurrection, nor wander lost in the infinite immensity; but the soul goes straight to the heavenly home, built of God, and prepared for the ransomed by the adorning and beautifying touch of the ransoming Lord, who has gone before for the very purpose. "The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection."¹

The proof of this is drawn from the following considerations:—

(1) Such a heavenly house for the soul meets all the conditions of the passage and its context. It fully answers to the description, and nothing

¹ Q. 37. Shorter Catechism.

else does. It is "a building from God," it is "eternal," it is "in heaven." "We have" it when we leave our earthly house. It is a construction of the divine Architect, and with it human hands have had nothing to do. Once entered upon by the believer, it is his home for ever. It is there now in heaven, waiting occupancy. "In my Father's house are many mansions; . . . I go to prepare a place for you." If this body die—if we leave our earthly house—when we leave it we are not deprived of a house. We have the heavenly house.

(2) It is to be entered upon at death. This point has already had attention. Any ordinary reader of the passage would get this impression. The preceding context demands it. Absent from the body, present with the Lord; that seems to make it imperative. A critical exegesis justifies the popular impression. There is scarcely a point in the entire Greek text that makes against it. Just one word in the original and in the translation is in apparent conflict—the word "clothed upon." This is certainly not the ordinary way in which we would speak of entering a house. But it must be remembered that a house is just what Paul is speaking of. He speaks of this body as a house, frail and perishing. And he says, "Not that we

would be unclothed of this house, but clothed upon with our heavenly house"; in other words, not that we would lay aside our earthly tabernacle, but enter our heavenly home.

(3) The descriptive language is in entire accord with other Scriptural representations of heaven. Jesus speaks of it as a place of everlasting habitations. As a house of many mansions. Paul speaks of it elsewhere as a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands; as a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. John calls it a great city with walls and gates. Apply the language of the text to the resurrection body and it is new and strange, nowhere else thus used in the word of God. Apply it to heaven and all readers of God's word are at once struck with the naturalness of it.

(4) The proof is elsewhere furnished that the souls of believers do enter at death upon this heavenly inheritance. Paul himself testifies as follows: "Knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; we are . . . willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord." The apostle knew that his death would usher him at once into the presence of Jesus, and he says so. Now where is Jesus? In purgatory? In hades? In the grave?

Asleep? In unconsciousness? In a sort of lower Paradise? In a shadowy realm of half-conscious life? Let us see. "It came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, . . . but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that has passed into the heavens, . . . let us hold fast our profession." "After He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever," He "sat down at the right hand of God." And whom saw the Seer of Patmos, as the heavens were opened to his rapt vision? He saw Jesus the Lamb of God, that had been slain, worshiped there by adoring hosts, singing their new song, and saying, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood." Jesus is in heaven; in the highest heaven, at the right hand of God. To be present with Jesus is to be in heaven, is to be at the right hand of God. Hence, absent from the body means at home with the Lord. Did this passage stand alone, therefore, it would prove that the dead who die in the Lord are at once admitted to heaven. But it has ample corroboration. "For to me, . . . to die is gain," says the apostle. What gain? Why, this. That to

depart and be with Christ is far better. The first martyr, how did he die? What did he see and what did he expect in the presence of that mad mob bent upon his death? "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." A voice comes from Calvary, saying, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." The Mount of Transfiguration witnesses to the communion of the sainted dead with Jesus. And already they sing a song in heaven of redemption by blood. The beloved disciple caught the notes of it. Who sing it there, who can sing it, but the already saved, the dead that have died in the Lord, the spirits of just men made perfect? Thus through all the Scriptures, like warp and woof, runs the corroborative proof of an immediate entrance, not into some intermediate place, but into heaven, of those who fall asleep in Jesus. And hence we are confirmed in the position that the building from God is none other than the heavenly home we are to have at once when this earthly house of our tabernacle shall be dissolved.

Let us consider briefly the objections that are raised to this view. It is said:—

(1) "Paul is speaking of the body—and a body is demanded in contrast. As the earthly house is a body, the heavenly house must be a body also." But the body, as such, is not the idea distinctly brought out at all. It is the body as a residence or dwelling-place—a home or house. The comparison or contrast is clearly not between one body and another, but one house and another. If this house fail us we have another and a better one. If this earthly tabernacle perish we have a building from God.

(2) It is held that a human being cannot exist as pure spirit; can neither perceive nor act unless in connection with a body; that a vehicle or form is essential. Corporeal organization is the necessary condition of personality. Hence the theories of the soul's sleep, the soul's unconsciousness, the soul's dreamy, shadowy state of existence, the soul's assumption of something essential to perfect consciousness of personality and identity between death and the resurrection. But—to say nothing of the direct antagonism of much of this to the word of God, Scripture upon Scripture rising up in testimony against it—how do we know that spirit cannot act without form; that corporeity, a material body, is essential to conscious personality? Where is the proof of it? Who has been

experimenting beyond the grave to see? Who has disrobed himself—gotten out of his earthly house—and tested this question? “I think, therefore I am,” is both a piece of logic and a state of consciousness with which the body has nothing to do. Have not human spirits signaled each other directly, spirit to spirit, notwithstanding these walls of sense, and seemingly without their intervention? Have not souls sometimes met and touched each other, unconscious of instrumentality in the meeting? Do we not now and then have flashed to us, in rapport with some kindred spirit, the possibility of spiritual fellowship and the joy of it, without the limitation of a bodily organization? Nay, is not God a spirit? Is not the Holy Ghost a spirit, personal and active, yet without body or form, contradicting this theory by certifying to us of His presence and power in the resurrection He carries on within us, in the re-creation of our souls? He regenerates us. He dwells in us. He communes with us. I know the truth is an instrumentality. But cannot a spirit know the truth without a body to help grasp it? And does there not come a time in the process of this new birth when the all-creating breath of God touches and changes the soul without even truth’s intervention? And all

along the disciple's way to glory is not the Beloved manifesting Himself directly and immediately to his innermost spirit through love's holy mystery? Ah, these reasonings of vain philosophy are not true! All that we know about the matter leans the other way.

(3) But, it is said, the Scriptures speak of the dead as asleep and as in the grave, where there is neither wisdom nor knowledge nor device. True. Sleep is a figurative term for death—fitly represents it. When asleep we are lost to the consciousness of what is going on in the world; it is as if we were dead to it. And hence the figure, beautiful and appropriate. But a figure must not be pressed too far. We cannot take a figure, even a Bible figure, and urge its acceptance, in all its sweep and compass and in literal exactness of detail, when it runs counter to clear and positive statements of the word of God. When they stoned Stephen to death, it is said "he fell asleep." Remembering that look of his into heaven and those words of his that broke on the air, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," is it not trifling with speech to make anything else of the statement, "he fell asleep," than a simple record that he died? It is written, "them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him"; but the manifest

reference is to the resurrection of the bodies of the saints. They sleep in the grave; that is, they lie there as if they were asleep, waiting the coming of the Lord with ten thousand of His saints—the spirits of just men made perfect—come to shout their final shout of victory over the grave as they shall robe themselves in the bodies made like unto the glorious body of the Son of God. Moreover, the idea of sleep is wholly incompatible with words like the following: “Earnestly desiring to be clothed upon”; “absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord”; “to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better”; “to-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.” This is the Scriptural phraseology; and it is not the language men use when they talk of going into a state of sleep.

(4) A fourth objection to regarding this building of God as heaven itself, to be entered upon at death, is the fact of a general judgment. The question is raised, do not the Scriptures declare that God hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness? That when the Son of man shall come in His glory before Him shall be gathered all nations, and He shall separate them one from the other? And in prophetic vision were not the dead, small and great,

seen standing before God, the sea having given up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them, that they all might be judged? Yes, the Scriptures do thus declare; the Bible does point to a last great day—a judgment day. But how is this, it is asked, if awards are made at death; if judgment takes place when we die; if we pass at once to a state fixed, eternal, either of blessedness or condemnation? A partial answer to this question may be found in the very word—judgment. As it comes to us now it has lost the primary and original meaning. We are used to only one construction of it—to render decision, whether judicial or otherwise. But this is not its root signification. The Greek word is *κρίσις*, of which our word “crisis” is a mere transliteration, meaning the decisive hour in any important affair—the critical turning-point. The primary meaning of the word in the original is separation, from the verb meaning first and chiefly, to separate, divide, distinguish, then to decide, determine, judge, and then, in a judicial sense, to sit in judgment, to put on trial. Hence you see, in the radical and vital, and therefore the deepest sense of the word, judgment takes place at death, for judgment is “separation.” This is in accord with the Scrip-

tural saying, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Right after death comes judgment, judgment is going on, judgment is now, whenever a man dies. It is the "crisis," the turning-point, the decisive hour—and it means separation, quick, sharp, unavoidable, eternal. But then there is another judgment, for there is a secondary meaning to the word—a judgment judicial, declarative—a last great day, when public decision shall be made and awards rendered. Why this? We may not know all the reasons of it, for they are not revealed. But we can conceive how thus there would be a public vindication of the ways of God to man—how thus every mouth might be stopped—for then, and not till then, down the avenues of time, at the end of the world, could be known and could be revealed all the influence of a life here lived, all the consequences of deeds done and words spoken as they went out from men to commence and continue their work of evil or of good. For these do not end when our life ends, when we die; they end only with the world and time.

We are thus left securely with the truth of the text. We know, if we be truly Christ's we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were

dissolved we are not houseless and homeless—we do not stay in the realm of shadows, we do not sleep to be waked only cycles of time hence and when time shall be no more, we do not sink into unconsciousness for interminable ages and, for all purposes of life, perish like the brute. No such cold, dark, dismal, unwelcome, and soul-dissatisfying truth mocks us with its proffer of solace and soothing when we stand by our loved dead or when we ourselves go down into the valley. These are apples of Sodom that change to ashes on our lips. No. When we die, if we die in the Lord, we have a building of God. We make our way straight to yonder realms of joy. No grave shall hold our freed spirits. No sleep shall clasp us in its long embrace. No purgatorial fires shall leap about our souls to purify them. No dim and filmy consciousness shall be substituted for our present life with God. It were not far better to depart if this were so. It were no gain to die if this were so. No. We pass immediately into glory. Being made sinless, we go at once through the gates. And as soon as we step out of our earthly house we enter our heavenly house. As soon as we are absent from the body we are at home with the Lord. Our mansion is ready for us. Jesus has prepared it and prepared us for it;

and when the house is ready we step in. We, in our fond desire and glad expectation, often get rooms ready for people that never come. When Christ prepares a room He always prepares a guest for the room. Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.

But out of Him, what then? After death the judgment. And judgment is the decisive hour, the turning-point; separation, final, irrevocable, eternal. When the man died that could betray his Lord with a kiss, coining the blood of the innocent into a few pieces of silver, what is said of him? "He went to his own place." What place was that? The grave? Will you say where Judas is now? Is he nowhere? Is he asleep? Is he—of whom the omniscient Son of God said, "it had been good for that man if he had not been born"—is he only in a state of unconsciousness? The rich man died and was buried. Note this, his body was buried. And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment. Do men fall asleep in that way? I know this is a parable, but a parable means something. And the background of such a story as that is not annihilation nor sleep. No. The righteous when they die go to their own place—and the wicked go to

theirs. Judgment is separation, the turning-point, the crisis.

There is, therefore, no intermediate place for the righteous or the wicked. But there is an intermediate state. The full apocalypse of God is not yet given. Not all the exceeding glory has yet come to the sons of God. The souls of the ransomed are round about the throne. They have entered into the joy of their Lord. Their spirits, made perfect there, bathe in the God-light, and go on heavenly commissions, and hold uninterrupted blessed converse with one another and with the Beloved, flashing each to each their signals of intelligence and their high thoughts of truth and God by subtle and superior modes of which we now have only hints and dreams. Theirs is a sinless state, a glorified state, a state of blessedness, a state of living, personal, active, exalted consciousness, high, grand and holy, as it must be, to be with Jesus at the right hand of God; but a disembodied state—disembodied and therefore intermediate. Without bodies but not without heaven. The place is theirs at death and will be theirs for ever; but the state is bodyless, and therefore coming between the present earthly state where souls are robed with the natural body, and the future resurrection state where

souls are robed with the spiritual body. When that morn shall break on this world of graves, when the Son of man shall come from heaven with a vast retinue of spirits of just men made perfect, when these ransomed souls shall take their bodies back again, changed by the divine alchemy of the resurrection, from corruption to incorruption, from the mortal to immortality; then, and not till then, shall the grave be robbed of its spoils; then, and not till then, shall be fully brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory."

VII

WHAT SHALL THE RESURREC-
TION BODY BE

VII

WHAT SHALL THE RESURRECTION BODY BE

“With what manner of body do they come?”—I COR. xv. 35.

CHRIST'S emptied sepulchre is the one sure pledge and proof of the final resurrection of the dead. But those who believe in the fact are often stirred with eager thrills of curiosity to know with what body the dead shall rise.

Speculation is easy here, and as without profit as it is without difficulty. All that we may certainly know about the matter must be found in Scripture or, “by good and necessary consequence, be deduced from Scripture.” Wishes are not arguments. Speculations are not facts. Analogies are not certainties. Is there some sure word of God for our feet? It must be that a great multitude of hearts would count it sweet and beautiful to have something assured to them concerning the resurrection body. Has God said anything about it? Seeking to avoid being wise above what is written, we believe the following

things may be affirmed and rested in with rejoicing confidence as God's sure word of prophecy:—

I. That the resurrection body will be material—a literal, material, human body.

II. That it will be our own body in unbroken identity.

III. That it will not be the same as to actual materials, atom for atom.

IV. That its being material will be no bar to great changes.

V. That it will have certain characteristics in distinct contrast with those of the present body.

Let us hold these successive points before us for a while, that we may the more fully see their Scriptural warrant and their true significance.

I. *The resurrection body will be material*—made up of matter, in contradistinction from mind or spirit. Our body is material now, wholly unlike our inner, truer, and only essential self. It will be material then, wholly unlike our inner, truer, and essential self. While this is simply presumptive, it is conclusive in the absence of proof to the contrary.

Again, the apostle's extended reference to different kinds of "flesh," and the differing glory of "bodies" is otherwise inexplicable. "All flesh is not the same flesh"; but its changes do not

change its essential substance. All flesh is "flesh," though not the same flesh. Celestial and terrestrial bodies differ in glory, but they are material bodies still. Now, if the difference between the present body and the resurrection body is substantive and fundamental, these allusions lose their force and have no significance.

Still again, Christ arose with a true resurrection body. But the body with which He rose was material. What did He say when His disciples doubted it? "Behold My hands and My feet." "Handle Me, and see." "A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." Was Christ quibbling with words? Did He mean to deceive His disciples? Or was it a veritable body of "flesh and bones" that stood before them?

Some say this was not His resurrection body, but the body of His burial simply restored to life; and that the vital change by which the mortal took on immortality occurred at the ascension. But how then is Christ "the firstfruits of them that are asleep"? What are "firstfruits"? They are fruits that are first in order of time, and fruits that are like the fruits that follow after. They precede the remaining harvest and are a sample of the remaining harvest. But if Christ rose with a mortal body

subject to death, then in no respect does His resurrection differ from that of Lazarus who rose before Him. Hence, He is not the firstfruits in *time*. And if Christ rose with a mortal body subject to death, then in no respect does His resurrection resemble the resurrection of His people. They shall be raised in "incorruption" and "glory" and "power," while Christ came from the grave with a body subject still to dissolution. Hence, He is not the "firstfruits" as a sample.

But Christ ate of "broiled fish" after He was risen, it is said. And then it is asked, Does the resurrection body need food? Which is answered by asking, Did the angels, who ate of the dressed calf of Abraham, need food? Christ ate of His power, not of His necessity. But if His body was "material," how could it appear and disappear, passing through doors? it is asked. Which is answered by saying, Just as, before the resurrection, it could walk on the sea. How could Jesus take five loaves and keep breaking them until they fed five thousand? Shall we limit the Lord of life and death by the laws of matter? Some change may, indeed, have passed upon Christ's body as He went from Olivet to heaven—giving it a glory such as it wore on the Mount of Transfiguration. But the vital change

occurred at the sepulchre, where its weakness gave way to power, and death and dissolution were made for ever impossible. "Now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep." The firstfruits was material. So shall the whole harvest be.

II. *The resurrection body will be our own body in unbroken identity.* "God giveth it a body even as it pleased Him, and to each seed a body of its own." He makes no mistake in the succession. Wheat comes up wheat, and barley comes up barley, and corn comes up corn; and the thought is, matters will not get mixed in the resurrections of the saints any more than they do in the resurrections of nature. This reference to the law by which every seed sown produces after its kind is meaningless here if it is not intended to assure us that the body of the burial will have in the body of the resurrection a true and legitimate successorship, recognizable and unmistakable, so that each of the saints, when the trump shall sound and the dead come forth, will know his body as his own, belonging to him by reason of a past possession.

This position is further emphasized and supported and, indeed, made incontrovertible by the very meaning of the word—resurrection. How

can a body be said to be risen again that never was buried? The thing that is sown is the thing that is raised. If the continuity is broken and the sameness wholly lost, so that the body raised is a new and totally different body, with absolutely nothing to identify it with the body of the burial, then it is a creation, not a resurrection.

Here we reach the difficulty that so often staggers faith. If the buried body and the risen body must be the same to constitute a resurrection, how is it possible for the dead to be raised? These bodies are burned, cast into the sea, buried in the earth, dissolved in nature's laboratory, taken up into animal and vegetable life, flung into the all-surrounding air, breathed into myriads of lungs, made food for man, and so organized as elements of other bodies, which also die and repeat the process. The question returns with an added emphasis, How are the dead raised up, and with what manner of body do they come? This brings us to our third Scripture certainty.

III. *The risen body will not be the same as to actual materials, atom for atom.* Mark, now, how the apostle, while maintaining the body's identity as we have seen, distinctly denies the sameness as to actual materials. "Thou sowest not that body that shall be; but thou sowest a bare

grain"; that is, the mere naked kernel. That buried kernel of wheat, in its separate and specific atoms, does not come up again, but wheat comes up. The identity is never lost. God gives to every seed its own body. He does not give to the wheat seed a barley body, nor to the oat seed a wheat body. "So also is the resurrection of the dead." The dead body, like the dead seed, maintains its identity in unbroken continuity through all the marvelous transformations of burial and resurrection, but it does not perpetuate its atomic parts. The identical material atoms of the body we lay in the grave do not come up out of the grave any more than the identical material atoms of the kernel of corn we put in the soil come up. But the identity of the body is no more lost than the identity of the corn. Wherein this identity consists, what constitutes it, science cannot tell. We certainly know that change of atoms does not destroy it. There is not an atom in any living body to-day that was in that body ten years ago, yet it is the same body.

IV. The fourth Scriptural certainty given us by the apostle is, that *though the body is material, this is no bar to marvelous changes and great glory*. There is a flesh of beasts, of fishes, and of birds. There are bodies terrestrial and celestial.

There is one glory of the sun, another of the moon, another of the stars. For one star differeth from another star in glory. "So also is the resurrection of the dead." The possible modifications of matter are almost endless. What a difference between the crawling caterpillar with its dull hues and the fairy butterfly, flashing sunbeams from its wings! Resurrection wrought that magic—death and resurrection. It is the same body; yet how changed the atoms and elements! We all know that common coal and the brilliant, imperishable diamond are the same substance. We all know that many of the forms of peerless beauty in nature are evolved from that which is colorless. The most beautiful life is here and there the product of the most repulsive. A rosebush, planted over decaying matter of any kind, and striking its roots down through the corruption and rottenness, will outstrip its fellows in thrift and beauty, as if the very corruption of death underneath were sucked up through the roots and branches of the bush, and transmuted of God into leaf and flower and the attar of roses.

We need not, therefore, stagger at the idea of the materiality of the resurrection body as if it involved grossness and earthliness. It may remain material, and yet take on a beauty and

a glory and a capacity fitting it for splendid uses in the changed conditions of the heavenly world. And here we reach our last Scriptural certainty.

V. *The resurrection body will have certain distinct characteristics in positive contrast to those that mark the body of the burial.* The apostle, under inspiration of God, in his marvelous answer to the question, "With what body do the dead arise?" proceeds to say what these characteristics are. So far as he goes we have sure foot-planting for our feet. We walk out on a basis of certainty. We *know* what the body will be. All beyond is sheer conjecture.

"It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption." This is the first contrast. Here it is in process of decay. The doom of death is on it. Corruption at last hangs out its signals, and we bury it out of our sight. But it will be raised in incorruption, with nothing in it or of it upon which disease and corruption may fasten—a body of undecaying parts and powers, its mortality swallowed up of life.

"It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory." This is the second contrast. The body is laid away a lifeless body, a dead body, a corpse. Death makes spoil of its beauty and delivers it over to

loathsomeness and putrefaction; but it will be raised in glory. Just what the glory will be we may not know. But Paul elsewhere tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ "shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory." And when we think of Tabor, where "his face did shine as the sun," who shall hazard a guess that shall transcend the resplendent reality!

"It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power." This is the third contrast. Here the body is weak. It tires of effort, is easily exhausted, needs frequent rest. At death it is utterly powerless. But it will be raised in power. Not in the possession of enormous physical strength, but free from the possibility of decrepitude, traced with the vigor of immortal youth, and aglow with the freshness of eternal morning.

"It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." This is the fourth and last contrast. And at first blush it seems like a contradiction to what has already been said. If the resurrection body is "spiritual," how can it be material? But the contrast is not between a material body and a spiritual body, but between a natural body and a spiritual body. What does the apostle mean by a "natural" body? Certainly not a material,

physical body. He uses this same word in this same letter to the Corinthians, in saying, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," where the meaning is obvious. Clearly the "natural" man is not the material, physical man, but man by nature, as he is at present constituted, blinded by sin, subject to infirmity, struck through with the taint of corruption and the doom of death; he cannot receive and know the things of God. So here, the "natural body" is not the body as mere matter, made up of material atoms, but the body by nature as it is now constituted, subject to corruption and death. And the "spiritual" body is just the opposite of all this—not a spirit body, for that would be opposed to a matter body—but a body without infirmity, not subject to death, immortal like the spirit, fitted for the spirit home; but still a body—a true, material body.

The further saying of the apostle, "that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," is in perfect consistency with this position. He means by "flesh and blood" the body as now constituted, with its weakness and perishableness and mortality, for corruption cannot inherit incorruption; that which is mortal cannot be immortal. We have a perfectly analogous expres-

sion in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the author says, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He" (Christ) "also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy," etc.—*i. e.*, Christ took upon Himself "flesh and blood" that He might die. He took a mortal body subject to the ordinary laws of mortality. And it is this "flesh and blood," not the body as material, but the body as mortal, that cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

Thus we are left securely with the five points affirmed at the opening of our discussion. Here they are, the five Scriptural certainties concerning the resurrection body: It will be material, it will be recognizably our own, it will not be "the same" as to its individual atoms, it will be greatly changed, and it will be raised in incorruption, glory, and power. These things we know. They are the averments of Scripture.

The Scripture knows only two bodies—the body of the burial and the body of the resurrection; the body of humiliation and the body of glory; the body we lay in the grave and the body that will come up out of the grave when the last trumpet shall sound. The Scripture knows nothing of a third body, a sort of *tertium quid*, an

intermediate, refined, subtle, ethereal, sublimated somewhat, which the soul is to have as an enswathement until the day of resurrection. This is the fiction of a philosophy that thinks the soul cannot exist apart from some kind of body. The Scripture knows nothing of "the development of a spiritual body at death from the bodies we now inhabit." This is the fiction of Swedenborgian imagination. The Scripture knows nothing of a "spirit-like body" in the shape of an invisible, "individual, self-contained, self-sustaining, self-acting, vital entity," that is all the while invisibly building the material body. This body-builder, it has been claimed, is "the spiritual body" of which the apostle speaks. But if there be such a body, it is here now. It is sown. It is buried. It dies. It is just as "spiritual" now as it will be when raised. But the apostle says that the spiritual body he is talking about is *not* spiritual when it dies and is buried. This material, feeble, corruptible, perishable mortal body, that we can see with our eyes and handle with our hands, *it* is the thing sown. And *it* is raised a spiritual body.

Let us keep to the record. We have no need of guesswork. It is enough to know that the passageway through the tomb is ablaze with the

glory of resurrection; that dust and ashes are the seed-plots of immortality: that our bodies are to be fashioned like unto the body of Christ's glory; that they will be real, material, immortal bodies raised in power and glory; that we shall recognize them as our own, belonging to us by reason of a past possession; and that only when the resurrection of the dead shall be brought to pass will the highest notes and the grandest chords in the chorus of our triumph in Christ Jesus be struck. Who would not die? We may go to the grave with a shout of victory! The grave is but the soul's robing-room, where it shall at last put on a garment fit for the palace of the King! Through and through the valley of the shadow of death is shot the glory of these resurrection rays. How it banks the way to the tomb with flowers! How it transforms the grim skeleton into one of God's beautiful presence angels, come to empty our tombs as Christ's tomb in the garden was emptied! "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." "Now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep."

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

VIII

GOD'S GREAT PRAISING DAY

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GOD'S GREAT PRAISING DAY

“Then shall each man have his praise from God.”—I COR.
iv. 5.

THIS text twists things about. It shows us the reverse side of the medal God has stamped in the mint of heaven for all loyal souls. And the reverse side is the divine side. Commonly we are occupied with the human side. We are ordinarily looking at the inscription that tells of our duty to God. And praise is one of those duties. Praise is the instinct of the heart that loves and worships. More often than anything else the Church sings “Praise God from whom all blessings flow.” Luther often used to say to his people, “Let us praise God and shame the Devil by singing the forty-sixth Psalm”; and then with a lusty vigor he would break forth with “Ein’ feste Burg”—“A mighty fortress is our God.” The Psalms of praise have been the hymns of the ages. They betoken adoring love and gratitude and high appreciation; not only a sense of favors received, but more fully and truly

a sense of the worth of Him who bestows the favors. We mean the quality of the giver far more than we do the quantity of the gift in any true praise we render. Hence, if praise is not often on our lips in worship we are not in key with the heavenly harmonies; our sacred song has not struck its truest and deepest notes and is out of tune. He has gone deepest into God's heart who most profoundly and adoringly praises Him.

But the inspired apostle turns the reverse side of the medal toward us to-day, and lets us read one of the secrets of the Almighty—"Then shall each man have his praise from God."

Herein is a marvelous thing. A day is coming when God will be at the business of giving praise. I venture to say we have not often—some of us doubtless have never—thought of it in quite that way. Then—when the Lord shall bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the heart—then shall each man have his praise from God.

Paul's word here is not a word of warning. It is exclusively a word of comfort. He is speaking of the good deeds that have been untrumpeted and unknown, hidden in silence and darkness, and which the Lord shall then bring to light.

In like manner, when the apostle speaks of the counsels of the hearts, he means the hearts that had the love of Christ in them; that, down in their deepest depths, beat true; that tried, however feebly and humbly, to put some honor on the Master. And He says, when the counsels of these hearts, the things they planned, the devices of love they longed to execute, the motives they cherished, the silent inner battles they fought, when these shall be made manifest, then shall each true, loyal disciple have his praise from God.

Let us see now what this praise from God will be.

I. Beyond a doubt *it will be genuine*. There will be no gloss about it. God will not indulge in mere compliments. It is not thinkable that He should say other than what He means, or that He should mean what is not justified to the full by the conditions and facts. Praise from His lips will have the stamp of absolute sincerity.

It is hard to find it so in human relationships. Partly because of love's bias. Partly because of social conventionalities. Our affections influence our judgments. Accepted usage has a good deal to do with determining the measure of praise we render in any given case. The very paucity of our resources of expression makes it sometimes

difficult to balance deed with an exact equivalent of commendation. We are often trammelled by poor speech in trying to tell our heart's estimate of some loving and loyal service.

Sincerity is a word of singular beauty, both in its Latin and Greek significance. It is derived from two Latin words that mean "without wax," and that were applied to vessels of ancient earthenware so perfect that there was no flaw in them needing to be filled with wax. They were *sine cera*. Hence our word "sincere." Sincerity, in the New Testament, is from two Greek words meaning "*judged in the sunlight*"—that which can let the sunlight flash through it all, sure to be found absolutely flawless. So sincerity in praise implies neither overestimate nor underestimate, but perfect estimate, without wax, shot through and through with sunlight and found true.

God's praise, when He comes to give it, will be of this fine quality—genuine, sincere, true. It will represent actual worth without exaggeration and without defect. It will measure up to the exact value of deed and character, and be utterly unaffected by partiality or prejudice.

In human praise there is almost inevitably an admixture made up of, or affected by, personal relationship, limitation of view, overfondness for

the object. And hence the questions that often challenge the praises bestowed by men. "Does he really mean it?" "Can it possibly be true?" "Has he not been imposed upon by appearances?" But such questions will never be heard when God's praises of His people are sounded out. There will be surprises—blessed surprises—but there will be no challenges. God's great heart will speak, but two things will make His praise ring true. He will know all the facts—the whole inner history—and He will keep truth on His side. So that praise from His lips will be as far removed from empty compliment or fulsome flattery as a sparkling jewel is from the bubble that flashes with the jewel's brilliant hues.

II. Another marked feature of this praise from God will be this: *it will be individual.*

"Then shall each man have his praise from God." It is a distinguishing mark of the divine method that it individualizes men. With God there are never any mechanical arrangements for dealing with souls in crowds. The tremendous emphasis of the gospel is on personality. God is a person. And when He made man in His own image He made him a person. Personality is one of the elements of Godlikeness. Personality is therefore the mightiest and finest thing in the universe.

And God honors it as He honors nothing else. He never ignores it, never merges it in another, never loses recognition of it in any multitudinous company. We do, in human movements of magnitude; we can't help it. A general does not deal with his army man by man. Each soldier cannot be individualized in the vast armed host. Indeed, an army is at its best when individuality is lost in solidarity, when it is a mighty machine; an intelligent, thinking machine indeed, but still a machine, held, marched, hurled, and fought to victory as one compact, and so resistless, force.

But God does not swing saints that way. Though they get to be ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, a multitude that no man can number, the individuality of each is never lost in the record God keeps of them. He enthrones personality as an indestructible unit in His moral universe, and through all His vast designs the personality of each is respected and dealt with as if there were no other personality to deal with. His approach to each soul is personal. His call to repentance is personal. His pardon is personal. His gift of eternal life is personal. Repentance cannot be exercised by a mass meeting. Regeneration is not a noun of multitude. God does not sanctify society. He

regenerates and sanctifies the individual, and to that extent is society sanctified—not one jot or tittle more. So it is with all God's moral dealings. So it is with judgment. Every man must give account of himself to God.

Now carry this thought of the individuality of God's dealings into His praise-giving, and how it glorifies the matter! It will be no wholesale affair. It will not be simply one grand encomium, spoken to a multitudinous host, splendid as that would be. It will not be merely a sovereign's recognition of heroic service read to a battle-scarred army fresh from the deeds that make history and win immortality, splendid as that would be.

It may be all this. It is not for me to deny the imposing innumerable assembly at the last great day; the gathering of God's elect from all the ages, and the welcome plaudit of the King of kings as He says to the mighty multitude, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." But over and above this imposing tribute, spoken to the assembled host of God's redeemed and enhancing immeasurably the honor and the joy of the heavenly awards, will be the distinct and specific recognition of individual service; for

each man shall have his praise from God. "He calleth them all by name" is Christ's own way of telling us of the tender shepherd's personal care. And from God's lips praises will fall having their matchless and measureless worth in this, that they are meant for one and one only; each lowly disciple getting his individual meed of honor for his own peculiar and personal fidelity.

Now if we add to the genuineness and the individuality of the praise God is to bestow upon those that love Him the discriminating quality of it, we shall have named at least the chief elements of value in this rare thing God is to do for His children when the counsels of the hearts are made manifest.

III. *Discrimination* is to mark the praise from God. It will have the element of perfect adaptation. It will be fitted with an exquisite delicacy to the doer and the deed. Its correspondence and adjustment to the service rendered will be of that rare and matchless sort which we dream of in human relations, but never fully realize because of our inability to read all the secrets of the heart.

Sometimes we see approximations to this divine ideal of praise in the tribute dropped from human lips for fidelities nobly met, and all the world recognizes the heavenly likeness. A mother's

heart is nearest God's heart in this. She knows her boy as no one else knows him, and she is sympathetic to the mood and temper of his soul. And these two things, intelligence and sympathy, and these two only, can give to praise that discriminating quality which puts it beyond all price.

There must be intelligence in order that discrimination shall have its finest and fullest worth, the power to discern things that differ both in fiber of deed and fiber of spirit—the ability to make nice distinctions; in other words, knowledge of the doer and of all the circumstances of the doing. Clearly, this is vital to one who is to praise in any royal way. It must be no blind, indiscriminate affair, with however lavish a spirit it is administered.

But intelligence is not all. There is a subtle something to be found in praise of the divinest sort that even knowledge cannot furnish. Intelligence is of the head. It is cold, hard, metallic. It can discover, analyze, weigh, count, do mere justice to, but it has no heart. There are inner moods and postures and exquisite delicacies of spiritual approach to them, a subtle, almost indefinable sensitiveness of feeling, to which intellect must be utterly and forever blind.

How often it is said, "You cannot argue against a sentiment!" Of course not. But what a potent, almost omnipotent thing sentiment is in the conduct and the deep joy of life! Argument is of the intellect. Sentiment is of the heart. To knowledge, therefore, must be added sympathy if you are to have that discrimination in praise which will make it always perfect in its adaptation and give it its truest and heavenliest quality.

When, therefore, each man shall have his praise from God, the praise will be like this: it will be tenderly and delicately appreciative of deed and doer. For God will know—God will surely know—and God has a heart. Through and through the service, compassing it all and glorifying it all, will be His knowledge and His sympathy.

For illustration, think of Mary and her cruse of ointment that she broke and poured upon Christ's head. The disciples saw the deed and murmured against her. Christ saw Mary's motive. He was sympathetic to the mood of her spirit; and He said, "She hath done what she could. She hath wrought a good work on me." The Greek word rendered "good" here is not the ordinary word for good, but a word that carries in it the element of beauty. She hath wrought a beautiful work on me; morally beautiful, show-

ing us thus, for evermore, that it is not only the merely useful but the morally beautiful that pleases Christ; but showing us also how tenderly and lovingly sympathetic the praise will be that shall one day be given for the doing and denying of every loving and lowly heart.

What a day that will be when such praise—genuine, personal, discriminating—shall fall from God's own lips, for each one of all the ransomed host who have served and loved Him here! What a great day that will be!

A day of blessed surprises. God's thought of us, of each one of us, will be read out, and things long forgotten will be recalled. Battles that seemed defeats will be found to have been written down by God as victories. A word of ours, spoken in love indeed, and to save some soul, but spoken in great weakness and fear, which seemed lost in the wild tumult of human passion with which that soul was tossed and torn—that very word may be shown to have been winged of the invisible Spirit, and borne to the inner stillness of the heart's deeper sea, and there heard as the voice of God after the roar of passion had died away, and made the potent word by which that soul was led to Christ and peace. And the wondering question, "When saw I Thee an hungered?"

will be answered by the gracious praise, "You saw one of earth's children, weary and worn and passion-tossed, and your word was bread of life in that hunger and darkness of sin and death. And inasmuch as you did it to this human soul, you did it to Me."

And other blessed surprises will burst upon the faithful in that great praising day of God. Lowly deeds will be given undying honor. Gifts of love that went untrumpeted on earth and that were little thought of, even by the doers, will shine out with transcendent beauty and glory by the divine estimate put upon them.

Here we are prone to value service by bulk. With God, what is behind the gift is more than the gift. One day, while on earth, Jesus sat over against the treasury; and as rich and poor were casting in their gifts He weighed them in His heavenly balances. In these balances the two mites of a poor widow outweighed all the other gifts together. But do you suppose either the rich, who cast in of their abundance, or that lowly widow, who cast in of her want, estimated things in that way? Doubtless the rich quite congratulated themselves on their large liberality. Doubtless the poor woman sighed as she dropped in her little coin, almost ashamed in the glad self-

denial of her heart that the gift was so insignificant.

Well, Christ is always sitting over against the treasury. And He knows—He knows. And when the day comes for Him to speak His praise, will there not be some surprises? How He uplifted and glorified Mary's deed of love! She meant not so, neither did her heart think so, as she broke her alabaster box of ointment and poured it on His head. But He made it the anointing for His burial, and lifted to her a monument that any queen of earth might envy.

That praising day of God will also be a day without rebuke.

Here blame and praise go together, even from God's lips. They are a part of the discipline of life. We are not ready yet for the heavenly citizenship, but are being fitted for it. We trip and fall, we go astray, we are overborne of evil, even while we love. And God must rebuke and chasten, even as an earthly parent reproves and chides. He loves whom He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. Hear Christ's word to the church at Ephesus: "I know thy works, thy toil, thy patience, but I have this against thee, that thou hast left thy first love." Hear His word to the church in Pergamum: "I know thy works,

that thou dwellest where Satan's seat is, and yet holdest fast My name, and didst not deny My faith; but I have a few things against thee." Hear His word to the church at Thyatira: "I know thy works and thy love and faith and ministry and patience, but I have this against thee." Praise mingled with rebuke—praise mingled with rebuke. This is God's way. While sin remains, He must rebuke and chasten. How could it be otherwise? If He should let sin go unnoticed, even in His most loved and loving disciple, it would look as if He did not care. And if He did not care—if He glossed sin, or condoned it, or let it go unrebuked—down in our deepest hearts we would not care for Him.

So Peter must not only hear from Christ's lips "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona," but also, "Get thee behind me, Satan." And to the same disciples to whom He spoke words of pathetic and matchless tenderness He must needs say, "Could ye not watch with me one hour?"

But when sin is ended and the plague-spot is wholly out of our hearts and we are altogether like our Lord, and see Him as He is, the day of rebuke will be over. There will be no chiding, for there will be no occasion for it. The discipline of life will be finished. When Christ comes to

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speak His praises in the great day we are thinking of, He will not say to one soul of all the ransomed host, "I know thy works and thy patience and faith and ministry, but I have this against thee." That shadow will not fall on any heart.

Kipling, with his eye on the end of things, eager for realities, and in utter scorn of shams, sings exultingly of the time "when earth's last picture shall be painted":—

“And only the Master shall praise us,
And only the Master shall blame;
And no one shall work for money,
And no one shall work for fame;
But each for the joy of the working,
And each in his separate star,
Shall draw the thing as he sees it,
For the God of things as they are.”

But he strikes one false note in this splendid song, as he sings, "Only the Master shall blame." The Master will not blame. For He will then have nothing—nothing—against the lowliest disciple.

Read the gospel record of that day and see. "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." It is all praise and no rebuke. Read the parable of the talents. "Thou hast

been faithful"—"Thou hast been faithful." That is the verdict, whether to the one with five talents or to the one with two. Read the parable of the pounds. "Well done"—"Well done." That's the verdict. It is all praise still, whether the gain was more or less. No look of Christ will set us to weeping bitter tears of penitence there. No word of Christ will fall reprovingly on any one of His true disciples. In that day of the counsels of the hearts each man shall have only praise from God.

My friends, some of you are honestly trying to serve God. By prayer and gift and deed of toil, by patient suffering, by self-denial, by helpful though lowly ministry, you have brought some sunshine into the world, and, for Christ's sake, have made it seem more homelike and hopeful to a homeless and hopeless heart. You have not done much for your Master, but you have wanted to. And the little you have done has often seemed fruitless. You have felt almost ashamed when any one has spoken with warm appreciation of your service—so like the merest trifle has it seemed to you. And even when down in your deepest heart you knew the deed was born of the desire to bless somebody for Jesus' sake, your motive may have been misunderstood and your

action tortured into meanness and selfishness. As that bitterest of acids was applied to the coin of your Christian integrity you possibly felt the sting of ingratitude and misrepresentation. "Wait a bit and dinna weary," troubled heart; think ahead. Men, it may be, do not see thee nor heed thee nor praise thee. But by and by, God's great praising day shall come.

And when praises shall fall from His lips I know they will put new meaning and an exceeding weight of glory into your life. What seemed to be cross-signed here and weighted with care and even black sometimes with the clouds that gathered in it, will be radiant with the glory of God upon it in that great praising day when Christ shall tell His estimate of things. All the heart's longings will be satisfied. All the lowly toil will be uplifted and glorified. All the motives will be counted as achievements. All the tender moods and all the hidden mysteries of love will have the fullest recognition: for the praises in that day will be praises from God, genuine, individual, without rebuke, discriminating, ringing true.

Doubtless you will have praises from men. But see to it, O child of God, that human praise is never gotten by devices of expediency that involve the remotest suspicion of disloyalty to

your Lord and His truth: and never gotten by prophesying smooth things at the expense of silence as to doctrines of God's word that are just as true though not so smooth. If men praise you for these reasons your Lord may not praise you for any reason.

Keep your eye and heart on that great day of last accounts when each shall have his praise from God.

We call that last great day the judgment day. And so it is. We associate it with awe and majesty. And so we ought. But for Christ's disciples there is another side to it—a sweet and blessed side.

It has been the purpose of this word of truth to show you something of the ineffable glory of that day, when to each loving and loyal disciple shall be spoken praises by "the Master of all good workmen"—praises that should make us look toward that day with a kind of eager joy.

"What then, if Christ is
Sifting out the souls of men before His judgment seat!
Be swift my soul to answer Him: 'Be jubilant my feet.'"

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