

Consider Him-Vance Havner

CONSIDER HIM by Vance Havner 1937

NOTE: If you do not recognize this author's name from the past, [click here](#) for an excellent summary on Vance Havner.

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Foreword - The response to this little book **By The Stillwaters**, written while the author was a country pastor, has encouraged him to set down these reflections in quaint, historic Charleston, South Carolina, where he is now pastor of the very old First Baptist Church.

The doctrinal position here taken will, of course, be distasteful to those who have exchanged substance for shadow, the faith of our fathers for the modern leaven of the Sadducees. However, we have also endeavored to avoid the leaven of the Pharisees as well: to season our speech with salt, not vinegar, and to remember of what manner of spirit we are.

Above all, we rejoice in no party label, but in Him by whom all things consist. The writer's humble prayer is that across the ragged manuscript of his poor life, God may write in blood and fire: "Not I, but Christ." (Gal 2:20+) -- Vance Havner

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Consider Jesus

"... consider him...." Heb. 12:3

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is an impressive roll-call of faith's heroes but the list is complete only when Christ is considered. It is ever thus. No life is great that does not point to Christ. These great names from Abel through the prophets are but sign-posts that lead at last to him.

It is so with Scripture. In these pages many verses are called to mind. Start from any of them and the path leads to him. "They are they which testify of him."

So, no matter what the theme or text, we are really considering him, for by him all Scripture consists. Satan will go to any lengths to keep you from considering the Lord. If he can put you to riding the hobby of a favorite doctrine; if he can get you to look back at yesterday's failures, or ahead to tomorrow's dreads, or around at the array of circumstances or within at your own weakness and poverty—anywhere but looking unto Jesus—then he is satisfied. And remember that he has many masks and will come so like an angel of light that you are scarcely aware at first that you are not considering Christ.

These pages are written that from many diverse points along the "T and O Trail," the Trust and Obey, we might pause a moment and take a fresh look at him "lest we be wearied and faint in our minds."

"Not Knowing Whither... I Know Whom"

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." Heb. 11:8

Abraham went out, not knowing where he was going. When God calls us to the adventure of faith, he does not furnish a road-map in advance. We have a sinking feeling of having stepped out on nothing, but then God is always doing wonderful things with nothing: He hangs the earth on nothing (Job 26:7), and calls those things which are not as though they were (Rom. 4:17).

Neither does faith know why. Habakkuk wondered: "O Lord... why?" (Hab 1:2, 3). So did Job. God did not give them explanation but revelation, and when they saw God they did not need explanation. When we see whom, the why does not matter.

Faith does not know what. Peter was concerned about John: "What shall this man do?" Our Lord never explains the whats: "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter" (John 13:7).

But one thing faith does know: "I know whom I have believed." He knows the wheres, whys, and whats: "He knoweth the way that I take" (Job 23:10). Sight rests on some thing, some where; faith rests upon someone, anywhere!

"We See Not Yet... But We See Jesus"

"we see not yet... But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour,..." Heb. 2:8, 9

There is so much that we see not yet. Sorrow removed? Not yet. Sickness vanquished? Not yet. Satan bound? Not yet. Death

destroyed? Not yet. But amid all that we see not yet we see Jesus. And the things we see not yet must never keep us from beholding him.

We are so given to counting up the Not Yets. The Psalmist enumerates his adversaries—sin, sickness, backbiters, false friends—but from desperation he turns to deity: "But Thou, O Lord..." (Ps. 41:10). "I may sin but thou...." "I may be sick but thou...." "Friends may fail but thou...." Jeremiah adds up his miseries in the fifth Lamentation but he ends gloriously with "Thou, O Lord, remainest." Micah paints as dreary a picture as the Word records until he arrives at the conquering conclusion: "Therefore I will look unto the Lord" (7:7). And of course there is always Habakkuk with his "although" and "yet" (3:17, 18).

Like a rock in a weary land stands God's great positive in a world of negatives. It would be a hopeless wilderness of Not Yets were it not for one eternal phrase that makes an eternity of difference: "But we see Jesus."

God in a Frame

"... I will manifest myself to him." John 14:21

A little boy, whose father was away from home most of the time, looked at his dad's picture on the wall and said to his mother: "Mother, I wish father would come out of that frame."

Is God real to you, a person near at hand? Or is he more like a picture on the wall, a motto, a doctrine, something wonderful to look at and think about, but still in a frame? Have you wished he might come out of the frame, become a glorious living reality? Have you cried, "Oh that I knew where I might find him?"

Is Jesus in a frame—lovely, wondrous to think about—but he stays up on the wall? Sorrow has come, and failure, and pain, and loneliness, and you have wept and prayed, but still he isn't real, he seems to stay in a frame. And doubt sneers, "Is there anything to it?"

He said he would come out of the frame. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love Him, and will manifest myself to Him" (John 14:21). You have his commandments, faith in him and love for one another (1 John 3:23), but are you keeping them? You trust and pray, but have you obeyed? When you do he will come out of the frame.

Why Are You Sorry?

"Against thee, thee only, have I sinned...." Ps. 51:4

When you sin and then feel sorrow in repentance, why are you sorry? Are you sorry because you have been untrue to the Lord and have grieved the Holy Spirit? Or are you sorry merely because you have failed, and have not come up to your expectations?

There is a great deal of selfishness in much of our repentance. After all, it is not we who live the Christian life but Christ in us. We should never be looking at self anyway, expecting anything of ourselves. When we fail, if we worry because we have dropped from our standard, then we have only been trying to live up to a dramatized version of ourselves. It is a common error to be a spiritual poser, even posing like Christ, which of course always ends in collapse and then we are miserable because we have disappointed ourselves. Christ gets little consideration.

David had sinned against almost everybody, himself, his people, Uriah, Bathsheba, but he knew in his heart he had sinned against God. While we must afterward make restitution to others wronged, repentance is a transaction solely with God and what matters there is not that we have failed but that God has been disobeyed, Christ denied, the Spirit grieved.

Take Hold!

"The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces." Prov. 30:28

The spider is not popular but she is diligent and aggressive and gets things done. If one web is swept away she spins another and doesn't hesitate to take up quarters even in kings' palaces.

So might you and I dwell in the spiritual King's palace if only we took hold by the hand of faith. If we took hold of God's grace and took hold of opportunity and took hold of life with a positive eye to business instead of timidly and gingerly, we should live in the courts of the King instead of in some spiritual attic.

We get mixed up in our ideas of humility. It is never inconsistent with a holy boldness for we take hold in the name of Another. Since he is our High Priest, we may come boldly to the throne of grace and since he has said we may boldly say (Heb. 4:16; 13:6). If you have a spirit of fear you didn't get it from God for he has not given us such torment (2 Tim. 1:7).

Take hold boldly by faith and dare to spin your web in the King's palace! Don't live in an attic!

Traveling on the T and O

"Trust in the Lord and do good...." Ps. 37:3

A dear brother has just stopped me to ask a lot of useless questions about the difference between tweedledum and tweedledee. Was it Josh Billings who said, "I'd rather know a few things for certain than be sure of a lot of things that ain't so"? The Bible is a spiritual cafeteria, not a curiosity shop. These Bible punsters who are always exercising themselves in things too wonderful for them should move over from the dissecting room to the dining room! One may be an expert in calories and vitamins—and starve to death!

If these dear souls who are forever hunting Bible conundrums would only heed the Bible commandments! One thinks of the fable of the mother bear teaching her cubs to walk. One asked, "Mother, which foot shall I put forward first?" She retorted, "Shut up and walk!"

Get on the old T and O, brother, the Trust and Obey. Then go as deep as you can but at heart stick to the great simplicities, believe on his Name, and love one another.

For there's no other way to be happy in Jesus,
But to trust and obey.

Thoughts at a Grave

"When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still." John 11:6

Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. You would have expected him to hurry to Bethany. There is a love that tarries until we grumble: "If you had been here... this wouldn't have happened."

Martha said, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." She believed in the doctrine of the resurrection. But Jesus immediately made it a personal thing: "I am the resurrection and the life" (Jn 11:24, 25). So many of us have our theology straight but we need to see him who gathers up all doctrine in himself, by whom it all consists. Then theology becomes doxology!

"Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" (Jn 11:40). Yes, but we still insist on seeing first, we are such slaves to sense. Are you standing by the grave of the impossible in your life, the thing that just simply can't be done... and yet there he stands, saying, "Believe, and you shall see."

But he also said, "Take ye away the stone," and you, like Martha, have objected: "It would create too great a stench in my home, in my church, among the neighbors." You don't dare remove the thing that hinders. So he does no mighty works for you because of your unbelief.

"Said I not...?" "Whatever he says to you, do it." And the impossible shall be done.

"Tote Your Load"

"For every man shall bear his own burden." Gal. 6:5

So says the Word. You must "tote" your load.

But what is your load? Not your petty little vexations and grievances. You are to roll that burden on the Lord (Ps. 55:22). We invent

crosses of our own and think we are carrying the cross of Christ.

His cross for us is our identification with him in death to self. It is the crucifying of self, the mortifying of the old man, and all the sufferings that come on us for his sake. And there is the burden of his concern for a lost world.

Besides, there is the other fellow's burden. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). The shiny rails are not on the sidetrack where only once in a while a burden comes along but rather on the main line where the burdens continually are borne.

But, after all, his burden is light because his yoke is easy (Matt. 11:30). He came, not to add one more burden, but to give us a life that is wings and not weights. Your part is to reckon self dead that Christ may truly live.

"And I of Christ"

"And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." 1 Cor. 3:23

Usually it is overlooked that among the parties in the divided church at Corinth there was not only a Paul clique and an Apollos clique and a Cephas clique but even a Christ clique.

"Jesus Only" is a good motto but often it is the slogan of selfish Christians who don't like any kind of preaching and are like the spoiled children in the marketplace. Some poor sectarians are like safety matches that strike only on their own box! Trying to be original or nothing, they end up being both!

One thinks of the dear soul who had changed denominations four times and upon considering a fifth move was reminded by the sagacious old pastor: "Well, it does no harm to change labels on an empty bottle!"

Why not love and enjoy Paul, Apollos and Cephas, and all under Christ? After all, we do not belong to any of them, they belong to us: "For all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas..." (1 Cor. 3:21-22). Paul only plants and Apollos but waters; God gives the increase.

Don't dare to use the name of Christ to hide a dog-in-the-manger spirit that can't get along with any preacher. Remember that Paul and Cephas and Apollos are also of Christ.

"If We Follow on..."

"Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." Hos. 6:3

There is a heavenly promise: "Then shall we know" (a high pursuit), "if we follow on" (a holy purpose), "to know the Lord."

If the devil cannot keep you from being saved, if next he fails to make you backslide, then he undertakes to keep you just an average Christian. Here he succeeds with most believers. He hates to see you pressing on to a deeper knowledge of the Lord. So you must set your face like a flint knowing that you will not be ashamed (Isa. 50:7).

Satan will stir up these average Christians against you if you insist on living above the average. Nobody will pay you any attention so long as you go to church and teach a class and keep decent and even do lots of "church work." But when you start out into deeper water and begin taking consecration and sanctification and the filling of the Spirit in dead earnest, then eyebrows are lifted and shoulders are shrugged and average Christians begin eyeing you uneasily and your foes may be of your own household.

But be sure your object is "to know the Lord," not just to be different!

Holy Desperation

"Why sit we here until we die?" 2 Kings 7:3

These lepers at the gate of Samaria had come to a desperate pass: so they reasoned, "Let us make a reckless move and go down to the camp of the Syrians; they can not do more than kill us and we are going to die anyway!" (2Ki 7:4).

God's greatest blessings seem to be reached in crises of desperation. Zacchaeus does the irregular thing and climbs a tree; the

woman with the incurable disease, left to die by doctors, elbows through the crowd to reach Jesus; the roof is torn up to get a sick man before the Savior; the Syrophenician stakes all on a bold venture and will not take "no" for an answer. Many people saw the Lord when Zacchaeus climbed the tree but only Zacchaeus had the Lord as his guest. The sick woman was only "among those present" until she exercised faith; then our Lord made her stand out from the crowd. Such daring and desperate souls always touched his heart. They still do.

I can but perish if I go;
I am resolved to try;
For if I stay away I know
I must forever die.

May God make you desperate!

Driving Away the Fowls

"And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away." Gen. 15:11

After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram..." (Gen. 15:1). After what things? After Abram had obeyed God and moved to Canaan (Gen. 12). After he had obeyed God and separated from worldly Lot (Gen. 13). After he had obeyed God and refused to let the world reward him (Gen. 14). The word of the Lord always comes to such men after such things.

"I am thy shield." The shield is faith (Eph. 6:16) but since faith is merely that by which we lay hold on God, God himself is our shield.

"I am thy exceeding great reward." God is not only our Rewarder (Heb. 11:6) but he himself is also our Reward, our portion forever.

God ordered a sacrifice and Abram prepared it. But notice that after all is on the altar, instead of visions there come vultures, buzzards instead of blessings! Did you expect something wonderful when you surrendered and instead you felt worse and the fowls of doubt and depression tried to steal away your offering?

Drive them off, stay by the altar, though it drains the blood from your lips and it seems useless. There may even come horror of great darkness but God will not overstrain you. He will send the vindication of his Word and give you the land he promised you. Fear not, only believe!

Are You Proudly Humble?

"A shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body...." Col. 2:23

Blessed is that friend of the Bridegroom whose sole joy is in the Bridegroom's voice, who can face an audience and say: "This is not my crowd, but God's; not my message, but God's; not my results, but God's." Few attain unto this for sermonizing has supplanted witnessing.

But some preachers with a zeal for selflessness only end up with a different kind of selfishness. Now and then I hear a vehement evangelist condemned for preaching in the energy of the flesh because he storms around in the pulpit. Now preaching in the energy of the flesh—the old Adam, the old nature—is a deplorable thing, but often we confuse it with energy of the body. To preach at all we must use energy of the body and if the Spirit uses plenty in some brother, do not label it energy of the flesh. Some of us need to move about livelier in the pulpit!

Some preachers, for fear they will use words of men's wisdom, leave out all humor, epigrams, striking phraseology. But God uses all that, our Lord used it, Paul used it; and your refusal to use it may be false pride. Proud humility produces some dreadfully dry and dull sermons that sadly need seasoning with salt, though not, of course, with vinegar. Don't let the devil fool you into flat preaching. "Shell the woods" with any ammunition God gives you!

Father's Sermon

"Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men... manifestly declared to be the epistle of

Christ...." 2 Cor. 3:2, 3

"A Christian is the world's Bible", said Moody, "and some of them need revising." Don't forget that your life is preaching the "Gospel according to you."

My father, a faithful layman who loved preaching and preachers, used to tell us once in a while, with a smile: "Some time I'm going to prepare a big sermon and preach it." I think he really meant it for I found sermon notes, beginnings of outlines which never were completed. Whether the task was too great or whether he was smitten with timidity, I do not know, but for some reason the sermon never materialized.

Some months after he passed away, I was preaching in the old home church in the country. One night I asked Christians to stand and tell who had led them to Christ. I did not know what I was getting into: so many arose and said, "It was your father who brought me to Jesus" that I felt embarrassed lest the people think I had planned it merely to honor my father. They told of how along the country roads, in their homes, in the little church, he had dealt with them for the Lord.

And then I knew: father had preached his big sermon, after all!

"Restore Such an One"

"If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask...." 1 John 5:16

After a brother is overtaken in a fault the next thing to overtake him is the usual flock of "I told you so's." But remember that your brother's fall is not a summons to criticism but a call to prayer. If you see Him sin, you will not assemble the neighbors for a back-porch huddle of gossip, you will ask life for him.

Remember, besides, that you saw him when he fell. You do not know how many times he was very tempted and did not fall.

What's done we partly may compute,
But know not what's resisted.

A friend of mine used to say, "I know my fix and you know your fix but neither of us knows the other's fix!"

A neighbor said to the father of an incorrigible son: "If he were my son, I'd disinherit him." "So would I," answered the old father, "if he were your son, but he's my son, you see!" It is so easy to say what you would do... but would you?

Jesus Only

"... witnesses unto me...." Acts 1:8

He must ever have the preeminence for by him all things consist. He is the hub, but how many Christians stay perched on their favorite spokes instead of standing at the hub where all the spokes converge!

The Bible is important but it is only God's Word about Christ. The Spirit is important but he testifies only of Christ. Doctrine is important but a doctrine is just a truth about Christ. Experience is important but an experience is just another step with Christ.

That we are witnesses unto him does not mean we are not witnesses of doctrine. In Luke 24:48 he says we are "witnesses of these things" and that is doctrine. But it is he who gives doctrine vitality and he is greater than any truth about him.

Is it your supreme object to glorify him, or is it to exalt yourself, or to get results, or even to do good? "The Holy Ghost was not yet given because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39). That is also true experimentally; the blessing does not come until he is glorified. Too often we want power that we may be successful, that we may have joy. But "Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord" (John 20:20). Any way you look, everything consists by him.

"This Is That"

"But this is that...." Acts 2:16

At would seem that if ever people were qualified to witness of Christ, the hundred and twenty surely were: they had observed his

ministry, had heard him teach, had followed him. But they must wait until they are endued with power from on high. A personal knowledge of Jesus Christ is not sufficient qualification for witnessing. There must be the pentecostal enduement Came Pentecost and with it three attitudes were taken toward the phenomenon. The multitude was amazed and asked, "What meaneth this?" Others mocking said, "These men are full of new wine." Peter said, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:13-16)

These three attitudes still are manifested whenever and wherever the Holy Spirit turns Christians and churches into flaming witnesses to "the wonderful works of God." The world always asks, "What meaneth this?" for the natural man cannot receive these things The critics still say it is new wine, fanaticism, emotionalism. And it is new wine for even as earthly wine changes the natural man, so does the heavenly wine change the believer's face and walk and talk and causes a commotion wherever he goes.

But, above all, "this is that," the promised blessing Is your fire from heaven? Is "this" which you have "that" which they had?

The Lost Axe Head

"Alas, Master! for it was borrowed." 2 Kings 6:5

Observe that this young prophet's axe head was borrowed. The believer's power is from God, it is not his own. Observe that when he lost the axe head he was concerned over the loss of it. Today we pretend that the Lord has not departed from us in power for service and we keep on chopping with the handle when the axe head is gone!

It would be better to stop all our church work six months and find the lost axe head than to go on vehemently chopping, having a name to be alive but dead. Pulpits might be vacant, church classes without teachers, choir lofts without singers; if they only went back to the waters of worldliness, the ponds of sluggishness, the swamps of indifference and showed the Lord where the axe head fell, where they lost their power—then they might fell forests and build stately mansions to his glory.

God is asking, "Where did it fall?" Will you show him the place? You must go right back where you grieved the Spirit, you must "go back to Bethel" and "up to Gilgal" and make fresh covenant with God.

"And the iron did swim"! Axe heads do not ordinarily float on water but when you show God the place he will make the impossible happen, he will restore lost joy and uphold you with his Spirit. At the place where it fell, the iron will swim.

The Backside of the Desert

"He led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God." Exod. 3:1

It is always on the backside of the desert that we come to the mountain of God—on the backside of the desert of self, at the end of our own dreams and ambitions and plans.

Moody said that when Moses first undertook to deliver Israel he looked this way and that way (Exod. 2:12), but when he came back from Horeb he looked only one way, God's way. But before he saw God's way he had to come to the backside of the desert.

And poor Moses had made quite a come-down from the courts of Egypt to the desert of Midian. He carried in his hand only a shepherd's rod, fit symbol of his humiliation. God demanded that he cast even that to the ground (Exod. 4:3). And when he took it up again it became henceforth the "rod of God"! (4:20)

If God has brought you to the backside of the desert, if you are reduced, as it were, to a shepherd's rod, cast even that gladly at his feet and he will restore to you the rod of God—and with it you shall work wonders in his name so long as you "endure as seeing him who is invisible."

"Stir Up the Gift of God"

"Stir up the gift of God which is in thee." 2 Tim. 1:6

Timothy must have been timid; Paul kept prodding him to let no man despise his youth. He was a good boy and said good things but needed it all set on fire. Maybe the devil had him thinking he was humble when he was just plain scared!

So the gift of the Spirit in power for service had been reduced to coals and Timothy must kindle it into a blaze—a familiar figure to

any country boy who has made a fire on a wintry morning from coals left over the night before. And see what follows: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear" (2 Tim. 1:7). Throughout the Book, God calls us to holy boldness and promises to make us as fenced brazen walls with adamant faces.

God has given us the spirit of power for the power must precede the witnessing (Acts 1:8). He has given us the spirit of love for perfect love casteth out fear (wouldn't you have expected that verse to read, "Perfect faith or courage casteth out fear"?). And love conquers drudgery even as Jacob minded not the seven years' labor for Rachel. Then, there is the sound mind, as Matthew Henry puts it, "A peaceable enjoyment of ourselves, for we are oftentimes discouraged in our work and way by creatures of our own fancy and imagination which a sober, solid thinking mind would obviate and easily answer." Stir up the fire!

"Let No Man Take Thy Crown"

"Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Rev. 3:11

Not the crown of eternal life nor of righteousness, no one can steal those. But people can take away your reward by quenching the Spirit in you, by discouraging you, by leading you astray. And they will do it if you don't watch! After all, every Christian is a contradiction to this old world, he crosses it on every point, he runs against the grain from beginning to end. He is beside himself, a fool for Christ's sake, drunk on new wine, and if he allows it men will tame him and tone him down and reduce him to the great general average. From the day he is born again until he passes on, he must stand up against the current of a world forever going the other way. And the most subtle and dangerous peril of all is that even other Christians who are following the line of least resistance will seduce him into concession and compromise.

Don't let them take your crown! Don't let the king of Sodom make you rich (Gen. 14:23). Don't let those who do not understand your holy urgency persuade you to tarry awhile when your errand is accomplished; bid them hinder you not, seeing the Lord hath prospered your way (Gen. 24:55, 56). Let the dead bury their dead and go not back to bid them farewell which are at home in your house. Set your face like flint and keep traveling on! Let no man take thy crown!

Bonfire and Bone Fire

"Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men."
Acts 19:19

It is the great awakening in Ephesus. First, many believed and confessed and showed their deeds. Then, there was a fire, consuming the books of magic. And we are not surprised to read next, "So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed" (Acts 19:20).

Does your life need a bonfire? Are your heart and home filled with things that offend the Lord? Is there an accursed thing in the midst (Josh. 7:13)? His Word cannot grow and prevail until after the bonfire.

"His Word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay" (Jer. 20:9). Jeremiah had to preach, he was aflame within with the holy "bone fire." No man can truly preach until preach he must: "Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16).

Why is the message today such an academic, professional thing? There is no holy bone fire, no heavenly urgency, no divine compulsion. And there is no bone fire because, alas, there has been no bonfire. Men do not speak with authority because in them the Word grows not mightily to prevail.

Ambassador in Bonds

"... I am an ambassador in bonds...." Eph. 6:20

Paul's bonds were Roman chains. But how many ambassadors of Christ today are in other bonds, fettered by prejudice, shackled by sin, chained with fear! The bonds of suffering and persecution we may expect but these other manacles are to our shame.

What a paradox is this, anyway—an ambassador in bonds! No ambassador is ever supposed to be in chains. He is immune in any country. Yet we whose citizenship is in heaven are handcuffed by the world, the flesh, and the devil!

Paul asks, in this same passage, for prayer that he may open his mouth boldly, that in his bonds he may speak boldly as he ought to speak. We can indeed speak boldly if the bonds are those of suffering and tribulation in his Name. But, alas, our bonds are those of fear and doubt and sin and we cannot speak as we ought. As Zacharias was stricken dumb for his doubt so does our doubt choke our testimony.

Paul was a prisoner of Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:1), and he knew that back of the Roman jailer stood one who holds even the keys of hell and death (Rev. 1:18). But we are prisoners of Satan, bound even as the woman with her spirit of infirmity. Pitiful paradox that we, the messengers of another world, should be his ambassadors in bonds!

Blood and Bread

"Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." John 6:53

The Christian experience begins with Christ, the slain Passover Lamb and the blood applied by faith. With that truth sound believers are familiar in experience and doctrine. But the Christian experience continues on the strength of Christ, the Passover feast of the Bread of Life, as we feed upon Christ by faith. With that we are not so familiar.

Do not stop at the Passover, go on to the feast of unleavened bread. The blood must be followed by the bread. The lamb was not merely to be looked at and sung about but also to be eaten. Christ is our song but also our sustenance. All the lamb was eaten; Christ is for every need, all of him for all of us. The lamb was eaten with bitter herbs and so must we feed on Christ with broken and contrite hearts. No work was mixed with this feast nor are we to supplement the provision of Christ with works of our own. The bread was unleavened and we must allow no leaven of sin, malice, strife. The Israelites ate the feast girded and ready to travel: so must the believer sit loose to this world, a pilgrim and stranger, seeking here no continuing city.

The blood must come first, but the bread must follow. His words are spirit and life (John 6:63). Are you feeding daily on him?

Again to Fear?

"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear." Ro 8:15

God has not saved us from sin's bondage only to enslave us in a feverish fearfulness toward himself. Some believers live in a hyper-conscientious strain: so afraid are they of not doing God's will that they fail to do his will after all. Don't work yourself up into a nervous tension, so anxious to do right that you are "walking on eggs." It is a wretched home where children must live like that and surely our heavenly Father has not given us such a spirit of fear.

Have you failed miserably and are you all undone and despondent and wonder what's the use? Something is saying, "See, you aren't fit to preach or pray or teach or testify. You are just a hypocrite so better give it up." It is the very old devil speaking and he is posing as an angel of light trying to defeat you with the spirit of bondage.

Don't let him deceive you. After all, it isn't a question of your worthiness but of Christ's. It is bad if you have sinned, but worse to wallow in defeatism afterwards. That is a reflection on God's forgiving and cleansing mercies. Go confess, be cleansed, and live happily like a little child in the intimacy that nestles near the heart of God and cries, "Abba, Father."

"Now Dead... I Now Live"

"Abraham considered not his own body which was now dead, so far as being able to accomplish God's purposes was concerned." Rom. 4:19

Every believer must reckon himself crucified with Christ, dead to sin, must mortify the deeds of the body, for we are dead and our lives are hid with Christ in God. Yet we insist on thinking that there is something the old nature can do to please God. There is absolutely nothing in the old Adam that can realize the promises of God, no matter how well-meaning, cultured, and moral Adam may be, for that which is born of the flesh is flesh and whether religious or irreligious flesh, it makes no difference so far as this is concerned.

But we are dead to sin that we might live unto God. Now dead we now live. The life Paul lived in the flesh he did not live by the flesh

but by the faith of the Son of God and he lived it now. We are going to live this way some time, tomorrow, when we have enough faith, when we feel like it, when we have heard enough addresses and read enough devotional books about it, but not now.

Joseph said to Pharaoh: "It is not in me." It is not in us to do God's will. He who has promised must perform. But we can count the flesh now dead and Christ now living in us. We are to be both dead and alive now in God's everlasting today.

The Beatitude of the Unoffended

"And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." Matt. 11:6

It may shock you but it is true that there is nothing more offensive on earth today than Jesus Christ. He is an offense to the Jews (Isa. 8:14; Rom. 9:33); the cross is an offense (1 Cor. 1:23); he is an offense to Pharisaism (Matt. 15:12); he offends superficial disciples (John 6:61); even true disciples are offended (Matt. 26:31).

Many Christians are actually pouting with the Lord. They have asked and have not received, they see the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer, or like John in prison they are grieved because Jesus is not conquering the world in the way they expected.

So many, having expected the world to be Christianized, are offended because the social order is not being converted. Well, Jesus didn't say he would win the world that way but he is winning according to schedule: the blind are seeing, the deaf hear, the lame walk, lepers are healed, the dead are raised, the poor hear the gospel. God may seem slow but he is never late. The times may be evil but "the child Samuel grows on" (1 Sam. 2:26). Christ will return on time as promised (Acts 1:11). His schedule is in the Book. "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Ps. 119:165). Read his timetable and you won't be upset!

Holy Heartburn

"Did not our heart burn within us!" Luke 24:32

These Emmaus disciples were half-believing, "We trusted that it had been he...", and half-doubting, "Today is the third day." So of course they were sad. And Jesus walked with them but their eyes were blind. Is he a veiled Christ to you? "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?" (John 14:9).

They were "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken" (Luke 24:25). Better slow of head to understand than slow of heart to believe! To know the Bible by memory is not to know it "by heart." To know it "by heart" is to hide "thy Word," the great possession, "in my heart," the great place, "that I might not sin against thee," the great purpose.

On this Emmaus journey our Lord is the great Opener. He opened the Scriptures, he opened their eyes, he opened their understanding. But he began with the Scriptures which produced holy heartburn. The church needs nothing else so much as a holy heartburn that all the dopes of the devil and the sedatives of sin cannot deaden.

When their eyes were opened they went back those seven miles to Jerusalem and I do not believe they were weary for they had seen the Lord. Now they had a testimony and as they gave it, he appeared again, as he always does when men truly testify as to "what things were done in the way."

Are your eyes closed? Let him open to you the Scriptures that your heart may burn, and open your eyes that you may see!

"All Things Are Mine"

"All things are delivered unto me of my Father.... Come unto me...." Matt. 11:27, 28

Before inviting us to come our Lord sets forth his resources, shows us what he has to offer. He is God's and if we are his, then all is ours.

"The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (John 3:35, 36). Again the background of his limitless wealth from the Father before setting forth our part in believing.

"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore..." (Matt. 28:18, 19). Once again his authority comes before his

command. There would be no use in ordering us to go make disciples or in promising to be with us unto the end of the age if he had not the proper credentials. And is it not blessed to know that if the "lo" of faith's vision brings with it the "go" of faith's venture (as with Isaiah and Paul), likewise the "go" of Christ's command is followed by the "lo" of Christ's companionship: "Lo, I am with you" (Matt. 28:20).

It is as though in these three passages he says: "All things are mine,... Come. All things are mine,... Believe. All things are mine,... Go!" Have you done it?

The Fair King and the Far Country

"Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off." Isa. 33:17

When we see the fair King, we see also the far country. There is the far country of a new life in Christ. If any man be in Christ, there is a new creation everywhere, the mountains and hills break forth into singing and all the trees clap their hands.

But there is also the far country of a life of service in the name of the King. Isaiah's vision of the King brought conviction and confession and cleansing, but it brought also call and commission. The vision was followed by the voice calling for the volunteer. Saul of Tarsus saw the King and seeing led to service. The Who question, "Who art Thou, Lord?" must be followed by the What question: "What wilt Thou have me to do?" "And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go" (Acts 16:10). The venture must follow the vision. The King does not want mere admiration: he wants action. When you sing, "Jesus paid it all," remember the next line, "All to him I owe."

The far country may not be a far-off country, it may be right in your kitchen or office. But remember that having seen the King you must serve the King, not merely sing about him.

The Bushel and the Bed

"Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed?" Mark 4:21

Christ is the Light of the world (John 8:12). Believers are the light of the world (Matt. 5:14). Our light is Christ within. We are to let our light shine, not shine it. It is to be a glow, not a glare.

Two things hinder Christian testimony, the bushel and the bed. The bushel stands for business, commercialism, money-making. Your only business is to do the will of God. That is your vocation but most Christians treat it as a vacation, something to be done only once in a while. If you are a farmer, it really is God's farm; you are just the tenant. If you keep store, really it is God's store; you are but the clerk. Don't let the bushel smother the candle!

The bed stands for pleasure, ease, worldly comfort. There is no testimony among those who are at ease in Zion. Churches are filled with "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:4). And if "she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth" (1 Tim. 5:6) what a host of animated corpses run around doing church work! Said the Irishman who saw a tombstone marked "I yet live": "If I was dead I wouldn't be ashamed to admit it!" But professing believers are dead and don't know it nor does Sardis know she is dead though she has a name to be alive.

Beware the bushel and the bed!

When the Wine Gives Out

"... They have no wine." John 2:3

There comes a time when the wine of life's ordinary satisfactions gives out. Money, health, loved ones, these leave us. But if Jesus is our guest there is a way to attain even better wine than we lost: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it" (John 2:5).

He may put you to drawing water, filling waterpots, the most irksome drudgery right when you are so desperate you feel like screaming out over lost wine. Suppose these servants had rebelled: "What's the use drawing all this water? It is wine that we need!" Can you be a hewer of wood and drawer of water for the Lord, will you do the dull and laborious and tedious and commonplace thing and trust him to transform it into wine?

If you do whatever he asks of you he will give you better wine than you had at first. Paul counted all but loss to win Christ.

Each loss is truest gain if, day by day,
He takes the place of all He takes away.

He will give you the new wine of the Spirit. And he will turn the water of service into wine, even as with the lad's loaves and fishes he fed the multitude.

"This... did Jesus... and manifested forth his glory" (2:11). So will he manifest himself to you if you obey (14:21). "And his disciples believed on him." So shall you believe afresh with the certainty of experience.

He Himself Knew

"He himself knew what he would do." John 6:6

Jesus asks Philip: "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" It was a purely human question to test Philip. Has God ever brought you up against an emergency and then, instead of immediately relieving you, seemed only to ask you: "Now, what are you going to do about it?" But he is not perplexed: he himself knows what he is going to do all the time! You may not see how you will get through but he knows from the beginning. Will you place the dilemma in his hands and do as he bids you?

Philip answered the Lord that two hundred pennyworth of bread would not feed such a throng. How we measure God's blessings by the human yardstick and reason among ourselves because we have no bread! We cannot meet our problems even if we had all the natural bread of human resource. We have nothing to set before our friends who come to us in their journey: we must go to the house of the heavenly Friend.

Andrew mentions the lad with loaves and fishes but adds hopelessly: "What are they among so many?" Ah, but "little is much if God is in it" and he himself knows what he can and will do with even the least if it is all and freely given. He can multiply your loaves and fishes until there are hamper-baskets full left over. He never does things niggardly, there is always a surplus!

Don't let the crisis overwhelm you. He himself knows what he will do!

Statutes and Songs

"Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage." Ps. 119:54

One does not ordinarily associate law books with song books, mandates with music. But here is a man to whom the law of the Lord is no burdensome thing, a pattern of hard lines. Here is a radiant believer to whom law is liberty and service like unto a happy song.

One may be good in such a bad way. Some of us have punctiliously kept the statutes but have failed to sing the songs. We have whiteness but not light. The Christian life does have its stern, unyielding requirements but every law has a song written on the back and between the requirements runs the refrain. Duty leads to delight and mandates become melodies.

There must be law if there is to be liberty. Try to play a piano and you run into laws as fixed as the decrees of the Medes and Persians. But through those statutes you reach the songs, drudgery leads to delight.

The law of Christ brings the liberty of Christ. Keep his statutes and they become songs. The other side of commandment is conquest. What seems restraint to the outsider means release to you.

"Ye shall know the truth"—there are the statutes. "The truth shall make you free"—there is the song. But to know the truth is to know him, otherwise it is legalism. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). His lawbook becomes a songbook!

Lost and Found

"... he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." Matt. 10:39

We are always trying to "find ourselves" when that is exactly what we need to lose. We even measure ministers by how much they have gathered of reputation and results and position and honors when Paul gloried that he had suffered the loss of all things. We exhort the young people at each school commencement to go out and be leaders, to express themselves and make their mark, when our Lord said: "Whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all" (Mark 10:44).

It is only the life that is lost for him that is found in him. Once in a while there comes along one of those rare souls, fired with a holy recklessness, that flings down all it is and has in glad abandon to the Christ. These are not daredevils but dare saints who take literally our Lord's pronouncement in John 17:14, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world," and who never dream of toning down his severe terms of discipleship to suit the softness of the times. Alas, we modern easy-chair Christians have by clever exegesis excused ourselves from the rigors of his life and even under the guise of victorious living are by no means following the scriptural life of victory but only a subtle shortcut to self-realization under pious auspices. And beware even of a self-determined course of suffering that is not for his sake.

Will You Walk the Waves Toward Jesus?

"... he walked on the water, to go to Jesus." Matt. 14:29

Peter probably did not walk very far but at least he went farther than anyone else ever has gone!

He threw the Lord a challenge: "If it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water" (Mt 14:28). I rather like his daring proposition. He was impetuous, venturesome, often getting into trouble but there was nothing dull about him. He did not say, "If it be thou, come to our aid" but "Let me come to thee." The Lord likes to give men such a dare so he said to Peter, "Come." We ask God to prove his promises by waiting on us; he wants us to prove them by getting out of the boat and walking upon them.

But notice that Peter said, "Bid me come to thee." Christ must ever be the object of our walk of faith, we must not walk just for the thrill of it. And Peter would not start until invited. God will not sustain you in any ventures he has not ordered.

Will you get out of the boat and walk the waves toward him or will you keep on dabbling first this foot, then that, in the water but never standing on it? Suppose you do have a sinking spell as Peter did? You won't drown for the Lord is out there! Better walk by faith a little way and falter than to live the safe, smug life of those who never step out on his promises! Your faith need not fail and won't fail if you look unto him, but even if it does he will not lose you!

Don't live in the boat!

Childish or Childlike?

"Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." Mark 10:15

There are three kinds of people. First, the children: "And he took a child and set him in the midst of them" (Mark 9:36). Then, there are the childish: "Whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children..." (Matt. 11:16). No generation has been more fretful, petulant, hard-to-please than this. We have heard all kinds of preaching: the leaven of the Pharisees in orthodoxy without Spirit; the leaven of the Sadducees in liberalism and modernism; fads and isms galore; and also the true gospel. But we are like the childish souls of Jesus' time who liked neither John's fasting nor our Lord's feasting.

We cannot stay children and we must not be childish, but we should be childlike: "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3). A child doesn't reason it out; he either believes or he doesn't, he loves or he doesn't. Blessed is that Christian who can accept at the start by simple faith that which others reach only through years of questioning and reach it only then because they give up trying to analyze it and decide to accept it. Why not save time by starting out with that? You have to come to it anyway, or to despair.

Verily, God has kept these things from the wise and prudent and has revealed them unto babes (Matt. 11:25).

Something Better

"God having provided some better thing for us...." Heb. 11:40

Not only has he provided for us something better than the saints of the Old Testament had; he has also provided something better than we who believe are receiving and enjoying.

Are you living spiritually on crackers and cheese when you have a standing invitation daily to the banquets of his grace? The devil will lead you to get along with the good when you might have the best. "The Lord is rich unto all that call upon him" (Rom. 10:12). "They which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ" (5:17). If you do not reign it is because you do not take abundance of grace, you take just enough to get by!

Why ride third class when Christ has bought and paid for a first-class ticket? If your friend bought for you a Pullman ticket and meals in the diner and you sat in the baggage car and munched apples, would he not feel rejected? Christ has provided something better; make his provision your possession!

The spies brought back a sample from Canaan. Some Christians are living off samples from the land. After tasting and seeing that the Lord is good... eat! The figs and pomegranates, the milk and honey, the grapes of Eschol, are for you!

Scale the utmost height and catch the gleam of glory bright! There is something better for you!

Dead Flies

"Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour." Eccles. 10:1

A few flies can ruin a jar of precious perfume. And a little foolishness can spoil the influence of an honorable reputation. Someone said of a certain preacher: "When he is in the pulpit it seems that he ought never to come out; and when he is out it seems that he ought never to go in." A few unwise jokes, a remark off-guard, one move too far in a moment of hilarity—verily, such flies do make the best nard to stink. The devilry of these vain and idle words!

Of course we do not advocate that dry and dismal, holier-than-thou seriousness so often mistaken for saintliness. That sort of ointment is as bad as the spoiled kind for it has soured. But we must keep the heart with all diligence and walk circumspectly and let our conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ for

Alas, how easily things go wrong!
A sigh too deep or a kiss too long;
And then comes a mist and a weeping rain,
And life is never the same again.

Watch those flies of "foolish talking and jesting which are not convenient" (Eph. 5:4). And the devil himself is called Beelzebub which means "Lord of flies!"

"Which Is Desert"

"Arise and go toward the south unto the way... which is desert. And he arose and went: and behold...." Acts 8:26, 27

Philip is in the midst of a great revival in Samaria when suddenly there comes a strange turn in the divine direction. I am sure friends must have said: "What! From a revival to a desert? Are you sure God wants you to leave these thrilling meetings for a desolate trail?" But he went and behold... the evangelist meets the eunuch.

Has God called you from a Samaria to a Sahara? Has health failed, has adversity shut down, have loved ones died, must you undertake a hard work among strangers? Does the sudden shift in his orders seem so abrupt that you hesitate and argue that it doesn't make sense? Ah, but his ways are not ours. If he sends you to the desert he can furnish streams of water there. Philip had a date with the eunuch and didn't know it. If God orders you out on the lone road, he has a date for you to keep with someone, maybe with some bewildered soul, maybe with himself. Jesus must go through Samaria to meet one needy woman; perhaps you must leave Samaria because somewhere out on a dismal way, not at all where you like to travel, someone needs you.

Philip "arose and went... and behold." He who has said, "Go ye therefore..." has said "Lo, I am with you." As you obey, you may not see the why of it, but you shall see the who. He who says "Go" goes along.

A Matter of Fact

"With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." Matt. 19:26

Thou hast nothing to draw with," said the woman at the well, "and the well is deep" (John 4:11). She was right about the facts but she failed to recognize another fact, the Lord himself.

"He hath been dead four days," said Martha of Lazarus, and the deduction of course was that it would be unwise to open the grave (John 11:39). She was right about the fact of his having been dead four days but the deduction she drew was altogether wrong: she failed to count on a greater fact, the Christ who could conquer death!

"Beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done," said the Emmaus disciples and they were sad (Luke 24:21). Their facts were right but they left out another fact, the living Christ walking beside them. What a difference he makes in our conclusions!

We pride ourselves on being true to facts but we are often so true to the lower order of facts, the natural, that we do not reckon on a higher fact, the supernatural. An airplane stays on the ground because of one fact, gravitation, but employ another fact and it flies. We stay on the ground, measuring everything by circumstances, "recognizing the facts," when if we only recognized the greater fact of Christ, we might mount up as eagles. Christ does not deny the facts as false "isms" try to do: he rises above them. He is not contranatural but supernatural. Is he the supreme fact in your case?

Sunrise at Peniel

"And as he passed over Peniel, the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh." Gen. 32:31

Poor Jacob, the follower at the heel, "was left alone" to meet his life crisis. The self life always comes to that: "Except it die, it abideth alone." It was a strange wrestling match at Jabbok: both sides won! But remember that Jacob won only when he changed from wrestling to clinging.

He had to be put out of joint. "It is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire" (Matt. 18:8). We ask God to take us and make us but first he must break us.

The angel said, "Let me go, for the day breaketh" (Gen. 32:26). It is always dawn of a new day (as with Peter when the cock crowed!) when we come to a broken self. It was sunrise over Peniel and the sunrise of a new life for Jacob, no longer the supplanter but now a prince of God, having power with God and man.

But note the contrast: sunrise and a shrunken sinew. In 2 Corinthians 12 Paul tells of both his highest mountaintop of vision and his lowest valley of humiliation. If we come from Jabbok princes with God, we also carry the wounds by which self has been humbled. It is the crippled who conquer, the maimed who master. "The lame take the prey." Mephibosheth sits at the king's table lame in both his feet. Sunrise over Peniel may mean a shrunken sinew but it means also power with God and man!

Keep Looking Up!

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."
Titus 2:13

The average discussion of the Lord's return emphasizes the point that "the main thing is just to be ready." Now certainly that comes first but the Scriptures teach not only readiness but expectancy. The early Christians not only were ready: they were also eager, thrilled with anticipation, earnestly "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God" (2 Peter 3:12). No amount of exegesis can obscure that fact. They were not satisfied merely to be ready.

It is one thing to be ready for a visitor but quite another to look eagerly for him. I have been prepared more than once for a caller when I was not thrilled with anticipation and I am quite sure that in my rounds of visitation there are those who are ready for my call but who are not joyfully expectant!

If you grew up with a sister you will recall that she prepared for regular, ordinary friends; but when he whom she loved was to appear—ah, there was eagerness, anticipation, and how slowly moved the hours! One wonders about these believers who say they are

ready for their soul's lover, but who act as though it made no difference whether or not he ever appeared!

The New Testament hope carried not only readiness but also hilarious expectancy. Scholars today say the early Christians were mistaken. It is we who are mistaken scoffers asking, "Where is the promise of his coming?" Those who see no signs are themselves signs of his near appearing!

"Not I, But Christ"

"Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Gal. 2:20

Is it not more often "not Christ but I"? Have you ever come to where you threw down before the Lord all that you are and have and said, "There, Lord, I have failed. Only you can live the Christian life: begin now your life in me; think your thoughts, make your plans, will your will, work your work, have your way." Then, did you dare to believe that he had begun it, did you begin right there to expect him to live in you?

Suppose I try to run a store. I know nothing about it, I get the books mixed up, I do not know how to buy or sell, things are in a dreadful mess. I turn the whole business over to another to own and manage and I become only a clerk in the same store I used to run. Mind you, I am as busy as ever but I have changed my responsibility. The care, the upkeep, the management, all that now is the owner's concern; my part is just to be a faithful clerk.

This Christ life is simply turning the little shop of life, so woefully perplexing, over to another. Christ becomes owner, manager, overseer; his is the responsibility, the upkeep. Your part is to be a faithful clerk, steward of the grace of God. You are to trust the management to him and obey orders: take off the shelves anything displeasing, add anything he commands. But he is also your elder brother and his love takes out all the worry, fever, and tension. And one day, if you have been faithful over a few things, he will give you a heavenly shop in the city of the King!

"Found in Him"

"That I may win Christ, and be found in him." Phil. 3:8, 9

I am eternally in him, safe and secure as to position; my life is hid with Christ in God. But I want to be found in him as to condition any moment of the day.

Does morning find you experientially "in him" and his words abiding in you, or does it find you cross and irritable and with a disposition like a cross-cut saw? Does noon with the burden and heat of the day find you "in him" calmly abiding or have you succumbed to the whirl around you? Does evening find you still "in him" in spite of the wear and tear of the hours?

Does success find you "in him" or has it turned your head? And failure—has it embittered you, or are you still constantly abiding? Has trouble grieved you out of fellowship, has adversity broken your communion, or do they find the peace of God garrisoning your heart and mind through Christ Jesus? Has death invaded your household and still you sorrow not as those who have no hope because it finds you in him who is the resurrection and the life? Does the ordinary, daily grind wear down your disposition and do recreation and pleasure find you forgetting whose you are and that your citizenship is in heaven? Does the call of duty find you fearful and afraid, your life a compromise when it should be a challenge, or does the hour for testimony find you resting in him to speak through you his message?

So live, dear friend, that every situation finds you "in him" in state as well as in standing; let not Satan scare or seduce you from your blessed right in Christ Jesus.

Now Is the Time

"But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day...." Heb. 3:13

Procrastination is thief both of time and eternity. We live either in memory or anticipation: we were happy yesterday, we shall be happy tomorrow, but we never know what to do with today. God lives in an everlasting now for he is the eternal I AM.

If we are ever going to be or do or say anything for our Lord, now is the time. He wants our bodies as living sacrifices, not corpses;

he wants us to buy up the time today; today he must abide at our house. "If only I had lived when Jesus was in the flesh", says one, but he is "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day..." (Heb. 13:8). "But if he would come and make it all plain, it is such a puzzle"; "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth" (Rom. 10:8). We say "There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest" (John 4:35). We are going to live this life when we have a deeper experience, or when we understand it, or when we feel better, but today is as good a time as tomorrow ever will be.

Today is the day of condemnation for "he that believeth not is condemned already", not when he dies or at the judgment (John 3:18). You are never more lost than lost without Christ, and you are lost now! But now is also the accepted time, the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:1). "To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Heb. 3:15).

Tomorrow's sun may never rise
To bless thy long deluded sight.

Now is the time!

So Much to Unlearn

"If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise." 1 Cor. 3:18

We insist on thinking that the walk of faith is a profound, mystical matter which only a favored few ever reach. To the contrary, it is a simple, humble life of childlike trust which very few ever become lowly enough to get down to! There is more to unlearn than to learn! These precious secrets have been hid from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes; not many wise, mighty, noble, have been called; the kingdom is for the childlike; the meek will he teach his way. It is not reached by clever reasonings and elaborate theories; very embarrassing it may be, but often the kitchen cook has the secret while the theologian, bewildered in the midst of his library, has missed it.

We simply won't get it into our understanding that it is a plain matter of taking God at his word and living accordingly. There just must be something more complicated and profound to it than that! You see, that is dreadfully humbling to pride and pays scant deference to intellect and worldly wisdom. Flesh dies hard and is loath to renounce glorying in his presence. But God has wisely made the walk of faith a humble and simple thing. Otherwise only philosophers and theologians might have known it while the great masses, the poor, the plain and unlearned, could never have entered.

It is so simple that men miss it looking up at the clouds for what is among the cobblestones. There is much to count loss that you may know him. So much to unlearn!

Insured Against Tomorrow

"Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow." Josh. 7:13

You insure the house, the car, the family, your life; but are you insured against tomorrow?

Why should you be? Because, for one thing, tomorrow is an unknown quantity. You have had yesterday, you have today, but tomorrow lies in mystery. Have you ever thought what you would do if you knew you had only one more day to live? You would leave off some things you have been doing and add some new features, wouldn't you? Yet you may not have one day!

Again, you do know that tomorrow, some tomorrow, will be a day of reckoning and judgment. You can "get by" your wife and your neighbors and the preacher and the law, but not the Great Tribunal. There is one tomorrow you can count on!

But if you sanctify today, you also know that tomorrow will be a day of blessing. "Sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you" (Josh. 3:5).

But how sanctify? "Christ Jesus... is made unto us sanctification" (1 Cor. 1:30). Receive him, recognize him moment by moment, let him live his life in you. As much as he has and directs wholly is holy! He is the unfailing insurance against tomorrow for he will keep that which is "committed to him against that day."

"Let God Be True"

"Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar." Rom. 3:4

We interpret Scripture nowadays in the light of human reason and experience. When experience seems to contradict the Word we twist the Word to fit experience and devise an exegesis that will harmonize with "facts" instead of taking the Word at what it says and demanding that experience shall square with the facts of the Word.

When the Bible makes a challenging affirmation we immediately think of somebody "who was a good Christian and yet that verse didn't work in his case." But the test of the Word is not somebody's experience: the Word is true because it is the Word of God and his saying so makes it so! It does not need propping up with our verifications to prove its authority.

Pity the young convert who starts out all aglow with simple faith in the promises of God! If he pitches his tent in the Old Testament he will be told that it is for the Jew. If he claims something in the Gospels he may be reminded that the verse applies to the kingdom age! In Acts he will be informed that "these things were for the early church." In the epistles he generally wades through denaturing exposition that takes the vitality out of flaming promises and by the time he has paid tribute at all the toll gates of doubt he comes out with a pale, insipid set of platitudes. It is better to believe too much than too little. "Let God be true but every man a liar."

"If Any Man Thirst"

"For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty." Isa. 44:3

But who is thirsty? Casually wanting a drink of water is not thirsting. We know nothing of thirst, with water on tap at our elbows. When every pore cries, "water"; when lips swell; when every thought, hope and desire is concentrated in a fever for one cooling drink—that is thirst. Do we have such craving for fulness of the Spirit? Do we pant after God as the hart after the water brooks? We talk lightly about the need of more power. Five minutes later we have changed to some other subject; it is merely a topic for polite conversation among the saints. We are too shallow, we do not go to the deeps of any subject, we flit like butterflies from theme to theme.

And never even in dreams have seen
The things which are more excellent.

We are inclined nowadays to discount the experiences of the giants of another day who were so consumed with fever for deeper blessing that food lost its taste and sleep could not be had. More comfortable routes to Beulah Land, have been devised. But deep desire brings deep delight and when one compares the mighty preaching of those days with the thin pipings of these times it is evident that a shallow sense of poverty has brought a shallow sense of power. The living water has not been poured upon us for we are not thirsty.

The Sufficient Authority of the Word

"If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."
Luke 16:31

The rich man Dives is, among other things, a type of those who demand some sign other than the plain statement of God's Word. The Bible is not enough, it must be corroborated by some display. "If Christ were among us today in the flesh, working miracles, we would believe." No, a person who is not convinced by his Word will not be convinced by his works. Thomas demanded to see but more "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29). Faith that rests on signs soon fades for signs come and go but his words shall not pass away.

Indeed, one has risen from the dead and still men are unconvinced. Nothing else is enough when God's Word is not enough. Faith must rest on "it is written," it "cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Faith rests not on feelings but on fact, the revealed truth of the Book. Feelings are like the steam in the engine but the Word is the track and many brethren with plenty of zeal leave the track and run amuck.

This is not to say that signs do not follow those who believe. Indeed they do and God proves his promises in experience but not until we are content to rest upon his Word, sign or no sign. While he has vouchsafed weak believers some extra tokens, the better way is

to go on yet believing, though now we see him not. To ask for further evidence outside the Word is to doubt the Word and the Lord.

The Blessing or the Blesser?

"For to me to live is Christ." Phil. 1:21

Once I sought the Lord for victory over fear and worry. On deeper examination I realized that what I was seeking was not the fulness of the Lord but rather certain benefits from the Lord. We want our favorite blessings but do we want him? We desire peace and joy and power and courage and victory—all these are in him, though they are incidental—but do we want to decrease that he may increase until he fill us with himself? Do we want him to live his life in us at all costs, casting out whatever offends, leading us where he chooses? Some of us would make a heavenly Santa Claus of our Lord. The child wants gifts from Santa Claus but is not interested in Santa Claus himself except for what he brings.

We are not prepared to say, "Christ liveth in me." What we really want is to live our own lives with Christ at hand for particular blessings. But he must be Lord in general to bless us in particular.

Once it was the blessing,
Now it is the Lord;
Once it was the feeling,
Now it is His Word;
Once His gift I wanted,
Now the Giver own;
Once I sought for healing,
Now Himself alone.
—Anonymous

The Middle Mile

"For consider him... lest ye be weaned and faint in your minds." Heb. 12:3

The hardest part of the journey is neither the start nor the finish but the middle mile. There is the enthusiasm of a new undertaking that buoys you at the beginning and there is the thrill of reaching the goal that carries you down the home stretch; but the middle mile, when you are a long way from the start and home is still distant—that tests the mettle of the traveler.

On the middle mile of faith's pilgrimage the believer needs most the grace of "patient continuance" (Rom. 2:7). The soul can summon unusual strength for great sorrows and extra power for mighty deeds better than it can master the commonplace and the day-by-day. When the body is sluggish, the mind in a haze and the spirit stupid, when "a sense of things real comes doubly strong"; when the Bible seems dull and we cannot pray with a tongue that cleaves to the roof of the mouth; let us consider him or we will be weary and faint in our minds.

No one will know how much was wrapped in Paul's phrase "in weariness" (2 Cor. 11:27). The dangers of fierce battle are preferable to the humdrum of the trenches. There are days when we fly and days when we run but most days we walk. And the only way out is to "wait upon the Lord" and "consider Him" that we may "walk and not faint."

"Go, and Learn What that Meaneth"

"Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice...." Matt. 9:13

The Pharisees had known this quotation from Hosea all their lives but knowing the Word is one thing and knowing what it means by obedience is another. We are to remember the commandments to do them (Ps. 103:18). Our Lord bade us go not merely to teach them "all things whatsoever I have commanded you" but to teach them to observe these things (Matt. 28:20).

You have not really learned a commandment until you have obeyed it. The old lady was right when she said the best way to study the Bible was to read until you come to a commandment, then stop and do what it says before moving on. We are his friends if we do the things commanded. If we know these things, happy are we if we do them. We call him Lord, and do not the things he says. He

promised to reveal himself to those who keep his commandments. We are to be doers of the Word and not hearers only. We are to continue in the law of liberty.

The church suffers today from Christians who know volumes more than they practice. It would be well to let our walk catch up with our talk. Our minds have been taught much farther down the road than our feet have traveled. And nothing clarifies doctrine like doing. Each new thing learned becomes a millstone if we do not make it a milestone.

"Come Ye Apart"

"Come ye yourselves apart... and rest a while." Mark 6:31

If you don't come apart, you will come apart—you'll go to pieces!

Some of us would do more for the Lord if we did less. We have gone in for quantity production but the quality suffers. Keeping everlastingly at it brings only high blood pressure. Our Lord did not undertake to do personal work with everybody or to heal everyone in Galilee. Elijah must hide himself (1 Kings 17:3) before he could show himself with power (18:1). We do not hide ourselves nowadays and when we go out to show ourselves, all that we do show is ourselves; the Spirit of God works not in us.

The Lord Jesus knew how to rest for God—a forgotten art. Many a Christian would best glorify his Lord by a fishing trip. Maybe fishing in the creek would improve our fishing for men. We can get closer to people by getting away from them for awhile.

Martha gets overwrought in the kitchen and needs to turn to Mary and sit awhile at the feet of the Lord. So much church work is like a squirrel in a circular cage, plenty of activity but no progress. Statistitis is developed with symptoms not unlike St. Vitus' dance.

There is plenty of speed in Isaiah 40:31: We shall fly, run, walk; but it follows "waiting upon the Lord." "Study to be quiet!" (1 Thess. 4:11)

"Try His Own Words"

"The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." John 6:63

From far-off Norway a sailor, who once attended my church, wrote to tell me of a wonderful experience of healing. Evidently not well acquainted with English he puts his sentences together oddly but in the very phrasing there is beauty: "Will you... thank the Lord Jesus Christ, that he has given me a new spine in body by his own words from the Bible?" Then he adds what is very significant: "Just because I'll try his own words."

That is just what we won't do. We will try this theology and that, this devotional book and that, this exposition and that, this fad and that, but we will not try his own bold and naked words! Alas, even fundamentalists are often guilty of sizing and sorting Scripture to fit the dimensions of their own private theories, lopping off this verse and stretching that, to suit the procrustean bed of some favorite school of interpretation.

Blessed are they who, weary of the Babel of many tongues, press back through all the sermons and books and isms and ologies into his own dear presence, and who dare to "try his own words." It is possible even to search the Scriptures and yet not come to him that we might have life. Take him at his own word and see what happens!

Is Your Grace Drawing Interest?

"Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury." Matt. 25:27

We are God's merchantmen here to occupy till he comes; "stewards of the manifold grace of God," we are to redeem the time because the days are evil (1 Peter 4:10). I have seen some businessmen with small capital get great things done while others with large resources failed. And I have seen some believers without unusual piety manage to invest what they had wisely so that it drew great dividends while others with much spirituality did not seem to know how to put it to use.

Not for all the world would we depreciate the value of deep spirituality. Still we have had to observe men with saintly spirits and

wonderful graces who did not seem to make them count while others who had much to learn and who often exhibited unlovely characteristics and grievous flaws did put what they had with the exchangers so that their grace drew interest. To be sure, each of these needs to learn something from the other, but just now we would point out that there is something wrong with that piety which does not go into business for the King. Often those who make least investment of their riches talk most about them—remember that the man who hid his talent gave the longest report at the day of accounting!

Put your spiritual coinage to work for God. He is expecting interest!

A Word to the Janglers

"Now the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: from which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling." 1 Tim. 1:5,6

What is it all about anyway? What is the sum and the aim of the Gospel? Big churches and heavy theology and belligerent disputings among the brethren? No, it is love that proceeds from a pure heart and a good conscience and an unaffected faith. From this, alas, many have swerved into vain jangling and there is heard all over the land the raucous discord of sounding brass and clanging cymbal.

I entered upon my first pastorate rather pugnacious in my convictions like the Scot who said he was open to conviction but would like to see the man who could convict him! I began to hear references to a godly old minister who had preceded me by many years: "Now he was a real Christian"; "I've never seen many real Christians but he was one"; "I'd like to see another preacher like him." I began to inquire about this remarkable brother and learned that he had not been a scholar; had lived with an invalid wife; had founded churches and educated young people and given his life to ordinary people in pioneer horse-and-buggy days, in that swampy country against great adversities. I asked one who had known him what was the secret of that life and he answered: "He just loved us." More gifted ministers have followed this old saint and have moved on to imposing pulpits; but he holds the preeminence for he perceived the "end of the commandment." After tongues and mysteries and knowledge pass, love remains!

"Paying Off" the Lord

"And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac. But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts and sent them away." Gen. 25:5, 6

We reverse the process today. Unfaithfulness to God is spiritual adultery. We who believe are married to Christ that we might bring forth fruit unto God (Rom. 7:4). We are espoused unto another (2 Cor. 11:2). But too many Christians have spiritual concubines: to these they give themselves and on Sunday they give the Lord gifts and send him away. Much church giving is to ease the conscience. Singing in the choir, teaching a class, giving five dollars, may be only a nice way of paying off the Lord while the heart really is set on the concubines of self and sin. It is one thing to write out a handsome check for the church; it is another to give God oneself and the ability by which one earned the check!

Many a husband has been known to come in late at night bringing his wife flowers or candy after spending the evening with some other man's wife; and many a church member comes to God's house on Sunday with a sanctimonious smile, bringing the Lord a five-dollar bill after spending the week with the concubines of Egypt.

Spiritual adultery covers any infidelity to Christ. Many a Christian who never would dream of being unfaithful to his wife is unfaithful to the Christ to whom he is joined in spiritual union. Anything more important to you than the Lord is a concubine. Beware giving all to these while you give Christ gifts and send him away.

"But If Not..."

"If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us.... but if not...." Dan. 3:17, 18

At is well to be prepared for the "if not." For some the ninety-first Psalm is to be claimed literally but for others there is martyrdom. Through faith some have subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of

aliens, women received their dead raised to life again. But that does not exhaust the list. Not everyone who lives by faith readily overcomes every circumstance and achieves outward victory. So the Spirit adds, "and others..." (Heb. 11:35, 36). They were those who had to face the "if not..."

The man who mistakes faith for a short cut to health, wealth, and prosperity may be in for a sobering correction. God does not follow one uniform procedure with all of us. Peter walks out of prison by divine intervention but James dies by the sword. These Hebrew children knew that God was able to deliver them but if not they would be true anyway! Their faithfulness was not conditioned by favorable circumstance.

Although, of course, you would like to be delivered from whatever fiery furnace you are in, have you made up your mind about the if not? No matter to which category in the eleventh of Hebrews you belong will you be faithful anyway?

Rubbish

"... there is much rubbish." Neh. 4:10

At was another device of Satan to stop the building of Jerusalem's wall. Outside opposition had failed so he started boring from within. The burden bearers were weary and so much rubbish had accumulated that they grew discouraged.

If you are building a life upon the one foundation, Jesus Christ, you will face the problem of rubbish. You cannot build a house without the accumulation of odds and ends, broken pieces, waste material that must be destroyed; nor will you build a life without the rubbish of mistakes, wrong calculations, the inevitable odds and ends that result from our weaknesses and limitations. The devil would point to all these and break down your spirit. But you will save much trouble if you learn to expect some rubbish and, in spite of errors, go right on with the building. We do not exonerate the rubbish; we merely recognize it and keep hammering away, forgetting the things behind.

Many a minister has broken down because he had to work with such faulty helpers in the church, so many mistakes were made, so much time and money were unwisely used, that the rubbish and weariness overwhelmed him. But there are no perfect churches nor deacons nor choirs this side of heaven, so a little of Nehemiah's wisdom is sorely needed. Our Lord had to work with most discouraging disciples. There was much rubbish. One betrayed, another denied him. But he built his wall!

The Foolishness of God

"Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." 1 Cor. 1:25

It is an arresting phrase: one never thinks of connecting foolishness with God. But the gospel with all its wondrous provisions has always seemed foolish to the wisdom of this world which in turn is foolishness with God (1 Cor. 3:19). That one who came in poverty and died in shame should be the one and only Savior is incredible to the wise and prudent.

And, wonder of wonders, that the ideal life is simply to take God at what he has said in a very old book; to cast all one's own ideas and opinions to the winds and "let go and let God"; to dare to prove the words of the Lord by taking them at face value without running them through the shrinking processes of pious doubt. Surely to do this, one must become a fool that he may be wise (1 Cor. 3:18)!

And "the weakness of God," how even Christians simply will not dare to risk proving it! In this age of radio and aviation and psychology when it's every man for himself and wits must be kept at razor edge, simply to set out relying not on native gifts and daring to renounce all the tricks and tactics of self with full expectation that in weakness God makes perfect his strength even as Christ was "crucified through weakness but liveth by the power of God" (2 Cor. 13:4)—surely if this be not of God it is the wildest madness of all time!

Are you willing to "risk" the foolishness of God to find wisdom, and the weakness of God to find strength?

Scum of the Earth

"We are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." 1 Cor. 4:13

After reading such verses there is always something a bit ironical in a congregation of elegantly dressed Christians with jewels galore (in spite of 1 Tim. 2:9 and 1 Peter 3:3, 4!) singing

To the old rugged cross I will ever be true,
Its shame and reproach gladly bear.

But the cross has been displaced by cushions and a two-car-per-family generation with monetary souls prefers the millionaire to the martyr!

We would not glorify poverty: there is no holiness in sackcloth. It is easy to fall into the Colossian error of a false mysticism with neglect of the body. But still, few seem to remember that the time is short and that they who buy should be as though they possessed not, for the fashion of this world passes away. We are not recommending gunnysack garments but "Having food and raiment let us therewith be content" gets scant recognition nowadays. If early Christians dropped into church today one wonders how congenial they would find us, so entangled (in spite of 2 Tim. 2:4) with the affairs of this life.

But times are different. How different? If we dared to go to him without the camp bearing his reproach would not we be rated the filth of this modern world, the discarded debris of all things?

"Nevertheless"

"Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net."
Luke 5:5

Have you toiled through the years in your own strength and have taken nothing? And now the Master bids you launch out into deep water and let down your net, just when it seems most unpromising? It will be a great day for you if you will come to the "nevertheless" and cross over from self to the Savior. Look at the shift of emphasis: "We have toiled all the night and have taken nothing"—self-effort has ended in failure; "At thy word I will let down the net"—this time Peter is fishing in the name of and at the command of another. And what a difference it makes when we pass the "nevertheless"!

The secret of failure, not only in soul fishing but in all experiences of the Christian life lies just here: so many have not come to "nevertheless." So much of our church activity, though earnest and sincere, is the member's busyness instead of the master's business! Dear church workers wear themselves to a frazzle and come to bed Sunday nights completely exhausted and yet the Father has not been glorified, if the "nevertheless" has not been reached where transition has been made from the energy of the flesh to the power of the indwelling Christ. What matters it if "we have toiled all the night" if it has not been "at thy word"?

When Little Is Much

"There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?"
John 6:9

That boy set out from home with enough to feed five thousand and didn't know it! What a stare he would have given you if you had told him he carried such a dinner! There is no telling what can be done with what you have until Jesus has taken and sanctified it. There was neither quantity nor quality in this lad's meager meal: a scanty fare for even a growing boy! And only bread and fishes at that!

There were men a generation ago who carried most imposing assortments of gifts and graces but God passed by them all and took the coarse lunch of Dwight L. Moody and fed the world. Much becomes little when we consume it ourselves but little becomes much when Christ gets it all.

Do not berate yourself because you have so little to offer him. He can do nothing with the most until he has blessed it and it is the multiplied little with which he feeds the multitude, lest flesh should glory in his presence. This boy was obscure and his lunch contemptible but Jesus made him never to be forgotten. There is no telling which boy or girl in your home or church is the one whose paltry provision for self, once surrendered to the Lord, shall become ample provision for multitudes with baskets left over.

"Henceforth... Wars"

"Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars." 2 Chron. 16:9

King Asa made a splendid beginning. He did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God. He cleaned up idolatry and built fenced cities. The Lord gave him rest and the land was at peace. He gained a mighty victory over a million Ethiopians, was encouraged by Azariah the prophet to even greater reforms and put down even his idolatrous grandmother.

But in the face of a new crisis he weakened and allied with Syria, thus leaning on the arm of flesh instead of the Lord his God. Stern is the reproof of Hanani, the prophet: "Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars."

Trouble sets in when we begin to take some of our weight off God and lean on ourselves or others. From henceforth, from the day you start that sort of thing, you may count on wars within and without. "From whence come wars and fightings among you?" One reason is, we fear that God's promise is not enough, we must supplement that with resources of flesh. So we make unholy alliances: we call in native ability and personal shrewdness, we accept help from others. It is so easy to fall into the old carnal way of meeting danger. But God is enough: "It is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power" (2 Chron. 14:11).

"If Thou Canst—"

"If Thou canst do any thing.... If thou canst believe...." Mark 9:22, 23

The father of the afflicted boy was looking at the wrong "If." Our Lord speedily corrected him. It is not a matter of Christ's ability to help; it is always a matter of our willingness to believe. "According to your faith be it unto you."

Nor is it a matter of his willingness. The leper put it, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." At once Jesus clears that point: "I will; be thou clean" (Matt. 8:2, 3).

We have continually tried to saddle the responsibility for our meager and miserable condition on the Lord. He threw the issue clearly on us. If we do not reign in life it is because we do not receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness (Rom. 5:17). After these centuries of preaching we do not yet believe that "All things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23). Of course, this does not mean just any kind of faith in anything or anybody. All things are possible to him that believeth if he believes in him with whom all things are possible.

It is up to you: "If thou canst believe." If we can get a real faith the signs will follow, we shall have the miracles. The day of miracles has not passed but the day of faith has. "According to your faith" is the measure of what God will do for you.

Where You Belong

"That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ...." 1 Peter 4:11

God seems sometimes to waste his saints according to our viewpoint, putting them into what seem most useless places, not at all in keeping with their gifts and "possibilities." Most promising ones he may remove early and eagles he sometimes appears to put on hummingbird nests. But he is not concerned with putting us where we can best demonstrate our ability nor even where we can be of most service but only where we can best glorify him. He may even take us out of active service and sentence us to what seems dreariest failure that he might have the preeminence.

I suspect that much of our praying to be used is selfish and underneath it is the sneaking desire to make our mark and be recognized. We would use the divine sanction to put ourselves across. But simply to drop all our dreams and ambitions and preferences and have no mind about it all, but be willing for God to shift us anywhere on life's checkerboard, or bury us anywhere in life's garden, counting not our lives dear and loving them not unto the death, gladly yielding ourselves for God to please himself with, anywhere and any way he chooses—that is rarely done.

It does not matter whether you are being "appreciated" or recognized or "used" as you think you should, but is God glorifying himself in you?

"If Ye Had Faith...."

"Lord, Increase our faith. And the Lord said, If ye had faith...." Luke 17:5, 6

You will observe that he did not promise to increase their faith. He seems to counter their request: "If ye had faith...." We are continually asking God to give us more faith, but the Lord is saying "If you had a little and would act on it, you soon would have more!"

I am sure that most of our whining after God to send us some more faith from heaven wrapped and delivered at the door is utterly beside the point. We can will to believe and when we do God enables us to exercise faith and even faith as little as a grain of mustard seed exercised will move a mountain. But we sing about it, talk about it, pray about it, and never act it.

The Lord Jesus did not deliver lectures on faith to candidates for blessing, he told them something very definite to do: "Stretch forth thy hand!" "Go thy way!" "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house!" He asked the very thing that seemed most impossible. Goethe said, "Thought without action is a disease." We have read books and listened to lectures and pondered about faith and have never done anything about it until it has reacted on us in spiritual flabbiness. Nothing is more weakening than continually to know and be inspired by great truths, yet never act on them. Do something!

Faith Made Perfect

"By works was faith made perfect." James 2:22

We insist on thinking that faith is an ephemeral, evanescent sort of thing up in the clouds, a rare spell that sweeps over us in rare moments. But faith is the most matter-of-fact thing there is. It rests absolutely on what God has said (Rom. 10:17), but it is not content to mull over and dream about God's words.

Having heard what God has said, faith takes a stand on his Word through an act of will. In spite of all the confusion on the subject you have a will and the solemn choice of standing or not standing on the Word of God. To be sure, it is all of God. God gives you air and lungs to breathe it, but you must do the breathing. He gives you truth and the capacity to believe it, but you must do the believing.

Right here we fail. We believe what God has said but not to the point of acting, so faith remains incomplete and imperfect and never comes to fruition. We pray for years for more faith which never comes because God is waiting on that decisive act of will that shifts gears from mere opinion to action. But the moment we definitely, deliberately and decisively exercise what we believe by acting on it, the power of God swings into operation and mountains get out of the way! Mountains do not move before lectures and books and fine thoughts but only when we say, "Be thou removed!" "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt!"

"As Seeing Him"

"For he endured, as seeing him who is invisible." Heb. 11:27

Faith does not see consequences or results, is not concerned about what may happen. Most of us would live by faith if we knew the rewards would be forthcoming inside of two weeks. But when time passes and we feel the same and maybe worse; when friends suggest that we have tried too much and had better compromise; when every circumstance laughs in our face and the dead, dull sense of reality settles dismally around the soul; then we stagger at the promise through unbelief.

Please remember that if you start out to live by faith things may not turn out for you according to the book you read or as they did for someone else. But faith does not look at what develops: it goes right on whether success crowns you or adversity laughs at you: for faith sees him, and has nothing to do with feelings, results, circumstances. These simply do not enter into it, they are incidental. Faith has to do simply with you and God. Are you going to believe him, whatever happens?

That takes all disappointment out of it for your expectation is from him and whatever you suffer from others, yourself, or circumstances, he remains faithful. We have talked too much about the rewards of faith and have tried to lure men into it as a handsome paying proposition. But the object of faith is also its reward (Gen. 15:1) and faith sees only him.

Begin Today!

"The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God." Gal. 2:20

If we must wait until we understand doctrine and have a systematic knowledge of the Bible we may never begin the adventure of faith. One of the strange turns of providence is that he frequently raises up some young and untaught herald and makes the theologians sit at his feet. Moody invaded England and Scotland and learned divines were taught of him. It is all that flesh may not be tempted to glory before him who raises up things which are not to bring to nought things that are.

You can live as truly by faith today as ever you will later. You can be filled with the Spirit today as truly as anyone else. More light and experience may come but now is the time to walk by faith and you need feel no inferiority complex in the presence of theologians or let the experienced despise your youth. It is all of God and none of them has anything he did not receive. Pay them all due deference but do not postpone the life abundant until you know more or read more or experience more. Live abundantly today!

I have a life with Christ to live,
But, ere I live it, must I wait
Till learning can clear answer give
To this and that book's date?"

No! Now is the accepted time! Live today!

The First and the Last

"Fear not; I am the first and the last." Rev. 1:17

Why should I fear? He is the alpha and omega, the author and finisher, the first and the last. He was here before there was any fear and he will be here when all fear has passed away!

Before there was a universe he saw everything from the beginning. If I could stand for five minutes at his vantage point and see the entire scheme of things as he sees it, how absurd would be my dreads, how ridiculous my fears and tears! But I see only this mixed and muddled present. I snatch these hours out of the pattern of the ages and of course there are ragged edges and loose ends, and things don't seem to make sense. Like jerking a text out of its context I tear this leaf of today out of the book of eternity and wonder why it looks so incomplete. He sees it all and if I could see it all I would not fear.

But why should I fear anyway? He has told me that there is nothing to fear and he knows. Can't I take his Word for it? He has overcome pain and sorrow and fear and death: he will outlast them all. My life is in union with Christ in God and I shall outlast all of life's pressures. We think of ourselves as transient and these things as permanent but really they are but transient and we are eternal! I am identified with him: "To live is Christ"... and even to die is gain! What is there to fear?

"With Him Also... All Things"

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. 8:32

If God loved us enough to give his Son to die for us will he not also give us all lesser blessings? If he provided the greater, surely he will include the less! What a strange experience this is that we have received God's salvation from the guilt and penalty of sin, yet we wallow along in fear and doubt and care and daily sins! What sort of redemption is that which provides security against the past and future but leaves us stranded in the here-and-now?

It not only shows weakness and lack of faith to plug along in daily defeat hoping only to get to heaven; it casts reproach on the care of our heavenly Father to imply by our tawdry living that he has stingily meted out a scanty allowance for us in this present world.

And how much goes along with the gift of his Son? "All things!" And how is this given? Grudgingly, so that we must coax and persuade a parsimonious God? "Freely!" If being saved from condemnation makes us as happy as it does, why do we not take all the rest that goes along with it! Are you missing the things that are included "with him also"?

The Invincible Affirmation

"... Christ liveth in me." Gal. 2:20

There is absolutely no way of conquering a man who believes that Christ lives in him and lives accordingly. If Christ has been received by faith, if the life has been committed utterly to him, if he is allowed to fill the person's life with his own, there is nothing that can stand against such a character, even as nothing could stand against Christ in the days of his flesh.

Such a man is unconquerable because there is no way of getting at him. He isn't living by his own spirit and what can be done with a dead man? Christ is living in his stead and what can be done with Christ? He who lives by this invincible affirmation is hidden with Christ in God and is untouchable. Take his money but his treasures are laid up in heaven. Take his health but while the outer man decays, the inner man is renewed day by day. Revile his name but he lives by the name of another. You may even kill him but "to die is gain"! What can anything or anybody do with a man like that?

"Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword—a formidable combination but they are helpless here! We do not merely conquer, "in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37). Why? Because with Christ God hath freely given us all things. Having "all things" in Christ makes us superior to all things.

"Except It Die"

"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."
John 12:24

Are you willing to be ploughed under in God's garden? Self does not like the disintegrating process: but remember that wheat can never multiply until in the grave of clods greater forces than itself take it apart and destroy its identity, then resurrect it in manifold fruitage. We are always trying to keep ourselves intact!

But as the broken soil sends forth the grain and the broken grain yields the bread and the broken alabaster gives forth perfume so God breaks us to multiply us. The Indians believed that faded flowers formed the rainbow; our own faded dreams and crushed ambitions he blends into a bow of beauty. As the laver was made of the looking glasses of the women (Ex 38:8), so human vanity must be melted down to his praise and glory.

The tumult and the shouting dies—
The captains and the kings depart;
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,
A broken and a contrite heart.

Are you willing to be ploughed under, to die and disintegrate? Your life can be fruitful only if you allow God to break up the clumps of selfishness.

"He Hath Said"

"He hath said... so that we may boldly say..." Heb. 13:5, 6

Satan came in the form of a serpent asking, "Yea, hath God said?" Our Lord came in the form of a servant affirming, "Yea, God hath said!"

We either ask or affirm, we don't believe or we do. A Christian is a human question mark that has been straightened out by the grace of God into an exclamation mark of positive affirmation.

Consider the authority of the promiser: "He hath said." What gives the word of God authority is simply the fact that it is the word of God! Consider the authority of the promise: "He hath said." A check has no authority of its own, the name on the bottom gives it its value. It is God's name to the Book that gives it authority and please remember that his promises are checks to be cashed, not mere mottoes to hang on the wall!

Consider the authority of the promisee: "So that we may boldly say..." Backed up by God's Word, the checkbook of glory, we can

invest heavily and carry on great business buying up the time although we are only beggars in ourselves. Arm a beggar with a millionaire's signed checkbook and see what happens! Yet God has armed us who believe with the checkbook of the Word and some of us go on in a miserly way as though nothing had happened! We don't have to get rich, we are rich and won't believe it!

Will You Be One?

"For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him." 2 Chron. 16:9

It was Moody who heard someone say that God was waiting to show the world what he could do through one wholly surrendered man, and who said, "By the grace of God, I'll be that man"—and he was!

God is ready to do that at any time: he is waiting for the man whose heart is perfect toward him—not faultless but blameless, completely set on pleasing him. Our Lord said, "I do always those things that please him." If we told the truth, we should say, "I do always those things that please him—meaning myself," or "I do always those things that please them—other people."

Yes, God is ready to show himself strong in somebody who, according to the prayer of Epaphras, stands perfect and complete in all the will of God (Col. 4:12). That person might as well be you. "But I am not qualified!" do you lament? "All the fitness he requireth is to feel your need of him." The Philippian saints were at Philippi but in Christ Jesus. Whatever your situation here you can be in his will! Will you be one in whose behalf God may show his power? Set your heart completely on pleasing him and see what happens!

Collapse After Carmel

"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." 1 Cor. 10:12

It is the day after the incident at Carmel, the red-letter day in Elijah's life up to now, and he is in full flight, running from a woman! Even at that, it is better to run from Jezebel than after her as in the case of Thyatira (Rev. 2:20), but Elijah has no business heading for the tall timber.

Collapse so often follows Carmel. Look out after your big day! We worry about breaking down on a dull and tedious stretch but the most dangerous time is right after success. Peter reaches a mountain peak of confession with "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and within a few minutes he is daring to contradict the Lord! And the Lord who said, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee" is compelled within a few minutes to cry, "Get thee behind me Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men!" (Matt. 16:16-24). Peter, the spokesman of God, becomes on the same occasion the spokesman of the devil, crashing from mountain peaks of confession to the swamps of contradiction within seven verses!

Our Lord moved from the high day of baptism to the wilderness of temptation. We are tempted most at our strongest moments. The most dangerous time is not the hour of adversity but of success. You can fall farther from the roof of the house than from the front porch! Collapse may follow fast after Carmel. Watch and pray!

"This Is the Victory"

"In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." John 16:33

The world is too much with us nowadays. We cannot explain it for God holds that secret and the world by its wisdom knows not God. We cannot endure it by a Stoic stiff-upper-lip philosophy. Thousands are trying to bluff through, whistling their way past the graveyard, wearing the royal robes of a put-on fortitude over the sackcloth of inner wretchedness (2 Kings 6:30). We cannot enjoy the world for "she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth," it is all a lifeless counterfeit.

But we can overcome the world and any of us, regardless of circumstance, can get in on this. Christ did not dodge or deny the fact of trouble: he declared plainly that in this world we might expect it. But he follows it with, "Be of good cheer." He overcame the world and whoever is born of God and believes that Jesus is the Son of God overcomes the world, and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith (1 John 5:4, 5).

This business of overcoming the world is open to you. You may be an invalid, you may be in straits, you may be poor and ignorant and despised, but there is no condition in which you may be placed that can keep you from overcoming the world if you will receive him and let him live his overcoming life in you. "Be of good cheer." He is the way out.

"Arise, and Walk"

"Arise, take up thy bed and go unto thine house." Matt. 9:6

Jesus asked the palsied man to rise and carry his bed, though that was the very thing this man could not do. Yet that is exactly what he did! The lame man at the Beautiful Gate obeyed the same command, and the man with the withered hand stretched it forth for healing!

The moment he obeyed and the will made its effort, the power to perform came into action. If the sick man had waited until he felt like rising he would never have been healed. We put off obedience until the feeling sweeps over us; we must have the power before we undertake the performance. That is why there is so much abstract theorizing about faith and so little faith. There is no real faith until it gets into the will and we undertake the very thing we know we cannot do, but undertake it in the name of and at the command of another. Immediately divine power goes into action and what with men is impossible becomes with God possible.

Does this sound trite? You have heard it, read it before? Yes, but have you done it? Nothing is so needful as to familiarize ourselves with the familiar! "All things are possible to him that believeth" will do you scant good if you leave it in your mind unexercised. Have you actually risen, taken your bed, burned bridges and walked at his command, doing all things through Christ who strengthens you?

Not Ourselves

"For we preach not ourselves...." 2 Cor. 4:5

When we fail, Satan immediately comes to remind us that we had better give up testifying for Christ. "See, you are not fit, you are not worthy, you are a hypocrite." Then we grow miserable over our weakness and wallow in remorse and waste precious time as though the authority of our message rested on our integrity and character.

It is not a matter of our fitness or unfitness; what we declare when we witness is the Word of another who never fails. That Word has as much authority on our weakest day as on our strongest, it is not a question of our own worthiness. To be sure, you cannot testify with power if you have broken fellowship with God and are out of his will. You must confess and be forgiven and then, forgetting the past, press on. But don't confuse things here and get the idea that the validity of the message depends on the integrity of the messenger. God is true though every man is a liar and faithful though every man fail.

David had fallen into grievous sin but he didn't intend to give up his testimony. He prayed to be cleansed and re-empowered and then he taught transgressors God's ways and sinners were converted. But he knew that the authority of the message did not rest on his character. Our fitness rests on the authority of God's Word but the authority of his Word is not dependent on our fitness.

"When Thou Art Converted..."

"When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Luke 22:32

Peter needed to be converted, turned from his self life to Christ life. There are two very significant "Follow me's" in his life. The first time he forsook his nets (Matt. 4:19); the second time he forsook himself (John 21:19). At Galilee he was self-confident, he followed in much self-sufficiency. At Tiberias he was broken: Jesus did not call him Peter or Cephas—there was nothing of the rock about him that day!—just "son of Jonas"! The Lord has to reduce us to our right size, until we are just "sons of Jonas" before we can move in experience from the "follow me" of Galilee to the "follow me" of Tiberias. It was the same sea but what a distance between for Peter!

You cannot "strengthen the brethren" until you have been converted as Peter was. That accounts for so many dry sermons and flat Sunday-school lessons. As soon as he was converted, our Lord said, "Feed my lambs, tend my sheep, feed my sheep." Now he could strengthen the brethren!

David realized this: "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy

ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee" (Ps. 51:12-13). Before we can strengthen believers or win the lost, we must be converted from the self life to the Christ life... "Not I, but Christ."

"Not Mixed with Faith"

"The Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Heb. 4:2

It is customary to say that we have only to present God's Word and the Spirit will do the rest, that God's Word will not return void, that his bread cast on the waters will return. All that is very true but from it we are not to conclude that all we have to do is to hear the Word. The preached Word does no good unless it is mixed with faith in them that hear it.

We do well to ponder this in our personal experience of feeding on the Word. Sometimes we read a challenging promise and all the while we are mixing it with our private doubts and unbelief. We read that "all things work together for good" to us and yet our mental fingers are crossed; we accept it with reservations. "My God shall supply all your need" we read, but in our hearts there are "ifs" and "buts" and we denature it down to a pale platitude.

No promise of God is actually ours until faith has staked claims on it. It is one thing to make mottoes of these blessed assurances, fine quotations for hanging on the wall; it is another to put the whole weight upon them by a definite act of faith, to trust them wholly and find them wholly true.

No Second Best

"What wilt Thou have me to do?" Acts 9:6

God has a place and purpose for you, somewhere for you to be and something for you to do. You never will be happy elsewhere, nor can you please God anywhere but there. You may do lovely things, reach earthly success, but always there will be the haunting sense of having missed the main thing, of having been satisfied with life's second best which isn't best or even good. Woodrow Wilson once spoke of being "defeated by one's secondary successes." How many are defeated by their own success so that they never know God's success!

Lot chose his own success and missed God's better thing. Saul did it from Gilgal to Gilboa. Demas did it. David "served his generation by the will of God" (Acts 13:36). That is success. Our Lord said, "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). That is success, though it looked like failure.

If God has shown you his purpose—he will if you yield to him—don't dodge. Jonah tried to get away from God's presence and purpose and you know what happened. The only place to hide from his presence is in his presence. Don't tell God you won't do what he orders and try to compromise on something else just as good. There is nothing else just as good because there are no second bests in the will of God.

"Be Ye Angry"

"Be ye angry, and sin not." Eph. 4:26

When led to reprove and rebuke sin, we are sure to be reminded by someone that we are not "Christlike." We wonder what some people think he was like! In the presence of honest humility and genuine repentance he was all love and tenderness; but how he could deflate those who came all puffed up with their own importance! He could call a king a fox, he could look with anger on unbelieving critics, he could be displeased when his disciples rebuked those who brought the children to him. For the Pharisees he had only words of condemnation. In the Old Testament God says of Ephraim, "Let him alone" (Hos. 4:17). In the New Testament Christ says of the Pharisees, "Let them alone" (Matt. 15:14). Some people are to be let alone. Pharisaism, not atheism, is the greatest foe of Christ today. His worst enemies are not agnostics but religious folk who go to church, read the Bible, lead in prayer, give to the church, lead moral lives, but who honor God with their lips while their hearts are far from him. They are of the world, the devil, and the lusts of the world they will do.

Nothing is needed so much as a holy indignation against sin. It is true that there is not enough love for God, and one sign of it is that there is not enough hatred for sin. To be sure we are to love the sinner but while we snatch him from the fire let us hate the spotted

garment (Jude 23).

The way to be angry and sin not is to be angry at sin!

"For Me and Thee"

"... give unto them for me and thee." Matt. 17:27

Taxes are due and our Lord bids Simon do the amazing thing of catching a fish with the money in its mouth. So the tribute is paid both for Simon and his Lord.

Has the Lord bid you to do the unprecedented thing, the irregular, the thing that takes your breath? If you are with him in blessed partnership, if he commands you, then you share with him the consequence, it is "for me and thee."

We do not think of him as sharing with us such prosaic matters as taxes. Some time ago I listed my taxes too highly through ignorance of the rules. I wondered, when time came to pay them, whether I should be able to straighten out my mistake. I knew the Lord didn't want his money wasted on expenditures one didn't really owe so I set out for the office with a prayer. When I got there I was met by a friend who piloted me through and I saved what was to me a sizable difference. I came away thankful for the Lord's guiding hand.

If we are in his hand, his affairs are ours and ours are his. No matter is so matter-of-fact but he shares it. If all we have is his, all he has is ours; whatever he bids us do, the fruit thereof he enjoys with us. The servant shares with the master because the master is also brother and there is one father!

"As He Is, So Are We"

"Because as He is, so are we in this world." 1 John 4:17

If he died outside the city gate, then if you are his you belong with him out there and you should go to him. Where are the marks of the cross in your life? Are there any points of identification with your Lord? Alas, too many Christians wear medals but carry no scars!

The servant is not greater than his Lord and if the world persecuted him it will persecute us. It cannot be argued that times have grown better for conditions are essentially the same. Human nature has not improved and if we stood where our Lord stood we should fare as he fared. But the only place where most Christians know the shame and reproach of the old, rugged cross is in the hymn book. They are conformed, not transformed, and have followed Demas in loving this present world.

We have preserved our own identity at the cost of our daily identification with him. Not only are we to be as he in suffering, but in spirit we are to be Christlike. Failing to share his persecution we fail to show forth his personality. For the marks of the Lord Jesus do not issue from mere abstract theorizing about him, we must drink of his cup and be baptized with his baptism (Mark 10:39).

"Because as he is, so are we in this world."

Gehazi with a Staff

"Then said he to Gehazi,... take my staff." 2 Kings 4:29

Elisha deputized Gehazi to go ahead with a staff and lay it on the Shunammite boy. He went "but there was neither voice, nor hearing." It was not God's way. Elisha must apply himself to the need, literally laying himself on the child.

It is a day of need with millions of Shunammites dead in trespasses and in sins. But instead of giving ourselves nowadays we send Gehazi with a staff, we work by proxy, we will not apply ourselves directly. Like the priest and Levite we pass the needy world afar off, there are few Samaritans who actually touch the situation. Giving dollars to a "cause" is often a way of salving the conscience for not giving one's own self. We send a check to the evangelizing of men across the sea: we would never think of ministering directly to the man across the street!

We send Gehazi with a staff. We feed money into the slots of diverse agencies and although some of these are necessary it is

devastating to the sense of personal responsibility. We shrink from personally touching the world's need, we abhor the ceremonial defilement of going down into the mire and muck of the world ourselves. It is one thing to sing, "Rescue the perishing." It is another thing to rescue some of them, snatching them from the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

It is easier to send Gehazi with a staff than to say, "Here am I, Lord; send me."

Sharing the Spoils

"But as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike." 1 Sam. 30:24

David's hardy warriors were not disposed to share the spoils of victory with the two hundred weak men who could not get over the brook Besor. But such a spirit is a mark of Belial and we encounter it among many believers. Christians strong in faith and mighty in battle often grow ungracious and contemptuous toward those of weak faith and little courage.

Now none of us has anything he did not receive and we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. If Paul would eat no meat for the sake of a weaker brother, certainly we ought to share with him such spoils of Christian warfare as God has privileged us. He may not deserve such rewards but neither do we. It is all the grace of God.

If you have greater faith and have pressed on to higher heights than those around you, it is not for you to take an air of lofty superiority and keep your trophies to yourself. Rather, God has given you spoils to share with those who grow weary and faint in their minds. Gideon's victorious three hundred inspired the others to join them in their triumph. Samson carried honey from the lion home to his parents. Remember the weaker ones at Besor!

"What Is That to Thee?"

"... what is that to thee? Follow thou me." John 21:22

We have no business getting worked up over John. "Lord, what about this man? What about that ism over there? Why does that unconsecrated preacher seem to succeed and this good man live from hand to mouth?"

We are here to follow the Lord, not to explain the queer turns of life or to figure out the other man's affairs. We shall have plenty to do to follow him ourselves. What matters it if John has cushions and we a cross? If we live and die in obscurity and poverty while John gets on the boulevard and into Who's Who, what of it? If we preach to unappreciative churches and John sways the multitudes, what difference does it make? If we get the bricks and John gets the bouquets, why worry? All that matters with us or with John is that we be not disobedient to the heavenly vision. All other issues are purely by-products.

Learn to simplify your life by dropping all such foolish irrelevances. Cultivate a divine nonchalance, a heavenly disregard for earth's changing fortune. Let sickness, bereavement, disaster, adversity, depression do their worst to your circumstances if they must; but for yourself turn to them the blind eye and deaf ear and carry on in the name of him who said, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me."

"Believe that Ye Receive"

"What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Mark 11:24

Here is one of our commonest failings. We confess our sins according to 1 John 1:9 but, instead of receiving his forgiveness and believing we have it, we commit another sin by worrying about it for weeks. We should thank him for forgiveness and, forgetting the things behind, press on. We overlook the tremendously important fact that failing to believe we have what God has promised and what faith has received is also a sin.

Any disobedience of the command of our Lord is sin. He has commanded us to pray for things we need and then by faith receive them. Next he plainly commands us to "believe that ye have received them." Therefore, if we do not believe that we have received, we sin for all unbelief is sin.

In the verse before our text our Lord said, "Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith." Doubt is plain disobedience and disobedience is sin. So, beware of this snare of Satan; live believing and receiving and believing that you are receiving!

Marking Time or "Marching to Zion"?

"Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." Gal. 5:16

We speak of a "step of faith" but with some of us it never amounts to more than a step. Now a walk is a succession of steps and having stepped out by faith we are to keep stepping until the stepping is a steady walk. We have thought too much of this matter of faith as one definite move whereas it is a continuous moving onward looking toward Jesus. And some of us just "mark time": there is a sort of activity but it gets nowhere.

The faith life takes no vacations. It is not a matter of occasional ventures, excursions now and then from a walk by sight out into side roads of things unseen. It is not a matter of once in a while testing out a certain promise to see whether or not it works. Walking in the Spirit is exactly what the name means: not taking a "step" or a "stand" to pose like statues on the rock of a Bible truth, but living day by day in the name of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

So many have grown disappointed because they took a step and the next thing was not another step but a stop. If the step does not become a walk it ends like the little boy who fell out of bed because he slept too close to where he got in! And don't confuse marking time with "marching to Zion!"

Modern Reubenites

"For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart." Judg. 5:15

When the national crisis arose in the days of Deborah and Barak, some of the tribes rallied to the cause. Ephraim, Benjamin, and Zebulun went into action; also Issachar, which was to be expected for they had understanding of the times (1 Chron. 12:32). Men who understand the times can be counted on in the day of danger. Ignorance breeds indolence.

But Reuben was a different proposition. "For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart." They had fine and patriotic impulses but they didn't go to battle. "Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks?" They had lofty sentiments but they took good care to stay at home in a safe and sheltered place far from the peril of battle.

Their number today is legion. What church is not plagued with the modern counterparts of the tribe of Reuben? They sing lustily in the choir and go out to live lustfully. Their eyes well with tears when the preacher relates a touching incident—they have great searchings of heart—but at the actual battle they are conspicuous by their absence and you will find them safely tucked away among the sheepfolds of business, pleasure, and smug self-sufficiency.

As a tribe Reuben disappeared. Lofty impulses unexpressed in action will react and degeneration will set in. If you are not a victor you become a victim.

The Three "Thats"

"For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." 2 Tim. 1:12

I am persuaded that he is able to keep..." There is the ability of the keeper. My assurance is what it is because of who he is. Christ is able to save (Heb. 7:25), able to keep (Jude 24), able to succor (Heb. 2:18), able to subdue (Phil. 3:21).

"He is able to keep that which I have committed." As much as faith commits he will keep. How can we commit our souls to him and yet dare not trust him with the smaller issues of our daily lives? If he keeps the greater, will he not keep the less? It is up to you to say how much will he keep. "According to your faith be it unto you." The measure of your daily peace and assurance depends on how much you commit into his hands and leave with him. How much is "that" which you have committed? The only thing to worry

about is what you have not committed and the way to quit worrying about that is to commit everything to him.

"He is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." There is my eternal certainty. If he keeps it until the day of my glorification, I know I am safe from there on so that settles it for here and hereafter. All the justified are glorified so "I cannot get beyond the circle of his love."

Savings of a Lifetime

"But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." Matt. 6:20

When the bank crash struck my good friend there were those who bemoaned his disaster saying, "The poor man lost all the savings of a lifetime." But they don't know my friend. He is a child of God and all his life he has been laying up heavenly treasures beyond the reach of moth and thief. The real savings of his life are as sound and secure as ever.

All those prayers he has offered for others; the kind words he has spoken, the visits he has made to the sick, the troubled, and the dying; the personal work he has done soul-fishing for the Lord Jesus; the untrumpeted gifts he has made in the name of Christ; the time he has redeemed for God; the talent, energy, money he has gladly spent for the King—those are the savings of his lifetime and think you that he is any the poorer in those things for a bank failure?

You really save in this life only that which you spend for the Lord. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit every expenditure is an investment. The bank of heaven is sound and pays eternal dividends. This poor, foolish world still grades us by our balance around the corner. The cook in the kitchen may have stored away a fortune in glory while those she serves are paupers. "I

Make friends with money

"Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness" (Luke 16:9).

Would that we practiced the precepts of the parable of the unjust steward as much as we have argued about it! Truly, the children of this world are more prudent in their temporal affairs than we who are stewards of the manifold grace of God. The proper investment of money is in helping others" so that when we die, they may welcome us to our eternal home. Incidentally, that sheds light on the recognition of friends in heaven. We are to labor, working with our hands the thing which is good, that we may have - not to store in the bank - but to give to him that needs. (See Ephesians 4:28.) We are to communicate and lay up in store for ourselves a good foundation against the time to come. (See 1 Timothy 6:18-19.)

Here is plain teaching gets n attention. Indeed, in this very parable, our Lord declares that how we handle money is an index of how we would handle greater treasure. If we do not rightly use that which is another's (for "to have is to owe, not to own"), how shall we handle true spiritual wealth? God is withholding blessing from many a man because He first tested him with money and he has been proved unfaithful so why commit greater things to his stewardship? If we are unfaithful in the less, we certainly shall be (ED: unfaithful) in the greater.

Make friends with money! Invest not in stocks, but in souls! It pays here and guarantees a warm reception in eternity.

What manner of spirit

"Ye know not what manner of spirit you are of" Luke 9:55

The Samaritans did not receive our Lord, and James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven to consume them. Sometimes, a preacher is tempted to command divine vengeance upon a dull, dead congregation that responds to his fervent appeal with listless, stubborn silence. James and John were exasperated by people so narrow and prejudiced as to reject our Lord because His face was set toward Jerusalem. Likewise, it sorely tries a modern prophet to see even Christians divided into opposing groups one unwilling to join hands because someone belongs to a different denomination, another abstaining because he hasn't recited their favored shibboleth to satisfaction.

So the old Adam often gains the upper hand in the preacher. Between lambasting the faithful who are present about the unfaithful who are absent, and insulting the sinners who haven't yet decided to be saved, he sometimes becomes a spectacle. And what shall

we say of the petty rivalries among ministers? These sons of Diotrephes who refuse to work anywhere but in the moderator's chair, these professional "come outers" who resign out of so many things that they resign clear out of the will of God? Does not our Lord stand among us with a sad countenance, saying: "Ye know not what manner of spirit you are of?" (Luke 9:55)

Christ's Other Side

"That where I am, there ye may be also" - John 14:3

I just read a sweet story. A mother, returning from the burial of her baby, told her little daughter: "Your little brother has gone to be with Jesus." A few days later, the little girl heard her mother tell a friend that she had "lost" her child. "But Mother," the girl asked, "you told me that brother was with Jesus. If you know where he is, how can he be lost?"

The little girl was right. If they are with Him, they are not lost "they are safe. Safer than ever.

"Death doth hide
But not divide.
Thou art but on Christ's other side!
Thou art with Christ and Christ with me;
In Christ united still are we."

There has been much speculation about Paradise, what and where it is. I shall know that in due time. But meanwhile, what matters most is what He said: "Today, you shall be WITH ME." (Luke 23:43) I am not so concerned about WHAT is there as I am interested in WHO is there. "Where I am, ye may be also."...it is Who He is that makes heaven what it is.

And on His other side are those of His whom we have loved long since and lost awhile.!