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DAVID AND HIS FRIENDS

A SERIES OF
REVIVAL SERMONS

BY

REV. LOUIS ALBERT BANKS, D.D.
Pastor First M. E. Church, Cleveland, Ohio

AUTHOR OF

"Christ and His Friends," "Paul and His Friends,"
"John and His Friends," etc.



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To
MY BROTHER
WALLACE HURLBURT BANKS
THIS VOLUME
IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED
BY THE AUTHOR

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE sermons contained in this volume were all preached in revival meetings held in the First Methodist Episcopal Church, Cleveland, Ohio, during the month of January, 1900. The themes had been selected long before and some thought and time had been expended on them at intervals during the year, but they were finally forged in the heat of battle and were dictated to my stenographer daily as the meetings proceeded. At the time of their delivery they were greatly blessed of God in the awakening of sinners and in leading to conversion, and I hope and pray that as they now go forth on the printed page the Holy Spirit may continue with them and make them an inspiration and a help to all who come to them for assistance in that most blessed of all the work given man to do, the winning of souls to Christ.

LOUIS ALBERT BANKS.

CLEVELAND, April 16, 1900.

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DAVID AND HIS FRIENDS.

SAMUEL, OR THE LISTENING SOUL.

“Speak ; for thy servant heareth.”—1 *Sam.* iii. 10.

THE story of Samuel begins before he was born, as the story of a river begins up on the mountain side, where the spring bursts forth from its rocky reservoir. The great snowdrifts on the mountain summit, and the deep caverns in the depths of the hills, are interesting chapters in the story of a river. So back of Samuel with his open ear and his open heart toward heaven are a good father and a pious mother ; people who were faithful to God and who sought to do their duty. They did not lay up great wealth for Samuel, but they gave him the heritage of a good name, and above all things they gave him the heritage of faith in God, and of love for things good and pure.

Hannah, the mother of Samuel, stands out as beautiful and noble in her womanly faith, and in her purposeful life, as any woman in all the

Bible. In the loneliness of her life she had earnestly besought God to give her a child. She was once praying for this before the altar in the temple, and if you will read the first chapter of Samuel you will find a very interesting paragraph, describing that prayer and the conversation it brought about between Hannah and Eli the priest. The historian says of it: "And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli marked her mouth. Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto." What a simple-hearted, wholesome speech out of a woman's heart!

God answered this good woman's prayer, and, in honor of that answer to her petition, when her son was born she called him Samuel, which means "Heard of God." There is nothing more beautiful among the prayers that are recorded

in the Bible than Hannah's prayer of thanksgiving, pouring out her gratitude to God for his gift of Samuel. Listen to some of these sentences: "And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord; mine horn is exalted in the Lord; . . . because I rejoice in thy salvation. There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God. . . . The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dung-hill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail."

Let every man who had a praying mother thank God. A home that is fragrant with the reading of the Bible and musical with the sound of family worship is something to be grateful for as long as one lives. Let no mother think she has lived in vain or despair of being a great blessing and comfort to her children, however poor or restricted or humble her circumstances may be, if through God's grace she is living a pure, wholesome life before them, and is giving

them a memory of a mother with a sweet, cheerful Christian faith, whose prayers ascended for them before the throne of mercy every day. Better than gold, better than all the world's luxuries, is the inheritance given by a Christian mother to her children.

Hannah's religious faith and her sense of duty led her to dedicate her child to the special service of God in his temple. And so Samuel was brought as a little child and left with Eli the priest, in the tabernacle, to grow up there as peculiarly the servant of God. And there Samuel remained through the years of his boyhood. And one night as Samuel lay on his little bed the Lord called, "Samuel"; and he answered, "Here am I." The voice was so clear and distinct that the boy supposed Eli had called him, and he jumped out of bed and ran to the old priest's room and said, "Here am I; for thou calledst me." And Eli answered, "I called not; lie down again." And Samuel, wondering at this strange thing, no doubt thought he had been dreaming as he went back to bed. The same experience occurred again after a little interval, with the same result. But when it took place the third time, it dawned upon Eli that God had a communication to make to Samuel. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go,

lie down : and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord ; for thy servant heareth." So Samuel, no doubt trembling and excited, went and lay down in his place. And the Lord came and called another time, "Samuel, Samuel." Then Samuel answered, "Speak ; for thy servant heareth."

Now we should make a great mistake if we were to put this interesting and beautiful story away from us with the feeling that it is all so strange and marvelous that it can have no real message for us. It has many very striking messages for us here and now. Let us earnestly study them.

In the first place, it is a very interesting fact to note what is directly stated here, that up to this time Samuel did not know the Lord. His father was a good man who came regularly to church to worship, and we have noted what a pure and saintly woman his mother was, and his own name even, "Heard of God," was a testimony to God's presence in the world. He lived in the temple and associated daily with the priests, and assisted in the services of the church ; and yet personally he did not know the Lord. I am sure there is here a message for some of you who hear me to-night. You too were born into a Christian home. You have

been the object of a father's and mother's prayers, and probably since you were a little child you have been accustomed to attend the Sunday-school and the church. Of course there was a sense in which Samuel did know the Lord. He knew what one can know about God in seeing others worship; but his own heart did not go out to God in prayer and love; and in that deep, inner, personal sense he was without God. Is that not exactly your case? You have heard about Christ since you were a little child, and you feel that you know a great deal about him, and yet in the truest sense you do not know him. There is no communication between you and your Savior. And as you bring the matter straight home to your heart tonight, you feel that you do not know the Lord, and that you are without God and without hope in the world.

I want you to notice again that God called Samuel three times before he answered. Has not God called you again and again? And I appeal to you if your call has not been as real in all the essential matters, in making you understand and feel what it meant, as it was when God spoke to Samuel at night in the old temple. Perhaps God has called you in some great sorrow; in the deep times of trouble, God

has said to you, "Cast your cares on me and I will care for you. Come unto me with your weary heart and your burdened shoulders, and I will give you rest." You heard the call and you understood it, but you did not answer. Perhaps God came to you at a time of some disgrace because of your sin. Your conscience spoke as it had never spoken before, and you felt that your sin was ruining you, and that your life was turned downward toward death and disaster. God called you then with clanging notes of alarm; and your heart said, "I ought to kneel to God; I ought to seek the forgiveness of my sins." You knew it was God's call to you, but you did not answer. Perhaps it was a great joy that came, and the goodness and gentleness of God filled your heart with upspringing praise. With warm heart and tearful eyes you exclaimed, "God is so good to me, I ought to yield him my heart, I ought to give him my open thanks, I ought to let the whole world know how good he is to me." It was God's call to you, but you did not answer. And now God comes to you again to-night in his Word, and on this first night of the new year I stand here humbly to be his messenger, and to call you to come to God. Turn to Christ to-night, open your ear at last to hear him,

open your lips that have been closed in ungrateful silence for so long a time, and say, "Speak ; thy servant heareth."

I call your attention to the fact that God called Samuel by name. "Samuel, Samuel," is the way the Lord talks to the boy. God spoke to Abraham in the same way. When the Lord Jesus met Saul on the way to Damascus it was a personal message he brought him, and he cried out to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" God knows us all by name ; you are not lost in the crowd to him. Possibly I speak to some one here this evening who is very lonely and heartbroken ; it seems to you that you have no friends, and that no one cares for your soul. I want to assure you that you are mistaken. God cares for you personally ; he thinks about you individually ; with infinite love, like a caress, he calls over your name as he sends some angel to stand in the path and turn you, if possible, from wrongdoing ; or, as he sends another angel to speak in the still, small voice in your heart to-night, to entreat you to hearken and hear his words, and give him your heart and love and service at the beginning of this new year. No one can tell how much it will mean if you will only listen to God and answer his call to-night.

One of the greatest missionaries who ever worked among the Indians in this country was David Zeisberger. His forefathers were peasants ; the followers of John Huss. He was a small, delicate lad, and something in his face attracted Count Zinzendorf, who helped him get an education, and finally made him his secretary, and intended to advance him to fortune. But during a visit to America David became greatly impressed with the need that some one should preach the gospel to the savage Indians, and was convinced that God wanted him to do it. David came on to Philadelphia to sail for Europe with Count Zinzendorf, not knowing what to do. On one side was Europe, with fame and fortune luring him ; on the other, hardship and suffering and poverty, duty and the call of God. He went on board ship with the matter still undecided. The ship weighed anchor, and started down the harbor. Bishop Nitschmann, passing down the deck, saw the lad standing there, pale and haggard, gazing at the fast receding shore.

“Zeisberger,” he said, “is it possible that you wish to return ?”

“Yes.”

“But for what reason ?”

“That I may learn to know Christ, and teach

him to the Indians," said David, finding speech at last in his extremity.

"Then, if that be your mind, in God's name, even now, go back!"

The ship was brought to, and the boy sent back. He at once went to the lodge of the great sachem of the Mohawks, and there lived and worked that he might learn thoroughly the language and habits of the Indians. He was adopted into the tribe of the Onondagas. Thus began the wonderful history of the work which extended over sixty-two years, and was so greatly blessed of God.

It is quite possible that if some who hear me now, who are called of God through this word, would yield their hearts in response to God's call, it would be the beginning of a life equally as useful. Of one thing we may be sure, that only good can come from heeding and answering the call of God, and only evil can come from closing the ears to that call. There will be joy in heaven to-night, joy on earth and the beginning of noble careers, if every one here who has not known the Lord shall follow Samuel's example and say, with reverent faith, "Speak; thy servant heareth."

DAVID UNDER THE HOLY HORN.

“ And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him : for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren : and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.”—1 *Sam.* xvi. 12, 13.

SAUL'S sins had brought about his doom. The world did not know it yet, but in the heart of God he was doomed. Sometimes the sinner goes on in his defiance against God, thinking the Lord has forgotten, but God does not forget. Tho he does not pay at the end of the week, as some one has aptly said, at the last he pays. Saul may still live in the palace ; he may still be the head of the army, and the people may still bow themselves down before him ; but his sins have already ruined him and his public shame and disgrace is soon to follow.

During this time, while Saul's doom was in the air, God gave directions to Samuel the prophet to go down to Bethlehem, carrying with him a horn full of holy oil, and there to anoint as king one of the sons of Jesse. And Samuel was afraid to go at first, for he knew Saul's vicious and vindictive spirit, and he said to the

Lord, "How can I go? If Saul hear it, he will kill me." But the Lord said, "Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the Lord. And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will shew thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee."

And Samuel obeyed God, and as he came near the town, driving the heifer in front of him, the people in the town trembled at his coming; they feared, no doubt, that he was coming to prophesy against them because of their sins. What cowards sin does make of us! And the elders of the town inquired of Samuel, "Comest thou peaceably?" And he replied, "Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the Lord: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice." And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice. And when they were come together, Samuel was alert and greatly interested to see who was to be the new king over Israel. Now the eldest of Jesse's sons, Eliab, was the largest of them all; he was like Saul in his figure, a great, tall, broad-shouldered, magnificent-looking specimen of physical manhood. All the others in the crowd looked little and insignificant when compared to him, and when Samuel saw him

he said to himself, "There is the man. Surely the Lord's anointed is before him." But the Lord made Samuel know his mistake and said to him, "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature ; because I have refused him : for the Lord seeth not as man seeth ; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." A bad heart may make a splendid physical manhood seem only repulsive. What a shame it is that outward appearances should often be so deceptive ! When we see a man with great physical strength and beauty, it is natural for us to feel that here ought to be a defender of the weak and a giant for righteousness and goodness. I remember a friend of mine telling me of a young man who was living in Boston during the years when Phillips Brooks was doing his great work there in Trinity Church. This young man was converted to Christ under Phillips Brooks' ministry, and he explained to my friend how it came about. He said the first thing that attracted him to Mr. Brooks was his giant-like physical form. He used to see him walking down the street every morning, and he said to himself, "What a man that is!" He was thinking only of the physique, and nothing else. But he so greatly admired the splendid appear-

ance of the man that he went to hear him preach, and as he listened to his clear expositions of the Scripture and was charmed by his flights of eloquence, he began to admire the intellect of the man, and he said to himself, "What a splendid brain he has ; it is equal to his body ; he is a giant in intellect as well as in physique." But as he went on listening to Mr. Brooks' sermons, the Spirit of God used the word as a "two-edged sword" and he became greatly troubled because of his sins, and finally he was so troubled that he went to see Mr. Brooks, and opened his heart to him, and then the great man's tenderness of heart, and loving sympathy with him, as he cleared away his doubts, swallowed up all his previous thoughts concerning him. The young man not only came to know Jesus Christ as his Savior, but his heart was flooded also with the knowledge that Phillips Brooks was as great in his heart and in his spiritual nature as he was in body or brain. Surely that is as it ought to be always. It is a shame for a man to be large in body and mind and little and narrow and mean in spirit.

The same is true of the circumstances in which we live. When you see a man living in a large and splendid house, having about him all the evidences of abundance, and the indica-

tions of great wealth, you feel that out from such a house there should flow streams of benevolence and loving sympathy, and brotherhood to those who are less blessed in worldly comforts. You feel that the strength of this man and his family, financially and socially, should be a pledge of their kindness of heart, and of their generosity and sympathy of conduct. When it proves to be true it is a beautiful thing. But when such a place is full of selfishness and greed, a place where everything comes in to minister to comfort, and nothing goes out in sympathy of love, you feel that it is a shame and only a mockery of what it professes to be.

Is not the same thing true of our spiritual blessings? When we see a man who has been a Christian for ten or twenty or thirty years, who has been hedged about all his life long with Christian influences, and has known from his childhood the kindness and love of God, we feel that here is one that ought to be tender with the erring, and who ought to be using this Christian strength to seek after those who have not had the same precious privileges, and whose lives have not been so sheltered. What a mean thing it is for us to take all the comfort and peace of God's great mercy, and fail to give ourselves up to seeking after the lost! Mr.

Moody tells of a young man who lay dying, and his mother thought he was a Christian. One day, passing his room door, she heard him say, "Lost! lost! lost!" The mother ran into the room and cried, "My boy, is it possible that you have lost your hope in Christ, now you are dying?"

"No, mother, it is not that; I have a hope beyond the grave, but I have lost my life. I have lived twenty-four years and have done nothing for the Son of God, and now I am dying. My life has been spent for myself. I have lived for this world, and now, while I am dying, I have given myself to Christ; but my life is lost."

How is it with you? What are you doing with the mercies that God has given you? Has Eliab any message for you? Do you look like a king or a queen and live like a beggar? God help us, that the inner nature may be as kingly as the outward — and it may be infinitely more so.

And so Samuel passed Eliab by; and the next, and still the next, came on, until seven sons of Jesse had passed before him. And Samuel said unto Jesse, "The Lord hath not chosen these." And then Samuel inquired, "Are here all thy children?" And Jesse answered, "There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he

keepeth the sheep." And Samuel said unto Jesse, "Send and fetch him ; for we will not sit down till he come hither."

They sent then for David. He was so young that it had not occurred to the father that he was important enough to think about in matters of interest to the family. He was only a shepherd lad ; but in David, after all, was the hope of the family. David had youth, and innocence of heart, and the possibilities of development. The Spirit of God had not yet touched him, and neither his father nor his brothers dreamed of the splendid possibilities wrapped up in that shepherd boy. How many of us are thus blind to-day ! There is a boy who lives next door to us, but he is young and awkward, and when we are thinking of the people we can win to Christ we are likely to pass him by. There is a boy working in the same store with you, but he is young and uninteresting, and it does not occur to you that it would be a great thing, a marvelous thing, to turn those young, awkward steps toward heaven. But nobody can tell what the boy will grow into if the Spirit of God can be put upon him.

A recent writer tells how, over in old Scotland, many years ago, a faithful minister coming early to the church met one of his deacons,

whose face wore a very resolute but distressed expression.

“I came early to meet you,” he said. “I have something on my conscience to say to you. Pastor, there must be something radically wrong in your preaching and work; there has been but one person added to the church in a whole year, and he is only a boy.”

“I feel it all,” he said. “I feel it; but God knows that I have tried to do my duty, and I can trust him for the results.”

“Yes, yes,” said the deacon, “but, ‘by their fruits ye shall know them,’ and one member, and he, too, only a boy, seems to me rather a slight evidence of true faith and zeal. I don’t want to be hard, but I have this matter on my conscience and I have done but my duty in speaking plainly.”

“True,” said the old man; “but ‘charity suffereth long and is kind; beareth all things, hopeth all things.’ Ay, there you have it: ‘hopeth all things.’ I have great hopes of that one boy — Robert. Some seed that we sow bears fruit late, but that fruit is generally the most precious of all.”

The old minister went to the pulpit that day with a grieved and heavy heart. He closed his discourse with dim and tearful eyes. He wished

that his work was done forever and that he was at rest among the graves under the trees in the churchyard.

He lingered in the dear old church after the rest were gone. He wished to be alone. The place was sacred and inexpressibly dear to him. It had been his spiritual home from his youth. Before this altar he had prayed over the dead forms of a bygone generation, and had welcomed the children of a new generation ; and here, yes, here, he had been told at last that his work was no longer owned and blessed.

No one remained. No one? "Only a boy."

The boy was Robert Moffat. He watched the trembling old man. His soul was filled with loving sympathy. He went to him and laid his hand on his black gown.

"Well, Robert," said the minister.

"Do you think if I were willing to work hard for an education I could ever become a preacher?"

"A preacher?"

"Perhaps a missionary?"

There was a long pause. Tears filled the eyes of the old minister. At length he said: "This heals the ache in my heart, Robert. I see the divine hand now. May God bless you,

my boy. Yes, I think you will become a preacher."

Some years ago there returned to London from Africa an aged missionary. His name was spoken with reverence. When he went into an assembly the people rose; when he spoke in public there was a deep silence. Princes stood uncovered before him; nobles invited him to their homes. He had added a province to the church of Christ on earth, had brought under the Gospel's influence the most savage of African chiefs, had given the translated Bible to strange tribes, had enriched with valuable knowledge the Royal Geographical Society, and had honored the humble place of his birth, the Scottish church, the United Kingdom, and the universal missionary cause.

It is hard to trust when no evidence of fruit appears. But the harvests of right intentions are sure. The old minister sleeps beneath the trees in the humble place of his labors, but men remember his work because of what he was to that one boy, and what that one boy was to the world. "Only a boy!"

A spiritual revolution would take place in this city if all of us were as truly anxious here that the young boys and girls, the young men and women, should be anointed to the

service of Christ as Samuel was to see David anointed king. He would not eat until he had looked on David's face, and had held above his head the horn of holy oil, and in God's name had set him apart to be king over Israel.

But our message is not all for Christians. What a beautiful and inspiring message we find here for those who have been going on their way doing their ordinary work, as David had been, and have not come into fellowship with Christ. You have looked at religion as a good thing for others, and there have been hours when you have said, "Some time I too will become a Christian," but the time has never come, and you are still away from God, and without hope in his love. I come to-night to call you to this diviner life. It is the noblest life that any one has ever lived, this life of freedom from sin, this life of friendship with Jesus Christ, and fellowship with those who love and serve him. There is no honor that the world can give which is equal to the honor that God puts upon us when his Spirit comes and takes possession of the heart and abides there, giving us comfort and peace, and inspiring us to lofty deeds.

Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman says that a Scotch friend of his told him that he was once going

to his native land and stopped at a little cottage by the wayside to rest. When he entered the room, his first inclination was to be seated in a comfortable chair which occupied a very prominent place in the room; but just as he was about to sit down, an old Scotch woman sprang to the chair and, throwing up her hands in an excited gesture, exclaimed, "Nay, nay, man, don't sit there!" She pointed to the scarlet cord fastened around the chair, which he had not noticed before, and said, "One day Her Majesty, Queen Victoria, left her carriage and came into this house, because a sudden storm had overtaken her." And with a look of great reverence she continued, "She sat in this chair; and when she went away we fastened this scarlet cord about it, and I said, 'We will give it to our son John, and he can keep it in his family.' Is it not wonderful Her Majesty the Queen has used it?"

Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords, sends me in his name to assure you that if you will open the door of your heart, he will come and take up his abode there, and honor you with his presence as long as you live in the world, and when the journey of life is over, will receive you into heaven, and honor you there forever.

A CERTAIN PRESCRIPTION FOR HAPPINESS.

“ Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord ; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season ; his leaf also shall not wither ; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”
— *Psalm* i. 1-3.

THERE is a very beautiful story told of a king, who, when he came to his throne, a young man, had a silver bell made and placed in a high tower of his palace. Then the announcement was sent forth that whenever the king was happy his subjects would know it by the ringing of this bell. It was never to be rung except when the king was perfectly happy, and then by no hand but his own. Day after day the people listened for the sound of the silver bell, but it did not ring. Days passed into weeks, and weeks into months, and the months into years ; but no sound of the bell rang out either day or night to tell that the king was happy. At last the king, grown old

and gray in his palace, lay on his death bed. His weeping subjects gathered around him, and he learned how through all the years his people had loved him ; and then he was happy, and in his joy, with dying hands, he rang out the silver bell.

How many years of wasted happiness because the king did not come to know and appreciate the love of his people ! The little story may suggest to us a still greater loss in ourselves.

— Only the consciousness of God's love can make us perfectly happy. Many people go through life from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, from manhood to age, and the lines of care deepen in their faces and the silver bell of happiness never rings out because all the while they are getting farther from God, and there is no consciousness of that divine love which alone can give perfect happiness and peace to the human heart.

We have in this Psalm the thought of a keen-brained and spiritually-instructed man as to what is required to make a happy man. We have here the testimony of a man of broad experience. Surely it is a good thing to have a certain prescription for happiness, and we cannot do better than to study it earnestly.

David sets forth, at the beginning, that there

are three things which it is important that we shall not do if we are to lead happy lives. The first of these is walking in the counsel of the ungodly. I do not understand that he intended to teach that to come under this head it is necessary for a man to seek out ungodly people and ask their advice as to how he shall live. Very few people would be tempted to do that at first. The danger is far more insidious than that. The trouble is that ungodly people are always ready to speak their counsels of evil and lead others astray by them. Eve did not send for the devil to come and advise her, but he came of his own accord and spit forth his lying sophistries about the Lord. Many young men and women come to the city from Christian homes, expecting to live a frank Christian life here, but in the boarding house, or the store or shop where they work, they are thrown into touch with ungodly and wicked people, who are ready at every turn with skeptical and insinuating remarks about the church and about Christianity. Their counsels are for laxity of faith and conduct. A broken-hearted young woman came to me the other morning, and with sobs and tears told of the loss of her religious experience and of her happiness, because in the boarding house where she lived she had listened

to the counsels of godless and wicked people. And only this week a young man told me he came to the city a Christian, and confidently expected to become identified with the Christian life of the city, but he made the great blunder of not at once uniting with the church, and thus showing his colors ; he thought he would wait a little and go about and see the different churches ; but, while he was drifting around, the counsels of the ungodly among his associates were undermining his religious fidelity, and almost before he knew it he had been swept into sin.

Dr. W. L. Watkinson, in a recent sermon, recalls the fact that while we are careful to do our utmost to protect great buildings from fire and tempest, yet all the while those buildings are liable to another peril, certainly not less severe—the subtle decay of the very framework of the structure itself. The tissue of the wood silently and mysteriously deteriorates, and a calamity dire as a conflagration is precipitated. The whole of the magnificent roofing of the church of St. Paul outside the walls of Rome had to be taken out at an enormous expense because dry rot developed. Scientific men have discovered that this is caused by an obscure malign vegetation which goes on in the

heart of the wood, destroying the strength and glory of cathedral and palace.

David indicates in this Psalm that character is liable to a similar danger. In our religious experience, as in our homes, moth and rust destroy more frequently than thieves break through and steal. Many people think they are all right because they are not committing outbreking sins, while the counsels to which they are listening, and the associations to which they are lending themselves, are really undermining all their spiritual strength. The fiber of will and conscience and feeling is secretly eaten away, and some day they awake to find they no longer possess the faith, the sensibility, and the resolution of other days. No swift and violent assault of world or flesh or devil has torn or stained them, but it has been like a moth fretting a garment. They go on with their routine life; they give place to dullness, deadness, indifference; and all the while obscure germs of weakness and disease spring up within and consume their moral fiber. Then one day a sudden temptation occurs, a severe emergency, and they fall into a condemnation that surprises and startles them as much as it does others.

In the physical world sunshine is the sure

antidote to the dry rot. So the only antidote to the counsels of the ungodly is to turn from them to the beams which fall from the Sun of Righteousness. Happiness does not lie in the counsels of the ungodly, but in fellowship with "the children of the light."

Another place that the happy man must avoid is "the way of sinners." In Isaiah's prophecy God gives it as one of the first things to do, when a man will turn from wickedness to righteousness and from sorrow to happiness, to get out of the way in which he has been going. He says, "Let the wicked forsake his way." "The way of sinners" is the way of sorrow and unhappiness. Whatever of good it promises, it is a false way. It may seem attractive, but you may be sure that the end of the way is misery.

The other day in New York city there was an auction sale, by a railroad company, of a quantity of unclaimed chests, valises, and parcels. Some of these packages brought large prices. Many of them sold for a great many times their worth. The fiercest bidding was over a prosperous looking trunk. It was strongly made, and, altho not very heavy, the speculators who examined its exterior concluded that it contained articles of value. One

of them finally secured it for fifty-five dollars and promptly pried it open, when he found within it only a disjointed human skeleton which had probably been the property of some medical student. It is easy to understand the chagrin of the purchaser who, instead of gold and jewels, found only these relics of death. Multitudes have experienced a similar disappointment, but one infinitely more sorrowful, when they have discovered the real nature of the prizes which they gained by sin. The wise Solomon, speaking of the false promises which sin makes, and of the assurances of the wicked that "stolen waters are sweet," and that secret sins are pleasant, declares of him who is deceived, "He knoweth not that the dead are there." I know I speak to some to-night who have been standing in "the way of sinners" at a fearful cost. The pleasure has vanished but the skeleton remains.

There is still another place that a man if he will be really happy must avoid, and that is, "the seat of the scornful." You will notice this evolution in sin ; this going down the three steps. The first is the listening to the counsel of the ungodly until — it may be almost unconsciously — you begin to walk in that counsel. The next step lower is where a man begins to

stand in the way of sinners, and the third and worst of all is where he sits down in the seat of the scornful. God have mercy on the man who has already taken the third degree in sin ; who not only walks in the counsel of the ungodly, and stands in the way of sinners, but sits in the seat of the scorners ! God have mercy on the boy who has gone so far that he can make a joke of his mother's religion, that he can make a sneer about his father's God, that he can scorn the voice of God's Word that calls him to repentance ! The sarcasm and cynicism and scorn of a sharp wit is often very fascinating to young people, but I assure you that the man who exercises it is never happy. It is a blossom which grows on a tree that is bitter at the heart. I have seen many scornful men and women, but I have never yet seen one who was happy.

Well, we have been looking at some of the things one must not do if he is to be happy ; let us turn to the brighter side, and see what one may do to insure happiness. The prescription is given here and is very plain. A child can understand and obey it : " But his delight is in the law of the Lord ; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

But, you say, " How can I delight in the law of the Lord, and how can I begin to think about

him, if I am taken up with other things?" It is all very simple. You have been breaking God's law and therefore you cannot delight in it. Stop breaking it. Stop now! Stop this very hour! Do not go another step that way. Turn right about and begin to obey the law of the Lord, and then you will have a chance to delight in it. God has made happiness and obedience to go together. As you obey the Lord, and as you feel the warmth of his smile on your face, you will take delight in him. All this is perfectly natural. The man who has committed a crime, and has broken the law of the land, and is fleeing from justice like a hunted animal, or has been caught and is being punished, takes no delight in that law. But the man who obeys the law and finds its strong arm of protection thrown around him, and rejoices in its security, delights in it, and in the consciousness of the presence of the law he finds rest and peace. So, as long as you sin against God, and feel the rebuke of your conscience, and are haunted by the impending doom which your sin must bring upon you, you have only fear and terror about the law of God. But when you turn from your sins, and cease to break God's law, and through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ your past sins

are forgiven, and you feel that you are at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, the law of God becomes a source of protection to you, and you take a new delight in God's strength and power and wisdom, and rejoice with Paul in the assurance that "all things work together for good to them that love God."

And what a glorious result is assured from such delight in the law of the Lord : " He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season ; his leaf also shall not wither ; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." What a beautiful picture that is ! Ah, but, you say, " Does God live up to that ? Do not many Christians have hard experiences, and trying difficulties like other people ?" Certainly the hot sun beats down on the tree planted by the river just the same as it does on the one that is planted on the gravelly, sandy upland. But the one by the river runs its roots down into the refreshing streams beneath, and when the upland tree withers and turns brown, the tree by the river is as green as ever. Christians meet the troubles of life like other people, but if they give themselves up whole-heartedly to do God's will, and delight in the law of the Lord, they have peace and content in the midst of the sorest trouble that

can come upon them. I read you this evening the story of Philip, who was taken up suddenly by the Spirit at a time of great prosperity with him and sent on a mission into the desert. But Philip went obediently, and found there, driving along in his chariot, a nobleman, who was trying to read the prophecies but did not understand them, and Philip found himself in the nick of time to give him just the help he needed in order to win him to Christ. God sent him into the desert, but he gave him a chariot to ride in, and a prince for a traveling companion. He had far more honor paid him in the desert than he had found in the city in his greatest prosperity. Mark Guy Pearse, the English preacher, commenting on this experience of Philip, says that is the way God always treats his children. The moment we set foot in the wilderness at God's bidding, we are the Lord's guests, and he ever keeps his table royally furnished. When the Lord led the hosts of Israel into the wilderness, they cried out against Moses and said, "Ye have brought us forth to kill us of hunger." But instead of the muddy water of the Nile God gave them clear, cool streams out of the rock, and instead of the onions and scanty crusts of Egypt he gave them delicious and abundant manna. God led

Elijah away into the wilderness, but he did not forget him. "And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening." Another time Elijah was in the desert, and this time his own cowardice brought him there, and he cried out to God that he might die. But the Lord had mercy on him and sent an angel to wait upon him; and when he awoke out of slumber, "Behold, there was a cake baking on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head." The multitude followed Jesus into the desert, but the Master fed them until they were filled. Yes, the Christian has his troubles like other people, but he has help that other people do not have. God is with him; he has the comfort of the Holy Spirit; he can go to God in prayer and find the peace which passeth all understanding, the peace that casteth out all fear.

You want happiness. There is only one certain prescription for happiness, and that is to obey God. Do the duty that is next to your hand. Christ says if any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be true. And he has assured us that it is his will that we should confess him before men. Begin to obey Christ now, and in obedience you shall find happiness.

THE CHAFF IN THE WIND.

“The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.”—*Psalms* i. 4.

My heart aches when I begin a sermon on a theme like this. It is not my message, but God's. It is not that I do not think God is just, for the chaff must fly in the wind, and the chaff is useless in God's sight and man's. But what makes my heart ache is that a man or a woman born so high should sink so low. That one who had the possibility of being the good grain in God's field, that might have been useful and happy, and have become more useful and honored throughout all eternity, should have so resisted the gracious influence of God's husbandry as at last to have become of no value, and only to be compared to the chaff which the wind driveth away.

There is a reference here to what has gone before. This introductory phrase is important—“the ungodly are not so.” That little word “so” has only two letters, but as it is placed here it means a great deal. David has

been telling us that the godly man is "blessed." That he is "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." And then, following that up, he says that "the ungodly are not so." The meaning must be, that an ungodly man is *not* like a tree planted by rivers of water; he does *not* bring forth his fruit in his season; his leaf does wither, and his doings will *not* prosper.

Importance hinges on the word "ungodly." Who are the ungodly? I think that many people when they hear that word are likely to make the mistake of excusing themselves from the term when they really belong under that head. I do not understand that it means, necessarily, that a man is outbreakingly and viciously wicked. One may not yet have sunk to the depths of sin, as a confirmed scorner of religion, in order to come under the term ungodly. The ungodly man or woman is simply a person who does not live in the way that God demands; one whose thoughts and purposes and conduct are not in harmony with God's laws; who does not please God. One who loves God, who worships him, who is guided day by day by his commandments, and who regulates

conduct by the law of God, is a godly person ; while one who is careless and indifferent, or who deliberately breaks God's laws, is ungodly. No one who is consciously a sinner against God has any authority for excusing himself from that title. If you do not love and serve God, and do not obey him up to the best light you have in his Word, then certainly you are an ungodly man, or an ungodly woman, and this message to-night must be for you.

It is a fearful message ; but, fearful as it is, it is true ; and the more you study it the more certain you will be that it is true.

Let us study this figure for a little while. It is a farm picture. It is a picture of the harvest time. It was in the days before there were threshing machines. Fields were small, and the farmer gathered his little bunch of grain together and beat it out, perhaps, with one stick or club tied to another, leaving a little play between the two so that the thresher held one club in his hand, and the other club came down with force on the grain. Or perhaps he took the bundle of grain up in his hand and brought down the heads over a box or a piece of timber, the grain flying out as the heads struck this obstruction. In either case the grain would be too heavy to be affected by the wind, and would

fall down on the ground in a heap ; but if it were at all breezy the wind would catch up the chaff and carry it away. The grain remained because of its weight and character ; the chaff was blown away because there was nothing about it reliable or permanent, and it was carried at the caprice of the wind. Now that is God's picture of one who for any reason is refusing all these gracious invitations of divine love and mercy, and hardening the heart against him. He is destroying steadily all that is good in him, and in the end will be "like the chaff which the wind driveth away."

What a graphic suggestion is here of the vanity of a sinful life ! The righteous man is compared to a tree with deep, strong roots and wide-spreading branches, bearing fruit in its season. The man who loves and serves God is building up a character which is abiding like a great tree. He is gathering many treasures of character and personality that can never be taken from him. Truth, and integrity, and love, and faith, and hope, and patience, and gentleness, these great spiritual qualities in which God develops the Christian, are qualities that cannot be taken away from us by any disaster that can come. Money, and honor, and friends, and health, and life itself may go, and

all these qualities remain in their full measure ; but a sinful life, a life that resists God's grace, has nothing left that is substantial. If a man gives himself up to worldliness he may be ever so successful in his ambitions, but there is nothing about it that will last. I have attended a great many funerals, and I have attended the funerals of men and women who had been very successful in their worldly ambitions, and while they lived people called them wealthy, but I have never known any of their wealth to be put in their coffins. A rich man goes out of the world as poor as when he came into it. His wealth fails and is like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Physical strength is fragile in the same way ; often a man rejoices in his strength one week and the next he is in his grave. But if he lives to be an old man, with trembling hands, and tottering footsteps, his physical strength fails him at last and is like the chaff in the wind. The same is true of physical beauty and all the attractiveness of physical life. I was reading the other day the story of a woman in Paris who died recently at over ninety years of age. In her youth she was one of the most beautiful women in France, but as she approached middle age her beauty began to fade, and she

would often stand with sad eyes and sinking heart before a fine painting of herself, for she could not help but feel that that beautiful creation of the painter was less true to life every day. Finally the painting disappeared from the wall of her salon, and it was afterwards learned that in her anger and despair at the loss of her beauty she had cut the picture in pieces with a pair of scissors. All physical beauty is like the chaff in the wind. So it is with all worldly things, and with the personality which is built up by worldliness. If you are rejecting Jesus Christ to-night, if you are practically refusing God's offers of mercy and grace, then there can be nothing about you, and nothing in your personality or character, that can live in happiness beyond these frail things in which you trust; and when this brief worldly life is over you will be like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

Many people who do not obey God are nevertheless very ambitious to make themselves of some account in the world; but one's work must be like the chaff if it is not in harmony with God. If I were to ask you to-night you would admit that while you are living this worldly and ungodly life you are doing no good. And yet you might be doing so much good. What a

fearful waste there is in your life ! God has created you to do good. You ought to be touching every life you meet with blessings and with helpfulness. The men and women who know you, and over whom you have influence, ought to find it easier to be good and harder to do wrong because your life is in such sweet and beautiful harmony with righteousness. And what good can you do while you are conscious all the time that you yourself are breaking God's laws, and are not living at peace with him ?

What a fearful picture this makes of the judgment day, which may open upon us at any time. Ah, but you say, "I do not believe that a kind and good God could punish sinners by driving them away in their sorrow." Is it not because you are conscious that you yourself are a sinner against God that you cherish that fond and fatal delusion ? "The wish," the proverb says, "is father to the thought." I have noticed that most of the skepticism of people whom I have known was a sort of self-made plaster to excuse their own sins. Dr. Robert Moffat, the great African missionary, tells how he was once preaching to Makaba, a powerful chief, about the resurrection.

"What !" exclaimed the African monarch

in excitement. "What are these words about? The dead — the dead arise?"

"Yes," was Moffat's reply, "all the dead shall arise."

"Will my father arise?"

"Yes," the missionary answered, "your father will arise."

"Will all the slain in battle arise?"

"Yes."

"And will all that have been killed and devoured by lions, tigers, hyenas, and crocodiles, again revive?"

"Yes, and come to judgment."

"And will those whose bodies have been left to waste and to wither on the desert plains, and scattered to the winds, again arise?" he asked with a kind of triumph, as if he had now silenced the missionary.

"Yes," Moffat replied; "not one will be left behind." This he repeated with increased emphasis.

After looking at the missionary for a few moments, Makaba turned to his people, to whom he spoke with stentorian voice, "Hark, ye wise men, whoever is among you, the wisest of past generations, did ever your ears hear such strange and unheard-of news?" Then, turning himself to Moffat and laying his hand

on his breast, Makaba said, "Father, I love you much. Your presence and your visit have made my heart white as milk. The words of your mouth are sweet as honey, but the words of a resurrection are too great to be heard. I do not wish to hear again about the dead rising. The dead cannot arise! The dead must not arise!"

"Why," Moffat inquired, "can so great a man refuse knowledge and turn away from wisdom? Tell me, my friend, why must I not speak of a resurrection?"

Raising and uncovering his arm, which had been strong in battle, and shaking his hand as if quivering a spear, he replied, "I have slain my thousands, and shall they arise?"

This man did not dare to believe in the resurrection because the resurrection meant that he must face the men whom he had slain. God could not be the good God that you dream of if he did not make a difference between chaff and wheat. It is not that God is not good, but that the ungodly man has failed to avail himself of God's goodness, has sinned against God's goodness and mercy, and has brought ruin upon himself. You say that the chaff cannot help being chaff; yes, but the man can. You will not be chaff unless you choose to be chaff.

God did not make you to be chaff; he made you in his own likeness and image, and when you had wandered from him by wicked ways, Jesus Christ wrought out your salvation on the cross. And tho you have marred and hurt your nature by your sins, and your iniquities have separated you from God, he sends me in his great mercy to-night to offer you salvation in the name of Jesus Christ.

And if you will turn from your ungodliness and become through his love a new creature in Christ Jesus, he shall plant you in his garden and you will become "a tree planted by the rivers of water"; you will begin to build up a character strong and brave and pure. You will begin to live a life that is useful and blessed. But if you refuse all this it will not be God's edict or arbitrary decision that sends you away on the winds into darkness at last, but it will be your own fault; it will be because you refused to be saved and would not hearken to God's reproofs, and would not accept his mercy.

You are not a mere machine. God has made you with this power to choose, and you can choose life or death. You can choose whether you will be the wheat in the garner, or the chaff which the wind driveth away. I pray

God that the Holy Spirit may show you how plain and yet how fearful is this controversy between God and your soul! God is saying to you, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate," but you are saying by your conduct if not by your words, "I will not." Christ is saying, "Look unto me and be saved," and your answer when you refuse these invitations is, "I will not." Christ is tenderly calling to you, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." But you stiffen your neck and say, "I will not." Jesus is saying to you, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," but your reply is, "I will not." Sharper than a two-edged sword the Spirit of God is causing your conscience to say to you to-night, "Repent and be converted," but you say, "I will not." Tenderly, pleadingly, God says, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" And you shut your teeth together and say, "I will not turn." Christ lovingly whispers to you, "Take up your cross and follow me," but you shut your eyes to the marks of the thorns on his brow, and the blood stains on his garments, and the nail prints in his hands, and say, "I will not." "Give me thine heart," says God, and you say, "I will not." "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven," is the appeal of Christ, but you say, "I will not." Suppose this goes on, and you

become only more worldly, and life passes, and death knocks at the door, and hastens you away into eternity, and God pronounces you to be only chaff which the wind driveth away. Is it not true that you will have to say "Amen" to your own condemnation? Do not, I pray you, store up such wrath against the day of wrath for your soul.

THE HOMESICKNESS OF THE SOUL.

“As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?”—*Psalm* xlii. 1, 2.

IF you have ever seen, as I have, in the North-western woods, a wild deer pursued by the hounds until, tired and hot, and panting for water, he makes for some mountain brook that comes down through the canyon, not only that he may refresh himself in drinking its clear, cool waters, but that by following the stream he may throw his dangerous pursuers off the track and escape, you have an insight into the meaning of this outburst of David: “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.” The picture is one of a hunted beast, one closely pursued by the dogs and the hunters, one which feels that it has but just one chance of life, and that is to get to the brook. Strong as the picture is, it is not an exaggeration of the condition of many a human soul that is pursued by wicked temptations, and hounded by vicious

appetites and lusts. Oh, the cry of the human heart, the panting of a poor, hunted, and pursued soul that longs for freedom, longs for some respite from the everlasting chasing, barking dogs of sin upon its track!

Just before Christmas a pathetic letter was handed to one of the judges in a New York court. It came from one of the prisoners who was then in the dock waiting for sentence. The writer said that he had not had a free Christmas for twenty-two years, and he longed beyond the power of words to express to spend the day this year outside the walls of a prison. It appeared from his record that he had been arrested in 1877 and tried for grand larceny. He had been convicted and sentenced. There had been several charges against him, and when he had served his term for one offense he was re-arrested as he left the penitentiary and tried for another. In November last he was once more a free man, but there was one more charge pending, and he was arrested as his discharge papers were handed to him. He was the more disappointed because he had learned in the prison a trade by which he could support himself honestly, and was hoping to lead a right life. All this he explained in his letter to the judge, and begged him when he should be

brought up for sentence to give him a chance. An officer corroborated his story of good behavior in prison and his learning a trade. The judge, having read the letter in open court, gave the prisoner some good advice, and suspended sentence. The man was so overcome with joy that he was unable to walk, and an officer had to lead him out of court. We can understand why a man should be overwhelmed with rejoicing at his sense of freedom at last from the prison guard dogging at his footsteps and the key turned in the lock of his cell door ; but how much more perfect and glorious is that freedom which comes to the man or the woman who is freed from sin by the Son of God ! There is not only the freedom from sin, but there is the glad consciousness of Christ's love, and the daily communion with God which satisfies the thirst of the soul. There is not only the escape from the hounds of wicked passion and appetite, but there are the refreshing draughts from the water of life.

John B. Gough tells how he was once entertained by an influential business man in a town in New Hampshire. This man lived in a splendid home, and he had earnestly sought out Gough and begged him to go home with him after his lecture. When they entered the house

he said to Mr. Gough : “ I was once one of the most debased and degraded of drunkards. I will tell you how I reformed. Some ladies noticed a little girl passing by their houses daily with a tin pail in her hand. One day they accosted her.

“ ‘ Little girl, what have you got in your pail ? ’

“ ‘ Whisky, ma’am. ’

“ ‘ Where do you live ? ’

“ ‘ Down in the hollow. ’

“ One of the ladies accompanied her home, and said to the mother, ‘ Is this your child, madam ? ’

“ ‘ Yes. ’

“ ‘ Does she go to school ? ’

“ ‘ No ; we have no clothes for her. ’

“ ‘ Send her to our house, and we will furnish her with clothes. ’

“ ‘ Yes, ’ responded the poor woman, ‘ and her father will steal them for drink. ’

“ ‘ Does your child go to Sunday-school ? ’ inquired the lady.

“ ‘ No, ’ replied the mother.

“ ‘ I propose a plan, ’ said the lady ; ‘ let your little girl come to our house, and we will give her clothes, so that she can go to Sunday-school, and she can return and put the old ones on before returning home. ’

“That was agreed upon, and the little girl was so teachable, and learned to read so soon, that she was presented with a little Testament, which was the first thing she ever owned. She loved it so much that she took it to bed with her, and held it in her hand till she went to sleep. One day the child was ill, so sick that the doctor said she must die. The father went into her room and sat by her side.”

At this point the man looked into Gough's face and said, “Oh, how I wanted a drink ; that quiet child little knew the hell there was in me. I must have drink, and felt like stripping the house of everything I could lay my hands upon. I looked at the child ; she was dozing ; the Testament dropped from her fingers on the coverlid of the bed. I saw it, and looked about me, for I felt I was guilty ; I stretched out my hand, and took the Testament. I put it in my pocket, went out, and got for it a drink of gin. I came back to the child, and soon she looked at me and said, ‘Papa, you know Jesus said, “Suffer little children to come unto me” ; I have tried to come, papa, just as well as I know how, and, when I die, I shall go to Jesus ; but, O papa ! suppose Jesus should ask me what you did with my little Testament, what will I tell him ?’”

The tears ran down the strong man's face as he told the story to Gough, but he smiled through his tears as he said, "My little girl's question was like a flash of lightning; but before that child died she heard me cry, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' From that day, twenty-three years ago, I have never touched intoxicating drink."

What glory there is in the freedom and riches of mercy that come to a hunted soul like that, who finds in God's water-brooks escape from the cruel hounds of evil habit, and refreshment for the famishing soul!

A man whose sins had driven him from bad to worse until he had brought up in Sing Sing, New York, gave me his story recently. While in the prison he passed through all the moods and tenses incident to a life of isolation, loneliness, and exile. He carried a load of sorrow as heavy as ever weighed down Bunyan's "Pilgrim," and experienced something of the remorse which fills the realms of Dante's "Inferno," and which caused him to place over the entrance the despairing inscription: —

"Abandon hope, all ye who enter here."

This was the man's condition when, one day, Maud Ballington Booth came into that prison,

and said with a tenderness that went home to his heart, as it did to many another hard and hopeless heart there, "I love you all." They look up, startled. The sweet words from that good woman's overflowing heart came like fragrant dew on a dry and parched earth. It worked like magic. It was a kind of gospel which this man had never heard before. He had come to believe that he was hated, but Mrs. Booth talked as his mother would have talked, could he have kneeled again at her knee as when he was a boy. She told him, "God loves you infinitely more than I do." The frozen ground began to thaw, icy streams melted into liquid rivulets, new purposes arose in his heart as sap mounts up in a grapevine in the spring when baptized in warm sunshine. He said within himself, "That is what I need." When the invitation was given to seek Christ, he stood up at once. The die was cast! The change was made. The stand was taken. And from that hour, tho still in prison, for months he lived a joyous Christian life. Two articles of creed were born in him, "All things are possible with God," and "All things are possible to him that believeth." Thank God, the same water-brooks that refreshed and comforted that poor hunted soul, and caused life to blossom anew

for him, so that he has come out from the dark past and is living an honorable life as a son of God, are open for every hunted and pursued man or woman anywhere.

But do not let any one say, "These illustrations do not touch my case, for I am not that kind of a person ; I have always lived a respectable life, and I have never done anything so very bad. And I have never experienced this hunted feeling that you speak of." If that is true, then thank God that you have been so hedged about and protected as to have been held back from so many sins which have pursued others. Do not allow yourself to be proud that you have escaped the sins that have dragged others down, but rather thank God in humility that you have been saved. If you had been put under the same stress of temptation that they have, perhaps you would have fallen still deeper into the mire. But if you are not a drunkard, or a thief, or a gambler, or a libertine, or a greedy sensualist ; if you have been going on living for this world only, refusing to give God your heart in affectionate love, refusing to grant to him the service and testimony which he asks of you, then I know there is a thirst in your soul for happiness and peace which the things of this world can never satisfy.

Dr. David Burrell, of New York, tells an interesting story of Akiyama, a Buddhist, from Japan, who was secretary of the Japanese Legation at the Russian Court. He was a very intelligent, bright man, but he had never thought seriously of any religion except that of his own country. Being a human being, his heart had never found rest, and the thirst of his soul was never satisfied. In January, 1899, he passed through New York city on his way to Japan. In his room at the hotel he found a prayer-book. In turning over its lessons from the gospels, his eyes fastened on the blessed words of Jesus. Conviction came to him at that moment, almost as strangely and suddenly as it did to Saul of Tarsus: "This Jesus is the very Christ! He is the one who alone can save my soul! The Buddha is nothing; Christ is all! The Tripitika are false; the Bible is a revelation from God!" He exclaimed in sentences like these, and flung himself upon his knees in earnest prayer to God through Jesus Christ.

He rose from his knees, and burned the pagan scriptures which from a child he had revered. His heart was set upon making an immediate confession of Christ. He made known his desire to one of the proprietors of the hotel, saying: "I believe. What doth hin-

der me to be baptized?" He could scarcely wait for the moment when the rite of baptism should finally and formally announce to the world his deliverance from darkness into light. The proprietor of the hotel, who was himself a Christian, hunted up a minister; and a number of Christians, among whom were some missionaries, were called in. He gave his testimony in both English and Japanese. He said: "In the former time I groped about in the darkness, searching for God; this time God came after me!" The grateful tears rolled down his cheeks while he told his happy experience.

I am sure there are some who hear me tonight who have had the earlier experience of this Japanese gentleman. Altho you have been held back by God's mercy and the circumstances which have surrounded your life from disgraceful and outbreaking sins, yet the things of the world have not been sufficient to give peace to your soul, and there is a deep thirst there which only the water-brooks of God that flow from Mount Calvary can ever quench. But how glorious is my privilege to assure you that you may quench your thirst this very hour by coming to the Lord Jesus. Surely there is no reason, there can be no good reason, why you should not come at once. You cannot

imagine a hart pursued by the hounds, in danger of being overtaken and destroyed, and told by its instinct that in the water-brook yonder is its only certain escape, delaying its flight toward the one chance of safety. How much more unwise it is for you to delay your coming to the water of life ! Nothing else will ever give you peace ; nothing else will ever give you certain happiness ; nothing else can give you freedom from sin ; or forgiveness and safety for the sins of the past. Delay does not make it easier to come ; it gets harder all the time. Not only is that so, but every hour you delay you are losing precious time when you might be rejoicing in God's love, and be employed in blessed service for Christ and your fellow men.

There is an old legend of King Tarquin and the Sibyl which has been often repeated, but its message is of such infinite importance that every delaying soul ought to hear it. The story is that the old woman came into the king's presence staggering under the weight of nine great rolls of manuscript, containing prophecies and counsels concerning Rome. She offered them for sale, but asked a price so high that the king hesitated to buy them. "Wait till to-morrow," said the king. Next day she came again ; but with only six books, having destroyed

three; and for the six she asked twice as much as she had asked for the nine. Tarquin again declined to purchase, and the woman again withdrew. Once more she came, this time with only three of the volumes, and asked a higher price yet. Tarquin dared delay no longer, and purchased the books at the cost of half his treasure, for they were of great value to him.

The Water of Life is offered us to-night—salvation from sin through Jesus Christ. If we surrender ourselves to God, and pay the price which the Lord asks, we may have all that is left of the possibilities of life filled with the presence of the Lord. But if we delay, less and less time is offered us, and it becomes harder and harder for us to yield. Nothing has ever been more pathetic and heartbreaking to me than to see a man or a woman who has refused God through youth and middle age, come to old age with the thirst of the soul unsatisfied and find it almost impossible to break down the habits of years and submit in humility to Christ. And yet I thank God that the oldest may come, and that so long as life lasts if a man will only repent of his sins and return to Christ he may drink deep of the water-brooks of God. But how much wiser it is to come to the Lord in youth. Come now!

THE ARMORBEARER WHO BACKED JONATHAN.

“ And his armorbearer said unto him, Do all that is in thine heart : turn thee ; behold, I am with thee according to thy heart.”— 1 *Sam.* xiv. 7.

JONATHAN was a brave and generous leader of men. No man in the Old Testament stands better in his personal character. He lived in a dark and stormy time, but in all the great essentials he was a noble and splendid man. We think of him so frequently in connection with his rare and beautiful friendship with David, that we do not give the full emphasis which is deserved to the strength and courage which were also his in large measure. In the picture we are to study we see Jonathan, tired of inaction, and longing to be against the enemy, suddenly determine to do a little skirmishing on his own account ; and yet there was a profoundly religious spirit controlling the impulse which led him to make the attempt. Jonathan devoutly believed that God was able to work by the few as well as by the many, and that if he went bravely and yet prudently in

the strength of God, he would enable him to turn the enemy into confusion, and to be the cause of victory on the side of Israel.

He made known his purpose to his armorbearer and no doubt awaited with interest the attitude which that young man would take in the matter. He does not command him in an arbitrary way to come and follow him ; but with the spirit of a comrade, the words which one brave man would say to another in a trying emergency, he says, "Come, and let us go over to the Philistines' garrison, that is on the other side. . . . It may be that the Lord will work for us : for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few." Then the armorbearer replied with a warm-hearted enthusiasm and fidelity that must have made Jonathan's generous blood tingle, "Do all that is in thine heart : turn thee ; behold, I am with thee according to thy heart."

Who could not win victories backed by such armorbearers as that ? Go back through history and you will see that the men who have done the greatest work in the world are the men who have been backed by faithful helpers with stanch and loyal hearts. Moses was chosen to lead Israel out of Egypt, but God gave him Miriam and Aaron for armorbearers.

Joshua became the great soldier and leader of his nation, but what a splendid armorbearer he had in Caleb. Daniel stands out gloriously against the dark background of wicked Babylon, but the three brave Hebrew boys that went into the fiery furnace rather than betray their faith in God were worthy armorbearers to such a leader. Paul shines forth from Ephesus, and Rome, and Athens, and Corinth as the great leader and evangelist, but who can ever tell how much Silas, and Barnabas, and Timothy meant to the great apostle as armorbearers to encourage and sustain him? Peter at Pentecost could never have won alone that glorious victory through which three thousand souls were converted in a single day. No, indeed! It was no lonely-hearted man's battle that was fought on Pentecost. It was the battle of a glowing, glorious leader, whose heart was warm not only with the presence of the Holy Ghost, but with the conscious sympathy of a hundred and twenty men and women whose hearts had been touched of God, and who with prayer, and testimony, and persuasion were backing up every word that Peter said in behalf of Jesus Christ. Give me a hundred and twenty such armorbearers here and now in Cleveland, men and women who have tarried

before the mercy seat until their countenances reflect the divine presence ; until their silence is broken in glad testimony for Jesus ; until their hearts are hot with longing to see sinners saved, so that they will go about at the cost of everything else to win men to Christ, and God will show us wondrous things in these days. O brothers and sisters, God has not changed ; Jesus Christ is the same to-day as yesterday ; heaven's mercy is not dried up. Let us throw ourselves with loyal hearts into the work of saving men, and God will give us sheaves to bring home with rejoicing.

I do not think there could be a more appropriate theme for our discussion this morning with reference to the revival meetings in which we are now engaged. Of course God works through leaders. I do not wish for one moment to shirk my own responsibility or my own duty with reference to a revival. I very well know that no church can have great spiritual victories unless it shall be honestly led by the pastor. God knows my heart ; I would rather fail at any other point, in any other department of my life-work, than fail to be, through his grace assisting me, an honest spiritual leader of this church. And I pray God above all things else that he will give me the courage, and the

patience, and the gentleness, and the humility, and the tireless earnestness, to lead you up to the full measure of power with which God may through Jesus Christ clothe my life. I honestly feel that there is no price in self-denial, or self-surrender, that I am not willing to make, that I may be the man whom God can bless and use in the salvation of immortal souls.

But feeling in this way, I also feel just as certainly that I cannot win in this church and in this city many souls to Christ, unless the men and women of this church shall be loyal and faithful armorbearers, who, when they are called, as at this time, to deny themselves, and at some cost to their own ease, shall say with earnestness and enthusiasm, as did this brave young armorbearer of Jonathan, "Do all that is in thine heart : I am with thee according to thy heart."

There are many ways in which the individual members of a church may be helpful armorbearers to the pastor in a time like this. The first is in their attitude to God and to their fellow Christians in relation to the meetings. Sincere and earnest prayer which takes possession of the heart and life must help to sustain the pastor in leading a campaign for the saving of souls. Many a Christian man or

woman, old or feeble, and not able to come to the meetings, has made the pastor feel that that sick chamber was a mighty arsenal, as splendid a helper to him as any home in the church. Let a pastor feel that the people are praying for him in tenderness and sympathy, and he is mightily strengthened. Do you think that Peter could have won that victory on the day of Pentecost if the hundred and twenty had been going about criticising him ; or had been making outside engagements to take away their interest from the meeting ; or had pleaded that they were so busy with other things that they could not give earnest heed to that day of special service ? Ah, you know very well that the record of Pentecost could never have been written with such a background. And many a pastor has gone into a revival campaign with a spirit as brave, a heart as loyal to Christ, and a soul as earnest to save men as did Peter, and has come out of it with a broken heart, defeated because he lacked the loyal and united and prayerful support of those who ought to have been his armorbearers for Christ's sake. So both your attitude to God and your attitude toward your fellow church members are of the most serious importance. Do you talk about the meetings with sympathy ? Do you pray to

God in secret and in public that salvation may come to the people, and that you may help to bring it about? Ah! then you are an armor-bearer indeed! Revivals never come easily. A revival of religion is a campaign waged against the world, and the flesh, and the devil. Every liquor saloon in this city is dead set against a revival of religion. Every gambling hell in this city is against a revival of religion. Every man, or woman, or institution, that preys upon young men or young women through their vices, and sins, and follies, must lose by a revival of religion, and they fight it with all the demon-like energy of hell. Not only are these against it, but the greed for money, and the love of ease and self-indulgence, in church members as well as in outsiders, are all against a revival of religion. Hence a real, genuine revival of religion always comes hard. It cannot come at all save through the crucifixion of greed, and ease, and self-indulgence, and indifference, and sin of every kind; it cannot come at all unless there be some men and women like Jonathan and his armorbearer, who, for Christ's sake, and for the sake of the souls of sinning men and women, will take their lives in their hands, and will die rather than that God's cause should not advance among the peo-

ple, and lost sinners be saved. Are you willing to be that kind of an armorbearer ?

But it is not enough that you be right toward God, right in your sympathies toward your pastor, and right in your attitude toward your fellow church members in regard to this earnest campaign for soul saving. If you are to be a real armorbearer you, too, must handle the sword of the Spirit ; you must not wait for the pastor to hunt out individuals one by one and win them to Christ. You must be faithful in your own place and with self-denial and earnestness seek to win souls yourself. But, you say, I am so diffident that I do not feel that I can talk well enough to present Christ. Perhaps you will do it all the better because you are diffident. Not trusting much in yourself, you will ask God's help, and you will go to seek your friend in humility and prayer, and God will not fail you. I was reading the other day the story of the Sunday-school teacher who persuaded Moody to give his heart to Christ. I suppose there is not a Sunday-school teacher here more diffident and trembling about such matters than he was. He says : "There came a day when I determined to speak to Moody about Christ and about his soul. I started down to Holton's shoe store. When I was nearly there

I began to wonder whether I ought to go just then during business hours. And I thought maybe my mission might so embarrass the boy that when I went away the other clerks might ask who I was, and when they learned might taunt Moody and ask him if I was trying to make a good boy out of him. While I was pondering over it all I passed the store without noticing it. Then when I found that I had gone by the door I determined to make a dash for it and have it over at once. I found Moody in the back part of the store wrapping up shoes in paper and putting them on shelves. I went up to him and put my hand on his shoulder and as I leaned over I put my foot on a shoe box. I feel that I made a very weak plea for Christ. I don't know just what words I used, nor could Mr. Moody tell. I simply told him of Christ's love for him and the love that Christ wanted in return. That was all there was of it. It seemed the young man was just ready for the light that then broke upon him, and there, in the back part of that store in Boston, the future great evangelist gave himself and his life to Christ." I am sure there are men who hear me to-day who might repeat that scene in all its essential parts to-morrow, and win some acquaintance to Christ by a little earnest, tact-

ful, prayerful work done in Jesus' name. There are many souls who are waiting for but a touch of influence from the outside to turn the balances on the side of righteousness.

Rev. Ford C. Ottman tells that once he was holding a series of meetings, and noticed that up in the gallery at his right, night after night, sat a gray-haired old man. He was evidently under deep conviction, but he would never rise when the invitation was given. One night he pointed him out to a Christian woman and said to her, "To-morrow night I want you to sit near him, and when the invitation is given, ask him to rise." She protested, and declared that she could never do it; but he insisted, and the next night she took her seat just behind the old man. When the invitation was given he sat still as before. Presently Mr. Ottman saw the lady move forward and say something to him; in a moment more the old man rose to his feet.

Not a night passes in this present campaign for souls in this church, but that people who are convicted by God's Spirit stifle their convictions, and remain inactive, who would come to the altar and make a public confession of Christ if the Christian man or woman in the pew next to them would only say the sympathetic or persuasive word.

And what joy it would bring to you if you were to thus feel yourself a real armorbearer in Christ's work. At the close of a meeting once, a young man with a very eager face came to the minister and said, "I never have led a soul to Jesus yet ; how can I do it ?"

The minister said : "Do you see that man just going out ? He is concerned ; go and speak to him."

He fairly ran down the aisle after that man, overtook him in the vestibule, brought him back, and they sat down in a pew together. After a while they came up the aisle to the altar where the pastor was still standing ; both faces were shining, and the young Christian who had done his first work for the Lord said, "Praise the Lord, this man has given his heart to God, and this is the first soul I ever brought to Jesus."

In every meeting there are cases like this, and every night I have the heartbreak of knowing that men and women are going away unsaved because the ability which is sitting silent beside them is not exercised to save them. Use your head to invent ways by which you can help win men to Christ. A young man who was a Christian brought an unconverted friend to a revival meeting. The service was a very

solemn one and the young man was very much impressed, but came to no decision. At the close of the meeting the two young fellows went out together.

The young Christian was greatly concerned for his friend, and concluded that the best thing to do was to intercept the preacher on the way home and introduce his friend. His intention remained unsuspected. He induced the man to walk around the block; at the street corner they met the preacher and he was introduced.

The unconverted young man turned to his companion and said indignantly, "I believe you brought me around here on purpose to meet this man."

"Well," said the minister, "suppose he did; I am not a bear."

"That may be," he replied, "but I didn't want to meet you."

The minister said, "Neither do you want to meet God, but some day you will have to do it." They conversed for some time longer, and when they parted he had surrendered to God. The next Sunday he united with the church. Such armorbearers as that young man will gladden the heart and inspire the courage of any Christian leader.

O brothers and sisters, we would find a way if we were only truly in earnest! Is not the real difficulty in the fact that there are so many other things that you care more about than you do about saving men? Is it not true that the reason you are not more helpful in the church is that you care more about making money, you care more about getting on in politics, you care more about your social pleasures, you care more for your parties and your dinners, you care more about the success of your other plans and purposes, than you do about standing well with God? It is more to you to stand well with some influential people you know than it is to cheer the heart of Jesus Christ, and see the joy on the face of a man who has been saved from his sins. God knows I do not speak this in anger, neither do I speak it in a fault-finding way; the subject is too awfully serious; it is too heartbreaking for any such feeling as that. But I speak it out of the depth of my conviction that it is the real truth. If we were earnest enough we would find a way to persuade the unconverted men and women and children we know to come to Christ and be saved. There are hundreds who are being kept from the revival meetings by insignificant excuses that would vanish in thin

air, and you would not miss one meeting this week, if you were only sufficiently in earnest.

It seems terrible, when the human heart is capable of such marvelous things in the way of loyalty, and zeal, and enthusiasm, that we who profess the name of Jesus Christ, and have been redeemed by his precious blood, should be so lacking here. What glorious deeds have been done through the chivalric earnestness of human souls! A young soldier was shot down near the outskirts of the battle of Manassas. He had been shot through by a bullet of the enemy and had dropped from his horse, but was hanging by the horn of the saddle, waiting to die. When the captain discovered his condition and fate he said, "O my boy, I'm afraid they have done for you!"

"Yes," said the lad. And then with his dying energy he exclaimed, "They've done for me, but my father's there yet; our army's there yet. See! Our flag's there yet." And lifting himself with heroic effort, he struggled once more to say, as he fell on his face in death, "And liberty is there yet."

O soldiers of Jesus Christ, if we will give ourselves with a zeal and a devotion like that to Christ and to the saving of his lost brothers and sisters, we shall win multitudes to him!

THE KING OF GLORY.

“Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.—*Psalm xxiv. 8.*”

IN the old days, when the king of England wished to enter the city of London, through Temple Bar, the gate being closed against him, the herald advanced and demanded entrance.

“Open the gate,” shouted the herald.

“Who is there?” questioned a voice from within.

“The king of England!” answered the herald.

The gate was at once opened, and the king passed, amid the acclamations of the people. But the custom was an old one, and stretched back perhaps thousands of years before England was known under that name. It is probable that to a custom like this allusion is made in this Psalm. Its direct and immediate reference was no doubt to the bringing of the ark into the tent David pitched for it, or into the temple Solomon built for it. The porters are called upon to open the doors, and they are called “everlasting doors” because much more dura-

ble than the doors of the tabernacle, which were but a curtain. And the porters asked, "Who is this King of glory?" very appropriately, for the ark was the symbol or token of God's presence. But the ark was a type of Jesus Christ, and the message we have in it is its proper and fitting description of Jesus. He is our "King of glory." He is our Lord, "strong and mighty in battle."

We may apply it very fitly to Christ's ascension to heaven after his life, and suffering, and death, and resurrection here on the earth. When Christ came to be born in Bethlehem he put aside the glory which he had before the world was, and, tho he was rich, for our sakes he became poor. While on earth he bore our flesh, he was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. He was an hungered, he thirsted, he was weary, he was criticised, he was lonely, he was insulted and abused, he was betrayed by false friends, he was denied by some that were nearest to him, he was beaten, he was crowned with thorns, he was crucified on the cross, his body was laid in a borrowed grave; but there his humiliation ended. He rose from the grave in mighty power, with angelic attendants, and ascended into heaven as a conqueror.

Isaiah had a vision of that time and cried out, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength?" And he answers, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?" And the answer comes ringing back, "I have trodden the winepress alone; of the people there was none with me. . . . And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold; therefore mine own arm brought salvation."

As one of the old preachers said, Christ has gone to heaven as a victor; leading sin, Satan, death, hell, and all his enemies in triumph at his chariot wheels. He has not only overcome his enemies for himself, but for all his people, whom he will make conquerors, yea, "more than conquerors." As he has overcome, so shall they also overcome; and as he has gone to heaven a victor, they shall follow in triumph. He is in heaven as a Savior. When he came from heaven it was in the character of the Savior; when on earth he obtained eternal salvation; in heaven he lives as a Savior; when he comes again from heaven he will come

as a Savior; and when he returns he will return as a Savior. He is also gone to heaven as the rightful heir. He is not gone to heaven as a sojourner, but as "the heir of all things." He is the heir of heavenly glory and happiness, and all who become his friends and disciples become "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Christ went back to heaven after the mightiest battle ever fought in the universe, and went back triumphant over sin and death.

We might properly apply these words to the coming of Christ to the life of man, and to the civilization of the world. Christ has been taking possession of the life of mankind. He is King of glory in modern civilization. In spite of all the wickedness there is in the world, it has already come about that the most dominant personality in it is Christ. Take the discussion that is now going on as to whether this year 1900 is the last year of the nineteenth or the first year of the twentieth century. What is the meaning of it all? It means that nineteen hundred years ago there was born in the little stable at Bethlehem a child; a child so marvelous, a child so wonderful, a child so given of God, that all the ages before the birth of that child became time before Christ, and all the centuries since have become time in the "year

of our Lord." Christ has possessed and become King of glory in the very counting of the years in modern centuries.

Christ has knocked at the gates of the world of art, and he is the King of glory in it. Go back and look at the works of the great masters and you will see that they are pictures of the Christ. And when in modern times has the world of art and modern invention in illustration been so stirred as in Tissot's, "Life of Christ in Art"?

Christ has knocked at the door of literature and he is the King of glory in the literature of the world. Where there is one book written against Christ there are a hundred thousand books written to illustrate his teaching or impress the lessons of his life. Some man of great learning and scholarship writes a book of skeptical philosophy, and if it has sold ten thousand copies the publishers think it has done well; but a humble preacher in a modest little Congregational church in Kansas writes a book in the simplest language and imagery, trying to show how men may live like Jesus, and three millions of copies are sold in less than five years.

We may apply it also with great appropriateness to the door of our hearts. Many commentators think that was the original mean-

ing, the direct reference, and they believe it to mean the same as in Revelation where Christ said to John, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock ; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him." One of the old Bible students calls attention to the fact that in the Gospel history Christ had four different kinds of entertainment among men. Some received him into their houses, but not into their hearts. Simon the Pharisee was one of these. He gave Christ a great dinner, but he gave him no kiss. Some people received him into their hearts, but not into their houses. The Roman centurion who was convinced of Christ's divine mission was one of these. He did not esteem himself worthy that Christ should come under his roof. Another class would receive Jesus neither into their houses nor their hearts, and their only prayer was that he should leave them alone and not disturb them. The people of Gadara, where Christ saved the poor demoniac and where the people lost their herd of swine, were an illustration of this class. But there was still a fourth class, who received Jesus both into their houses and into their hearts. That home in Bethany where Lazarus lived with Mary and Martha, his sisters, is an illustration of this class.

There are the same classes in the world to-day. Some of you who hear me to-night have received Christ into your houses but not into your hearts. Somewhere about your house probably there is a big family Bible. It may not have been opened for a long time, and you could probably write your name with your finger where the dust has gathered at the edges, but somehow you would not want the house to be without it. In your pictures, in your music, in your books, in your friends, in many ways, you have received Christ into your house ; but you have shut him out of your heart. You are willing to go as far as Simon and make him a dinner now and then, for the sake of some charity carried on in his name, but you refuse him access to your heart. Like Simon of old you let him sit at your table, but you give him no kiss of love. Yet if you could but for one moment imagine that Christ would finally be shut out of your lives completely, you would not wait another hour, would not wait another moment, without inviting Jesus to enter your hearts. I am sure you would not want to live in such a black world as it would be if Christ were gone out of it entirely. But there must come a time when in your world, in all the realm where you live and have your being,

there will be no Christ, nothing that is Christian, unless you shall turn from your indifference and sin, and open your heart to the King of glory who knocks at your door. Have you ever seriously thought what a dark midnight it would be if there were in your sky no Christ, no Christmas, no Easter, no Thanksgiving, no Sunday, no Christian books, no Christian pictures, no Christian churches, no Christian hospitals, no Christian homes of benevolence, no Christian spirit of love in the earth at all? Ah, that would be hell indeed! And yet that is what you are planning for yourselves if you persistently refuse Jesus Christ.

Once take the hope of Christ and goodness out of the heart, and you have reached the realm of despair. Dr. John W. Hamilton says that he once found that realm in Southern Europe. It was the Suicides' Cemetery at Monte Carlo. Many travelers have denied the existence of this graveyard, but it does exist and is not hard to find after you know where to look for it. It cannot be found near the grounds of the beautiful palace where the sound of the whirling ball mingles with the chink of gold. Neither the croupers nor the porters will tell you about it. If you ask them they will smile incredulously, and shake their heads.

Guide-books do not mention it — the owners of the gambling hell at Monte Carlo pay them to keep it out. But go to the old priest in Monaco and ask him where the cemetery is. He will tell you gladly. It is about three miles from the gambling house. Bronze gates open to it from the beautiful drive. Climb up over the hill and you will come to a little stone house built partly in the hillside. Here lives Gilbert, the gravedigger of the Suicides' Cemetery. If he has any other name he keeps it to himself. He claims to be French, but has more the appearance of an Italian or a Spaniard. He speaks the three languages perfectly, and has a smattering of English.

“I am the greatest man in the world,” said Gilbert to Dr. Hamilton. “All these graves I've dug myself. They are all mine, and so are the people in them—all mine. I spend my days here, and sometimes my nights. When another friend is ready to come and sleep in my house, they send for me and I go bring him.”

The old gravedigger leaned on the handle of his shovel and looked across the blue waters of the Mediterranean on one of the most beautiful sights on the face of the earth and said: “What matters it how a man leaves the world? See,”

said he, going to the edge of an open grave, "this is ready for somebody. Who? It may be me; it may be you. We cannot guide our own lives any more than we can guide the ball that whirls in the roulette wheel. All life is chance. We love chance and stake our lives on it. If we win we are happy; if we lose we weep; or, like my friend here, end our lives bravely. I never think of to-morrow: if I am to suffer, I will suffer; if I am to be glad, I will be glad. After all, it matters little in the end. That's the same in all cases. But I wonder where the man is now who will fill the grave I have just dug. Perhaps he is ready for me."

The old gravedigger was a type of the utter hopelessness of agnosticism and atheism, rejecting Jesus our Savior and the hope of eternal life in him. Blot Christ out and the whole world becomes like that "Suicides' Cemetery." Thank God, man was not made to go down into the darkness and silence like that. Ingersoll died on the banks of the Hudson a few months ago and there was no singing, no music, no hope; only a going down into silence. But Moody died the other day at Northfield, and as death came to him his friends stood about with tears indeed, but with hopeful, triumphant hearts as the warrior of a hundred battlefields

for Christ exclaimed, "I see earth receding, heaven is opening. God is calling me!" Songs were triumphantly sung about his coffin, songs were sung victoriously over his grave, the King of glory had thrown the mantle of his own glory over him in his dying as in his living. Which death will you die; the death of Ingersoll or the death of Moody? It is for you to decide. Nobody can decide it for you. Oh, for decision here and now! No man becomes a Christian who lingers to dally with excuses. What you need is to decide and to act. The question of our personal allegiance to Jesus Christ is not one we can transfer to any other court than that of our own conscience, and "He who hesitates is lost." No one can decide this momentous question but yourself, and no other time is promised you but now. I must call upon you to decide it to-night.

In 1871 Mr. Moody preached a series of sermons on the life of Christ, in old Farwell Hall, Chicago, for five nights. He took Him from the cradle in the manger, and followed Him to the Judgment Hall, and on that occasion he committed what I once heard him say was the greatest blunder of his life. It was on that memorable night in October, and the court house bell was sounding an alarm of fire, but

Moody paid no attention to it. He finished his sermon on the question of Pilate, "What shall I do with Jesus?" and said to the audience: "Now I want you to take the question home with you and think it over, and next Sunday I want you to come back and tell me what you are going to do with Him."

"What a mistake!" said Moody. "It seems now as if Satan was in my mind when I said this. Since then I never have dared give an audience a week to think of their salvation. If they were lost they might rise up in judgment against me."

"I remember," said Moody, "Mr. Sankey singing, and how his voice rang when he came to that pleading verse:—

" ' To-day the Savior calls ;
For refuge fly !
The storm of justice falls,
And death is nigh.' "

"After the meeting we went home. I remember going down La Salle street with a young man and saw the glare of flames. I said to the young man: 'This means ruin to Chicago.'

"About one o'clock Farwell Hall was burned; soon the church in which I preached went down and everything was scattered. I never saw that audience again."

Many years afterward I heard Moody tell that incident, and I never shall forget the impression made on me. His voice broke into sobs, and the tears ran down his cheeks, as he declared that it was the greatest blunder of his life, to send those people away that night without calling them to decision then. Dear friends, God helping me, I will not make the same blunder with you. None of us know what will happen to-morrow. But there is one thing we all know, and that is that the King of glory is knocking at the door of your heart to-night, and if you open the door and let him in it will all be well with you. Disease or fire or death may come, but you can triumph over all if Jesus Christ is your Savior and your King. Will you admit Jesus Christ as Lord over your heart? Will you decide now?

THE SHEPHERD GOD.

“The Lord is my Shepherd.”—*Psalm xxiii.* 1.

JOSEPH PARKER calls this the nightingale among the Psalms, pouring forth melodies which, when once heard, will never be forgotten. There is perhaps no other portion of the Holy Scriptures, with the exception of the Lord's Prayer, which has been committed to memory by so many people, and which has so comforted the hearts of men and women. Tens of thousands of children have committed it to memory. I heard Mr. Sankey say once that almost every Christian Scotchman sings this Psalm at least once a day, and some of them repeat it more frequently. It is a Psalm that is as precious to the old as to the young, and one that is as dear to middle age as to either of the extremes of life. Some one has said that it has remanded to their dungeon more felon thoughts, more black doubts, more thieving sorrows, than there are sands on the seashore. It has comforted the noble host of the poor. It has sung courage to the army of the disappointed. It has poured balm and consolation

into the heart of the sick. It has visited the prisoner and broken his chains; and, like Peter's angel, has led him forth in imagination, and sung him back to his home again.

I well remember once in Boston to have read this Psalm to a dying man. He was a dear old saint, who had lived on the earth more than eighty years, and for seventy years God had led him through green pastures, and now he had come to the valley and shadow of death. He was close to the edge, and he asked me to read this Psalm. I got down on my knees beside the bed and bent over him that I might repeat it in his ear. I held his right hand in mine and as I got to the verse which says, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me," I saw that he was going, and a great longing came over me to get some message back from the valley of shadows, and I cried, "Is it true? Is it true?" and with the last strength left in his body he pressed my hand, and with a smile of indescribable peace he said, "Yes, it is true," and he was gone.

This Psalm was born of David's life as a shepherd. It must have been written afterwards, for its talk of restoration and anointing indicates that it was written later in life than

the days when he led his flocks among the hills of Bethlehem. But those early experiences David ever carried in his heart, and it was natural for him to use them for illustrations of God's goodness and mercy. I bring this very beautiful figure of God to you to-night — a shepherd God who will be all and more than that word could mean to you.

It is interesting to note what it means as David understood it. As a shepherd David says that God restored him back again to the flock. David knew what that meant ; he knew as a shepherd lad what it was to hunt after the lost sheep that had wandered away and was in danger of being torn by the bears, or the lions, or the wolves, and to bring it back again to the safety of the flock and the fold. And David says that is what God did for him — “He restoreth my soul.” That is just what the sinner needs. It is idle to talk about Christian culture, or Christian growth in any way, until the soul is restored again from sin. Before you can expect your plant to grow you must plant it out ; before you can expect the sheep to be led in green pastures, and by still waters, and protected from enemies, it must be brought back from its wandering. It is just that way with a sinning soul that has wandered away from

God. It must be brought back, and Christ is the Good Shepherd who came to seek and to save that which was lost. I read you the old story which Jesus tells us of the ninety and nine which lay in the fold, and of the one that had wandered off and become lost, and the shepherd who would not sleep until he sought after and found that lost one, and who when he found it was happy through and through, and came back rejoicing with the lost sheep on his shoulder. That is what Christ is seeking to do for you to-night. He wants to bring you back to your lost goodness ; your lost innocence ; your lost relation to God, when you could pray to him as naturally as you could talk to your mother ; your lost peace of heart ; your lost tenderness of conscience ; your lost love for good things ; your lost sense of safety ; your lost hope of heaven and eternal life. If you will let him, this very night the Good Shepherd will restore your soul to all these precious things.

But the shepherd God not only restores ; he leads all through the journey of life those who trust him. And it is interesting to know over what kind of a way the Lord leads. In the first place, it is a fresh, green way. David says, "He maketh me to lie down in green pas-

tures." A sheep never lies down while he is hungry. The flock will only lie down after being filled with grass. God leads us in an interesting and blessed life. I have never known any one yet who had been wandering away into sin, and had been restored again by Christ's love and given up to be led by him, to complain that he led over a hard and rough path and into a dry and barren pasture. The pastures of the Lord keep green through all the trying experiences of life. The pasture doesn't dry up when Christian people get old and feeble. God's saints are like the palm tree; they are fat and flourishing in old age. Who of you ever heard of an old Christian whom the Good Shepherd had been leading for fifty years complaining that God put him on poor pasture when he was old? The devil has no happy old people, but God has green pastures full of them. If you want to have a sweet and happy and noble old age, when you shall be blessed both of God and man, give your heart to Christ now; put your life now in the hands of the Good Shepherd and let him lead you all the way through.

It is a safe way over which the shepherd God leads his flock. It is by still waters; not by some mountain run where on the occasion of a thunder storm or a cloud-burst a wild torrent

would come plunging down the mountain side and sweep the flock away, and leave them wounded or drowned farther down the brook. No sudden storm of temptation or trouble shall sweep us off our feet if we trust God and yield ourselves to be led by him.

It is a safe way because it is a righteous way. David says, "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." No man is safe in this world who is not right. I know some of you feel to-night that you are strong in your self-righteousness, but if your life would not pass muster before the judgment seat of Christ, if you would not dare to hold it up before the great white throne and let the calm clear eyes of Jesus look on it, then, my brother, for your soul's sake repent to-night, and implore the Good Shepherd to restore your soul, and lead you in the paths of righteousness. No wolf of sin or passion can harm you if you will give yourself up to be humbly led by Jesus Christ in the path of righteousness.

David also suggests to us that as a shepherd God disciplines and protects us. The shepherd carried a crook with which he brought the sheep back when it showed a disposition to wander into a dangerous place, where it might fall over a precipice or where it might get separated

from the others. Dr. Duff, the missionary, tells how he was once traveling in the Himalayas, where he saw a shepherd who, as usual, went before his flock, but frequently stopped and looked back. If he saw a sheep drawing too near the edge of a precipice he would go back and apply his crook to one of its hind legs and gently pull it back till the animal joined the rest. But besides this crook, he had a long rod, as tall as himself, and twisted around the lower half a thick bar of iron. With this he could effectually ward off the wolves and other dangerous animals which in the night time prowled around the place where the sheep lay. The crook was intended for the flock, the rod for its foes. So the shepherd God will, if we will let him, draw us back from danger and defend us from all enemies that can come against us.

It is delightful to notice what a different kind of following there is to the Christian than to the sinner. That which follows on sin is always uncomfortable. However fascinating the temporary pleasures of sin may be, afterwards remorse and punishment ever follow in the wake of sin. How many times people say to me when they come and uncover before me the skeleton in their hearts, "Oh, if I had only known that I should have been so followed and

persecuted by that one wrong step, I would have shunned my sin as I would have shunned the cholera!" But how different is that which follows on doing right. If we yield ourselves to the Good Shepherd and let him lead us and guide us, that which follows on our track is like a benediction. David says, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Ah, how much more precious it is to be followed by goodness and mercy than to be hunted down by the sleuth hounds of remorse!

But let us notice also the result in us. First, there is the banishment of want. David says, "I shall not want." God will feed your soul with everything that is good for it. The cry of the prodigal when he was among the swineherds of that far-off country was, "I perish with hunger." Oh, the world is full of souls that are hungry because of sin, but there is bread enough and to spare in the Father's house, and any soul here that hungers for real rest and satisfaction, and nourishing food that makes life worth living, may have it by just coming home to the shepherd God to-night. Every genuine Christian will bear testimony that Paul told the truth when he wrote to some of his own converts, "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

The Good Shepherd banishes fear. David says, "I will fear no evil." Perhaps there is no blessing so great for the happiness of the soul as the driving away of fear, which God does for those who give their hearts to him. He rescues us from the fear of punishment. He takes away the fear of the judgment. The man who has received a pardon from the President of the United States has no longer any fear of punishment for his crime. He knows that he never can be tried again for that offense. The President's pardon covers all his sin. So if you will repent of your sin to-night, and come to the mercy seat, trusting in the merits of Jesus Christ, God will pardon your sin and take out of your heart all fear of punishment because of your sins of the past. What a blessed relief that is !

God takes from us also the fear of death. How many have been held slaves to the fear of death. Many people are so afraid of death that they will not attend a funeral service. They will not willingly permit any one to speak of death in their presence. No poor superstitious soul was ever more cruelly haunted by imaginary ghosts than many people are haunted by the fear of dying. Paul gives us the real reason of this. He says, "The sting of death

is sin." If we are conscious that we are sinners against God, then we know that death will usher us into the presence of God with our souls unprepared to meet him. Death to the sinner means a fearful judgment day. It means condemnation forever. It means the meeting with Jesus Christ, who has said, "If any man deny me before men, him will I deny before my Father and his holy angels." No wonder that men and women who are conscious that they are not at peace with God fear death above all things. But if we repent of our sins, we receive pardon through Jesus Christ, and the sting of death is taken out. It is no longer an enemy, but becomes a friend. Come when it will, it can only usher us into the presence of our Heavenly Father, and bring us face to face with our divine Savior, who has said, "If any man will confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father and his holy angels."

Finally, what a beautiful and glorious hope the shepherd God holds out to us of the future life, toward which he is willing to lead us through all our life's journey. How happy is David's assurance; not only was goodness and mercy to follow him all the days of his life, but he says, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Our Good Shepherd said to his friends

just before he went away, and through them to us, and to every one that will believe on his name, that he has gone to prepare those houses in which his loved ones are to dwell. How tenderly he describes them: "In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you." And then again, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." Ah, there is no "leap in the dark" about that; there is no going down into nothingness or silence about that. There is unspeakable joy and blessing in the outlook of the Christian.

We are told in Hebrews that these happy experiences that we have here as Christians, in the forgiveness of our sins, and in the consciousness of God's guidance and protection, are only a tasting of the powers of the world to come. The saintly Dr. A. J. Gordon was once speaking on that Scripture, when he told of a shipload of cattle which a little while before had arrived on the New England coast after a long and stormy voyage. When they came within fifty miles of New England these poor, storm-tossed animals began to scent the clover, and to show signs of the greatest joy and delight. They had begun to taste the powers of the New World. That is what we may do —

now and then smell the clover of those sweet fields, arrayed in living green, beyond the flood. We are not to be conformed to this world, but we are to look forward to the glorious world beyond, so that in the midst of all of earth's sorrows and separations we may be exulting and strong.

Rev. F. B. Meyer says that in olden times the crews of outgoing vessels till they reached the line toasted "Friends behind"; but as soon as they passed it, they began to toast "Friends before." What a glorious outlook to all of us who have dear ones that have gone on before—dear hearts whom we have "loved long since, and lost awhile!" The Germans have a proverb, "Blessed are the homesick; for they shall reach home!" O wandering soul, the Good Shepherd is seeking you to-night; he is calling softly and tenderly across the wilds of sin. He comes strong and mighty to deliver, able to save unto the uttermost; do not run from him, but rather run towards him, and yield yourself to his strong arms that he may restore you to the Father's fold.

THE VOLCANO IN THE HEART.

“ My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned : then spake I with my tongue.”— *Psalm xxxix.* 3.

SEVERAL years ago, one July day, I climbed the sides of Vesuvius, the famous volcano which overlooks the bay of Naples. I never shall forget that day. I climbed upward through the vineyards and fig orchards growing where lava streams used to run, and out upon the mountain beyond the line of vegetation to the volcanic rock. The mountain was in a state of eruption, which added very greatly to the interest and the danger. Very close to the path over which we climbed during the last stage of the journey great heaving masses of red hot lava oozed out through the fissures in the mountain side. As we climbed near the top, hot, blinding smoke issued from the cracks in the rocks between our feet. We were getting high enough now to hear the deep-toned thunder of the explosions from the crater. Ever and anon the mountain quivered and shook beneath our feet. The smoke above filled the sky with its clouds ;

it smarted our eyes and parched our throats. As we neared the top we had to be careful where we stepped, for our shoes were now burning hot and our feet were scorching while our heads were in a whirl. We pressed forward to the edge of the crater and a moment later we were looking on the most splendid and thrilling scene I have ever witnessed ; a scene more awful, more sublime, than my wildest imagination in its most exaggerated flight had ever dreamed or painted. As I looked down into the gaping crater my first thought was that a mountain was smothering for breath. You have noticed a great freight locomotive just pulling out with its long line of cars, and you remember its deep respiration — its heaving puff ! puff ! puff ! Multiply that by a hundred thousand and you may have some conception of a burning mountain taking its breath. That deep, heaving pulse was as constant and as regular as the beating of my heart, and threw the smoke and ashes thousands of feet high. Every minute or two came a deep rumble like thunder, and out through the smoke were shot hundreds of rocks, some of them of immense size, and thrown, many of them, a thousand feet into the air. With the stones came up the melted lava. It fell all about the

sides of the crater, still molten, running like water as it fell. Then, if the wind blew aside the heavy curtains of smoke for a moment, I got a glimpse of the great sheets of lurid flame that came up from the mountain's burning heart. It thrilled, exalted, intoxicated me. I seemed to live ten years in a single hour. I had a new vision of the greatness and majesty of the God who "weighs the mountains in a balance," who "toucheth the hills and they smoke." The fascination of such a sight has something terrible about it, and I can understand how a distinguished traveler, a year or two later, standing there at the edge of the crater as I did that day, was so fascinated and drawn to the brink that he toppled over and lost his life in the yawning caldron. As I descended the mountain again it was with a new thought of the risk of life and property incurred by all the people who live about the base of Vesuvius. We cross over a great molten river. The lava is hard and solid enough now, but it is gnarled and twisted like the current of a great stream flowing over rapids; a river a thousand yards wide and twenty feet deep, that less than thirty years ago burned its way down the mountain through smiling vineyards. As you look at that you

know that no man within reach of that mountain is safe. You look down on old Pompeii at the left, and remember that a little over eighteen hundred years ago there was on that spot a lovely, beautiful city. It was the center of wealth and luxury. Then suddenly from that lofty crater, more than three thousand feet above, the great pillars of flame and smoke burst into the air. Streams of melted lava rolled down the sides of the mountain. Vast clouds of ashes began to fall like burning snow in the street. This horrid shower continued to fall until it was a foot deep ; then two feet; then it covered the doors of the houses ; it blocked the streets and the work of desolation and death went on until the tallest houses were covered over ; and a city bright, and gay, and beautiful, full of luxury and art and human life, was buried out of sight, and for seventeen centuries lost to the world.

And to-day the traveler to Vesuvius feels that no vineyard or cottage or village in all the region about the mountain's foot is safe for an hour. Men get careless, and gay, they become reckless about it, and eat and drink and are merry, but there is always a feeling of uncertainty and unrest in the air. They know that the heart of the mountain is on fire ; that down

in its great subterranean caverns the caldrons are boiling, and no man can tell what day or hour it will again spit forth its flame, pour out its rivers of burning lava, and snow under the cities about its foot with its desolating storms of ashes.

I have told you this story because it seems to me that there is no other illustration that so truly indicates what David means in this text. David says, "My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned : then spake I with my tongue." The heart of man is the center and source of words and deeds. Out of the heart come the issues of life and death ; what a man is, is first determined by his heart. And I wish to impress the great thought upon all our minds to-night, that a wicked heart is a certain precursor of a desolated and ruined life. A man sometimes carries a volcano of evil in his heart for a long time without an eruption, and he begins to think he is going to be able to hold down the boiling thoughts and imaginations of evil, and be master over them forever. Vesuvius was once so quiet for a hundred and thirty years that trees grew on the side of the mountain, and cattle grazed on the inside of the mouth of the crater. The people living on its sides looked on the stories

of the past eruptions as idle tales, and did not believe there would be any like them in the future. But suddenly the heart of the mountain burst forth in flames. Enormous stones, one of them twenty-five tons in weight, were thrown fifteen miles, rivers of lava poured from the summit, and three thousand people perished. So we see men who have held under the hatches their evil thoughts, and their impure imaginations, and their vengeful feelings for a long time, and they begin to sneer at other men who are not able to control their feelings, and are overcome by their passions and their appetites. Then suddenly the wicked heart within them bursts forth in vicious words, and unholy deeds, and the fair and smiling life is scorched and burned, and all the green leaves of hope are withered, and a promising career is wrecked and destroyed.

No man can trust an impure heart. All the history of mankind bears its testimony. That was the difficulty with Cain. Down in his heart he cherished envy and jealousy against his brother Abel. Adam did not know it; Eve did not know it; Abel was unconscious of it; but down in Cain's heart it smoldered and burned. God reasoned with him about it and pointed out the danger. God said to him, in

substance, "You are as dear to me as is Abel ; if you will turn over a new leaf and do right, your sacrifice will be as precious to me as is his. But, take care, Cain, and get that vicious envy out of your heart, for if you go on doing wrong, and let that grow, sin croucheth at the door." But Cain did not hearken. It burned in his soul, smothered out all his joy, and all his love for his brother ; for a long time all the outward sign of this feeling was that Cain grew sullen and morose in his appearance. His countenance fell. But one day Cain and Abel met in the field ; then came the eruption ; I have no doubt it was far more terrible than Cain had dreamed of. I have no doubt it was far from his intention to kill Abel, but his heart had been hot within him so long that he felt he must pour out some of his spite and hatred to Abel's face. He meant to give him a tongue lashing he would not soon forget. But when he had once given vent to his spiteful spirit, the stream of boiling hatred from his heart was beyond his power, and he killed him, and his brother's blood ran into the ground, and cried unto heaven, and Cain fled from it a poor, guilty, hunted thing, shocked at the crime which had been all the while locked up in his heart.

Many a man might take warning at this. The great dangers of life are not outside of us. A heart that is not open to God, that does not welcome God's sunshine of love, becomes a foul cell in which are all sorts of evil and horrible things. You remember what Jesus says about people who have let envy and jealousy rankle in their bosoms until they get to be hatred. Christ says that such people are "whited sepulchers, full of dead men's bones." That means that in God's thought you are already guilty of the murder of the man or woman whom you hate. It may be you have never spoken a hard word to him ; possibly you have always veiled even in your looks your antagonism ; you have never lifted your hand to harm a hair of his head, but down in your heart the smoldering fires of envy and jealousy and vengeance have been boiling, and in the secret chambers of your soul the clear eyes of Christ see that you have already killed the man or woman, and the bones lie there. Envy and jealousy and anger and hatred permitted to smolder in the heart always mean the possible murderer. And so of every other sin that desolates human life. All the sins of self-indulgence, and lust, and passion, that burn down the smiling vineyards and fig orchards of health, and innocence, and beauty,

and goodness, and leave lives that are scorched, and blackened, and ruined ; all these begin in the heart, in the heart that is held back from God and becomes the lurking place of evil and vicious things.

When we take into consideration these things we can understand God's thought when he says, "Son, give me thine heart." If we give our hearts to God, and he is permitted to cleanse them, and purify them, so that our thoughts and imaginations and purposes are right, our lives will take care of themselves. Christ compares the heart to a fountain ; he says that sweet water will never come from a bitter fountain. If our hearts are bitter our words and our deeds will be bitter. You remember how it was when the Israelites came to the bitter waters of Marah ; God directed Moses to take the branches of a tree and cast into the waters, and they were sweetened. So God sweetens the waters of our lives by making our hearts pure and wholesome.

We can understand now what David meant when he said, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." If the heart is clean, and the spirit is right, good words and pure deeds will follow.

We can understand from this what Jesus

meant when he talked to Nicodemus at night and said to him, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." He was but saying to him that his heart, the very fountain of his life, must be changed and transformed. And, thank God, that is what Jesus is ready to do for us. He does not mock us when he asks us to give him our hearts. We can do it, and if we will decide to do so tonight, he will cleanse them of evil thoughts, and he will make our hearts the fountain of good thoughts, and the nesting-place of earnest and pure deeds.

Perhaps some one says, "How can I give my heart to Christ?" Well, let us take Jesus' word for it. He says if any man will do his will he shall know the truth. That is, if we will do the thing we know is right to do, honestly, and follow it up, our knowledge will increase. Do the first duty at your hand and you shall have light as you go on.

A noted minister tells the story of a man in a New England city who was an infidel. He had forty-five young men associated with him in an infidel club, of which he was president. Some revival meetings were in progress in that city, and one day the pastor of the church where the meetings were being held met this

man on the street, and invited him to come to the meetings.

He said, "I don't know that I ought to go. But I am one who professes to believe in morality, and I think these meetings are having a good moral influence on the community, and so far they have my approbation. I'll tell you what I would like. I would like to see some of my young men going to these meetings. To be honest with you, some of the young men in our society are getting pretty far away from the path they ought to walk in, and I suppose I am somewhat responsible for them. I would like to have them take any sort of a moral tonic that would tone them up."

Said the minister, "Suppose you invite them to come."

"I am willing to ask them," was the reply.

On the next day the minister met him and said, "Did you ask the young men to come to the meetings?"

"Yes, but none of them would go."

"Did you tell them you would come yourself?"

"No, I did not. I told them I would not go. If I should go, people would say there had been a radical change in me, and it would cause a great deal of discussion, and my action would

be misunderstood. I am sure I ought not to go."

The minister said, "I will tell you what I will do. If you will see your young men, and tell them you are going to the meeting, and then let me know how many are coming with you, I will reserve a block of seats for you, and when you come and take them I will tell the people that you have come to the meetings not because you have ceased to be an infidel, but because you think this is a good, moral movement, and in that way you are willing to patronize it."

The infidel said, "If you will do that, I will come."

He came, and twenty-six of his young men were with him. They sat down in a block of reserved seats, and, of course, the people all looked at them, and the minister rose up and made the statement as he said he would. The meeting went on, and five of those young men were converted that night; and the person who seemed happiest over it was this infidel leader. He knew nothing that would keep them from their sinful ways, and the weight of responsibility was beginning to press upon him very seriously. The next night the young men were there again, and some others with

them, and several others decided for Christ. As the days went by, the man most interested in getting the young men to rise and confess Christ was this infidel. He did not have to worry any more about the young men going to saloons and gambling hells and other evil places. He began to be very much relieved, and he seemed very happy when one after another took a stand for Christ.

The last night of the meetings came ; the people had gone out, and the pastor and one of his church workers were at the front of the church, when this man came up and said to the pastor, "I have been so busy for the last two weeks that I have not had time to take stock of my thoughts at all, and I hardly know where I stand. But if you will see me to-morrow morning at eleven o'clock I will come to your house, and have a conversation with you, to see whether there is any way by which I can renounce my infidelity and become a Christian."

The men both smiled, and the agnostic saw what the smile meant, and he said, "You do not think that I am a Christian, do you?"

And the minister said, "If you will go on as you are doing now, you will be one of the best Christians on earth."

His doubts all disappeared that night, and the next time he had an opportunity he stood up in the congregation to confess Christ. He gathered his young men into the Sunday-school, and became the teacher of a large Bible class. You see, this man's heart began to be changed by divine grace the moment he felt his personal responsibility toward those young men, and sought to do the duty next to him in order to save them. He did not see the end from the beginning, but Christ led him, step by step.

There is one thing you know is right for you to do to-night, and that is to confess Jesus Christ. You know that is right because Christ asks it of you in the most tender and earnest way. Take that first step toward the new heart and the new life, now !

GOD'S COVERING FOR SIN.

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.”—*Psalm xxxii. 2.*

MAN cannot cover his own sin. Solomon declares that “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper.” And David in giving us his experience in that matter assures us that when he tried to cover up his sin and hide it, it brought him into the deepest anguish and sorrow. Some of the most tragic stories of mankind are those connected with men and women who have tried to hide away their sins, and in so doing have only hastened their uncovering. But what man cannot do God can do. The difference between man’s hiding and God’s is that man tries to cover up the sin and keep it; God blots the sin out and purges it from the heart and soul, and causes the man to have a new purpose, gives him indeed a new heart. God covers sin with forgiveness and abolishes it.

The next verse shows how clearly David understood this. Speaking farther about this man whose sin is covered he says, “Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not in-

iquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." God never covers up a man's sin to leave his heart full of cunning and guile and craftiness to go on in his sin; but when God covers a transgression by forgiveness, and blots out a sin with the divine blotting-pad of his infinite mercy and grace, he leaves the heart changed and cleansed, having no guile, and a spirit which has no purpose of iniquity in it. God never imputes iniquity where there is no evil motive. If we give up our hearts to Christ to do his will, he leads us day by day, and we live in such peace and fellowship with God that we are conscious that our purposes and motives and deeds are pleasing to him.

We have pointed out here the only way to get rid of sin. There is no way that a man can get rid of his transgressions except through pardon, and pardon can only come from the God whose laws we have broken and whose love we have disregarded. God can pardon our transgressions and still uphold his law if we will accept Jesus Christ as our Savior. Christ came and suffered in our stead; he took our place, and if we will accept him God will forgive us not because we are able to make it right—for we never shall be able to do that—but because of Christ having suffered for us; if we will accept

his salvation, God will pardon our transgressions. Mr. Moody used to illustrate this by a story of a French war :

In the time of the great Napoleon, in one of the conscriptions during one of his many wars, a man was balloted as a conscript who did not want to go ; but he had a friend who wanted to go in his name, and this friend was sent off to the war in his stead. By and by a battle came in which he was killed, and they buried him on the battlefield. Some time after the Emperor wanted more men, and by some mistake the first man was balloted the second time. They went to take him, but he remonstrated.

“ You cannot take me,” he said.

“ Why not ? ” they asked.

“ I am dead,” was his reply.

“ You are not dead ; you are alive and well.”

“ But I am dead,” he insisted.

“ Why, man, you are mad ! This is peculiar ; where did you die ? ”

“ At the battle of —, and you left me buried on the field.”

“ You talk like a madman ! ” they cried ; but the man stuck to his point that he had been dead and buried several months.

“ You look up your records,” he said, “ and see if it is not so.”

They looked and found that he was right. They found the man's name entered as drafted, sent to the war, and marked off as killed.

"Look here," they said, "you didn't die; you must have got some one to go for you; it must have been your substitute."

"I know that," he said; "he died in my stead. You cannot touch me. I go free. The law has no claim against me."

The authorities would not recognize this doctrine of substitution, and the case was carried to the Emperor. But he said that the man was right; that he was dead and buried in the eyes of the law; and that France had no claim against him. But in order to get that freedom this man had to accept his friend's substitution, and that is just what you must do. Christ came and died in your stead. The apostle says that "He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." And again it is declared that "He tasted death for every man." But we must accept him, and until we do accept his mediation in our behalf, we make his death and sufferings of no effect for us.

I wish I could make you feel how simple and straightforward are God's dealings with us, and that if you will come to God to-night with

the simplicity of a child, and accept forgiveness in Christ's name, your sin may be blotted out forever.

I was reading the other day of a little girl named Nellie, who had just recovered from a serious illness. One morning she said to her mother: "Mamma, I prayed last night."

"Did you, dear? Don't you always pray?"

"Oh, yes; but I prayed a real prayer last night. I don't think I ever prayed a real prayer before. I lay awake a long time. I thought what a naughty girl I had been so often. I tried to reckon up all the bad things I had done; there seemed to be lots of them, and I tried to remember what I did in one week, but there seemed to be such a heap; then I knew that I had not remembered them all. And I thought, What if Jesus had come to me when I was ill? Then I thought about Jesus coming to die for bad people, and that he delights to forgive them.

"So I got out of bed and tried to tell Jesus how bad I was; and I asked him to think over the sins that I could not remember. Then I waited to give him time to think of them; and when I thought he had remembered them all I asked him to forgive them. And I am sure he did, mamma, because he said he would.

“Then I felt so happy, and I got into bed and did not feel a bit afraid of God any more.”

Could there be a more striking illustration of our text, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered”? You may lose your fear of God, your trouble about your sin, in the same way, this very hour.

One of the comforting things about God's way of covering up sin is that it will put you in a new attitude toward the sad results of your sins in the past. Perhaps you say, “If I had only come to God a year ago, or ten years ago, before my sins had brought upon me so much trouble and anguish, and had caused so much sorrow to others, it would have been worth while; but it is too late now.” O my brother, if you will repent of your sins and come to God in faith, nothing has ever surprised you so much as you will be astonished at God's goodness and mercy in brightening up your whole life!

Rev. Ford C. Ottman tells how he once went to help a friend who was holding a series of meetings in a large city. Shortly after his arrival at the hotel, a bell-boy brought up to his room the card of a reporter from one of the daily papers. He told him to show the gentleman up.

He came in, was kindly received, and had all his questions answered.

When he rose to go, Mr. Ottman said to him, "Since you have interviewed me, would you have any objection to my interviewing you?"

"Oh, not in the least," he replied.

"Well," said the minister, "take a seat."

He sat down, and the preacher asked him, "Are you a Christian?"

"No," said he, "I am not a Christian; I am a reporter."

"Being a reporter, would there be any inconsistency in your being a Christian as well?"

"It would be quite impossible for me to be a Christian."

"Why impossible?"

"Well," said he, "for the simple reason that the man who is compelled to do the work I do can't be a Christian."

They continued the conversation for a while, when Mr. Ottman finally said to him: "You know that we are here to preach the Gospel; you are the first man I have met and you are unsaved. I should very much like to see you saved, and God has a much deeper interest in it than I have. As a reporter you could do much good; it may be that sometime dur-

ing the meetings God will have a message for you. I trust that you will think seriously about it."

He promised that he would.

For some days the minister saw nothing more of the man, but one night he came to his room; it was nearly eleven o'clock; he appeared to be in deep distress. He said, "I have come to tell you something about myself."

It was a sad story. He had deserted his wife and children, who were living in a distant city. For years he had been living in sin, but now, under the discipline of the Spirit of God, he was utterly wretched. It was long after midnight when they knelt together, and the reporter gave his heart to God.

A few nights later, when the preacher left the city on a midnight train, this reporter was the last to shake his hand and say good-by.

Sometime afterward, Mr. Ottman received from him a letter in which he said: "Perhaps you would like to know what has occurred. Well, Satan has stood out in the cold for a long time. Altho he has knocked many a time, he has found the way barred. I thank God that when the stone was rolled away it was too heavy to roll back. I have sent for my dear ones, and to-night, as I write this, they are

about me in a cozy home of our own, our castle and God's.

"I wish I were an artist that I could draw you a picture of a home just rebuilt from the ashes of an unholy past, and held together by the bond of God's merciful love. O my friend, it is glorious! I would that you were here to see us as we are. To-morrow is Christmas, and my tots will be denied the pleasure of even a single present, for I have not a cent except for the bare necessities of the table. However, they love me so fondly that they say if I will stay at home on my half holiday they will be satisfied. Thus we are happy, for my dear wife says she is satisfied with just my old-time love."

So you see that God in covering up that man's sins was able to cover up to a far greater extent than the man himself could have dreamed the sad results of his sins. I bring you this sweet and beautiful message to-night.

If you will accept the dying love and sufferings of Jesus Christ in your behalf, God is able and willing to forgive your transgressions and cover up your sins forever out of sight. Could I bring you a more cheering message?

HUNGER THE BEST SAUCE.

“I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.”—*Psalm lxxxi. 10.*

THIS is one of the Psalms of Asaph. It is a call to worship, a call to new consecration to God in consideration of his mercies to this people. The people are called upon to remember that it was God who delivered their shoulders from the burden of slavery and who, in many a strange and trying place, had interfered in their behalf. And they are assured that all they need in order to receive a great blessing is a good appetite to appreciate the mercies of God. Hunger is always the best sauce. The best viands ever cooked for a prince's table are wasted unless those that come to the feast have a desire for food. Many a man has found a crust of bread in the desert or on the mountains a richer dainty than the most delicious culinary combinations of some city *chef*. In one case he was hungry and in the other he was not.

There is no limit to God's mercy and love when we are willing to receive. This is an age of great wealth, of immense riches, but there are no riches like the mercies of God. Henry Ward Beecher says that once when he was in the White Mountains in New Hampshire he asked a man who lived there, "What do you call riches up here?" The reply was, "A farmer who is not in debt, and has five thousand dollars at interest, is called rich." At Concord, he asked, "What is being rich, in this community?" "Well, if a man is not in debt, and has fifty to seventy-five thousand dollars, he is considered passing well off." He came down to New York and asked, "What is it to be rich here?" "Ah, it would be very difficult to tell." "Does having ten thousand dollars make a man rich?" "No." "Twenty thousand?" "No." "Fifty thousand?" "No." "A hundred thousand?" "No." "Two or three hundred thousand?" "No." "A million?" "Yes, a man begins to be considered rich when he gets up to the millions." But it takes more now than it did in Mr. Beecher's day in New York to be called rich. The papers have been discussing for months the disinheriting of a poor young man who has received only six millions from his father's vast estate. You see there are dif-

ferent degrees of being rich. But, as Mr. Beecher says, when you rise from all inferior things, and God talks about being rich — God, that out of the seed bag of the universe threw out worlds for shining seeds, that dwells in eternity, that is Father of all things that are, far beyond the sweep of the mind-glass — when he says he is rich, how rich he must be! And when he says he is rich in mercy, oh, what an affluence, oh, what a power, oh, what a grandeur there is in that! How clearly Paul sets forth his conception of the abundance of God's mercy and power to help and save us when he says in his letter to the Ephesians, "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead, . . . hath quickened us together with Christ, . . . and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."

Now it is this God who is rich in mercy and has abundance of blessings in his hands — blessing beyond all our power to conceive — it is this

God who says to us, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

The text to-night ought to take out of your thought entirely the excuse that you are not fit to become a Christian and that you are afraid you wouldn't hold out if you came. What fitness for his dinner does a hungry man need? There are only two things in the world: one is an invitation to the table and the other is hunger, and if he have both, and the dinner is good and abundant, then there is nothing to keep him from satisfaction, unless he is foolish enough to stay away, refuse his invitation, and in spite of his hunger starve in the presence of the feast. Put out of your heart forever that you must be fit to come. We sing sometimes, "All the fitness he requireth is to feel your need of him." And that states the case exactly.

I read to you for the evening lesson that very remarkable story that is told in Matthew's Gospel, of the woman down in the land of Tyre and Sidon, who followed after Jesus and his disciples, begging that her little girl who was grievously tormented by a devil might be healed. Mark Guy Pearse, commenting on this story, well says that this woman had everything against her. If ever there was a woman who could have made an excuse that she was

unfit to come, it was this poor woman. But she was not hunting for excuses, but for divine help; her mother-love for her little girl drove her forward, and made her deaf to all rebuke and hardened her against all opposition. She did not care what difficulties she had to overcome, if only her little girl was saved from this demon tyranny that possessed her. The haughty Jews about her counted her as a poor heathen woman, and hissed out "dog" as they passed her in the street. What hope had she of gaining any favor of the Son of David?

I don't suppose this woman knew very much about Jesus. I suppose she knew nothing about the prophecies concerning him. All she knew was some rumors which had come to her that he had a kind heart and that he was able to dispossess those who were tormented with devils. Hearing that he was passing by, she left her afflicted little daughter with a neighbor and hurried out to seek Jesus, saying in her heart, "I will just ask him to help me."

"He will look upon you as a heathen and altogether beneath his notice," somebody said — probably her husband.

"Well, I will just tell him what trouble we are in, and how the poor little thing is tormented; and if he is so kind and gracious as

they say, I am sure he will pity and help me. I shall not lose anything by asking, anyhow ; it will not make her any worse. I will go and ask him."

And so, taking courage of her mother-love and having nothing to plead except her great need, she went out to find Christ.

O my friend, I wish you would act on that logic to-night ; why do you not say within yourself, "If he forgives the sins of others, if he makes their burdens light and their hearts happy, I think he will have mercy on me. I will ask him all the more to pity me and bless me because I am so weak and helpless." If you will do that to-night, you have God's promise here in the text : "I am the Lord thy God : open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

In order to encourage yourself, take up the story of that poor woman again. She came to the place where Christ and his disciples were and found the door shut against her. But she felt she could not go back to that sick child without help, and so she patiently waited and watched until after a while some one opened the door, and like a flash she slipped through into the room, and falling down on her face before Christ cried out, with all her heart in her voice, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of

David ; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." Instantly the mind of Jesus took the measure of her unconquerable, resistless love ; and, delighting in it, he determined to draw out its fullness. He answered her not a word ; but, rising, went forth from the house with his disciples. It was strange. Had she not heard that he was all tenderness and pity ? Never a word ! And perhaps that very Face turned from her, lest she should perceive the love that the lips seemed to deny. Like Naaman who went to the prophet to be healed of his leprosy, she might well have said, " I thought he would receive me very differently from this." But whatever he meant, there was one thing she could do, and she would — she could cry, " Lord, help me !" So she followed him with breaking heart, crying and entreating.

" Send her away," said the disciples. " She crieth after us." But Jesus was teaching these men the great lesson that God's love is not for a single class, but for every poor sinner that needs it and is willing to receive it. To bring this out clearly Christ seems at first to take the other side of the question. He stopped, so that the woman could come close up to him, and then said, " I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

The poor woman had no answer to make to that; she could not argue with him, she had only one plea, the plea of the hungry little robin for the worm his mother brings him, the plea of an open mouth of need, and so she continued to cry, "Lord, help me!"

Then Jesus spoke words for which Mr. Pearse well says "we need a phonograph Bible." Surely the tones must have taken all the seeming harshness from the words. Looking into the depths of that great love, for a moment Jesus held the gift behind his back in order to draw forth the eagerness of this woman's desire that his disciples who were looking on might measure its fullness. He said, "It is not meet to take away the bread from the children and to give it to the little dogs." Instantly her eyes flashed triumphantly. She felt that the case was won. "Of course not, Lord, because the little dogs pick up the crumbs that fall from their master's table."

The woman's reply was more perfect than our version represents. The new version gives the word "for" instead of "yet." Use that word and you see that the woman agrees perfectly with what Christ says. In substance her reply was: "That is precisely it, Lord; I, alas! am not one of thy children. I cannot come in

amongst thy favored disciples. I wish indeed I were. I am not worthy to sit at thy table and to break bread with thee. But, my Lord, I am the little dog creeping in under thy table and looking up into thy face and expecting thee to let fall a crumb."

And as she answered him thus that anxious mother knelt at his feet and looked up at him, her eyes shining through her tears; her entreaty passing as she spoke now with assured confidence. Then as Jesus bent and looked down upon her, the love that seemed held back for a little while swept all barriers away. It shone in his face and glistened in his eyes, and rang in the words, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." You see it was a blank check which Jesus Christ gave to this woman. "Whatever you will," he says, "you can have. Take it." And that is just what God offers you in this text. Whatever you want enough, you can have if it is good enough for God to give. Christ said to the woman, "Take what thou wilt"; God says to you, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

But don't fail to notice the result in the case of the story we have been following. Scarcely staying to thank Christ, so eager was this poor woman about her little girl that she ran all the

way home,—and “found the devil gone out.” Oh, what a glorious discovery that was for that trembling, anxious mother! Jesus Christ was manifested in this world to destroy the works of the devil. When he is admitted he drives the devil out of the home, and out of the heart, and there is great peace.

Now do not for a moment lose the special message which I bring you to-night. The only special fitness that you require in order that you may be forgiven and saved is to feel your need of him. And the moment you say, “I am not fit,” that shows you do feel the need of the divine blessings which Christ can bestow. Again, when you say, “I would begin to be a Christian at once, but I am so weak, and I make so many resolutions and break them, that I am afraid I could not hold out, and would only make a failure of it”—when you say that, it shows that you do feel your need of Jesus Christ. When a man knows he is not living the right kind of a life, and confesses that he is afraid to profess anything better for fear he could not live up to it, it is a confession of his need of Jesus. Now the conditions for your salvation to-night are all met except one, which is in your hands, and you can supply the omission at once. The feast is all ready; Christ pre-

pared that long ago. The wedding garment is waiting for you ; Christ has promised that if you will come to him he will clothe you with a new heart, and a righteous purpose, and make you fit to sit at his table. There is just one thing lacking, and that is for you to accept the invitation. Nothing could be more gracious than the invitation. The invitation reads, "Whosoever will may come"; "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"; "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"; "Come, for all things are now ready" !

THE STORY OF KIBROTH-HATTA AVAH.

“They were not estranged from their lust. But while their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel. For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works.”—*Psalms* lxxviii. 30-32.

THIS is a reference to an old story that you may find away back in the book of Numbers. While the Bible is made up of a great many books it is after all but one Book. There is a thread of continuity which runs through it all. This story concerns the children of Israel during their wanderings in the wilderness. They were dissatisfied with the heavenly manna and wanted meat to eat. The Lord gave them quails in abundance, but they were still dissatisfied and wanted more. They did not eat the quails with prudence, but they still murmured against God, and gave themselves to gluttony. They seemed to have been disposed to regard the pleasures of the appetite as of more importance than getting rapidly on the road toward the Promised Land. Canaan seemed far away

and the hunger of the stomach was close at hand. They said, "The grapes and the pomegranates and the old corn of Canaan are no doubt very nice, but they are a long way off, and our hunger is here, and we like plenty of meat."

The result of this gormandizing was that an epidemic came among them and killed off a large number, among whom were some of the most promising men in Israel. So severe was the sickness in this place and so fatal was the disease, that the camp became a great burying ground. And when they moved away from the spot they called the name of it Kibroth-Hattaavah, or, in more modern language, "the graves of lust."

Now it is very important to notice that what these people were lusting after and desiring so anxiously was all right in itself, but all wrong when it caused them to rebel against God and to seek it to the exclusion of things very much more important. It is not required that we desire things that are evil in themselves in order that evil may come to us ; but when we give ourselves to the acquirement of temporary things with a devotion which excludes or interferes with the doing of our duty to God, and the development of our immortal nature, then

it may come to be as deadly a sin as the yielding to the greatest vices. Scientific men often find living creatures in the heart of stones, and in the center of old trees. These living beings were created for the open air, they need the atmosphere and the sunshine, and were made to live on the surface of the earth. Some of them were made to run with rapidity, and some to mount aloft on the wing ; but in some way they have allowed themselves to be engulfed and entombed. It may have come about suddenly or gradually, but at last the wood and stone held them in their grave. It would have been easy to have broken away at first if they had known their danger, but afterwards it became too late, and finally their life was shut out and they were forever hedged in from the glorious outer life which they had known, and for which they were created. Something like this often happens to the spiritual nature. Young men or women having no intention of doing wrong, and fully desiring to shun the vices and dissipations of life, but failing to give themselves positively in earnest devotion to God and their duty, have their better natures engulfed by the forces of worldliness and the influence of temporary pleasures and self-indulgences, and often are overwhelmed and de-

stroyed without ever becoming really alarmed at their danger until they are lost.

Take the case of that wealthy young nobleman, a man of the most beautiful and upright character, who came to Jesus. According to the standards of the Jews he lived a model life. He could say with an honest heart that he had kept all the commandments of the law to the very letter. His life was so lovely that Jesus, looking at him, loved him. He came to Christ with the inquiry, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Jesus loved him and sought to save him. He loved him because he was such a promising young man. Probably in all the life of Jesus on earth he never met any man so completely correct in his outward life as this young man. And yet he saw one dangerous place in his nature; he saw in him one rotten spot which if it were not cleansed and healed would as certainly bring him to ruin as would the sins of a drunkard or a debauchee. The weak spot was his love for his money and his pleasure in the ease and luxury which his money brought him. Christ went straight to that spot at once. With a directness that was equal to a sword hunting the heart of a foe, he said, "Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have

treasure in heaven ; and come and follow me." And the young man went away sorrowful ; he went away with a cloud on his brow, for he had great possessions and his heart was set on them. You see his love for these temporary things made it impossible for him to live the highest and noblest life. And if he went on cherishing them to the exclusion of Christ and his duty, when he died, though he may have been buried with great pomp and splendor, with eulogies about his respectable character, he was as certainly buried in a grave of lust as though he had been a sinner of the outbreaking and shameful sort.

Now it may be that some of you to whom I am speaking have rather congratulated yourselves that you are not sinners in the ways that are usually thought of in connection with evil doing. And so you turn away from the earnest preaching of God's Word as though the heart-searching appeals of the pulpit were not intended for you. If so, the message which I bring you to-night you should certainly not repel, for it is a message to you.

You remember the story I read in our Scripture lesson, about Levi, or Matthew as he is usually called. Matthew, so far as we know, was not an outbreaking sinner. He had a

good house and belonged to a good family. He was unpopular among the Jews because he had accepted office under the Roman government. But, after all, so far as we know, Matthew was a very fair representative of that class which goes quietly along living very respectable and moral lives and yet neglecting to become openly and positively Christian. Christ came along one day, stepped over to see him, and had a conversation with him at his place of business. We don't know how much conversation he had, but we do know that at the end of their talk Jesus said to Matthew, "Follow me," and Matthew turned over his business into other hands and got up and left all and followed Christ. From that hour he ceased to be known peculiarly as Levi, the tax-gatherer, and was afterwards known while he lived on earth, and since, as Matthew, the friend of Jesus Christ. He became one of the biographers of Jesus. Matthew just turned over a new leaf and followed after Jesus. The next thing we read about him is that he made a great dinner to Jesus. He wanted to let all his friends and acquaintances know that he had become an open disciple of Jesus Christ.

Now that is God's call to you. It is not enough for a man to say, "I am not doing any

harm." A colorless, negative life like that is not sufficient. Manhood is too great, and life is too important, to be juggled with in that way. We must do good with all our hearts. We are God's children and we must not give ourselves over to even a negative service of evil. We must not take all the good things that God gives us and fail to give him any sincere worship or love.

None of us can afford to leave out of this calculation the effect of our influence on others. We ought to so live that if others follow our example they will go in the safe path. And the power of personal influence is so great that no man or woman or child who fails to give Jesus Christ open and avowed support, to witness to him as the Savior, knows who is thereby kept from coming to the side of Jesus.

An earnest Christian worker relates this story : Josie was only a girl in her early teens, when she was persuaded to come into a Sunday-school and join the class of a faithful teacher. A few months after this, in a series of revival meetings, Josie's heart was touched, and she seemed eager to begin a Christian life.

"But," asked she, "do you think it will be of any use for me to try and be a Christian in such a home as mine?"

The answer was not far to seek for one who knows the riches of His grace. The teacher assured the young girl that God never asked us to do impossibilities, and that he would supply all the needed strength if she would only do her duty. She told her that Christ would not leave her to walk alone, but would be with her to comfort and help in every time of need ; and encouraged her to believe that possibly Christ would make her a torch for himself in her unbelieving home and help her to win her family to him.

The little girl was finally persuaded to take the teacher's advice, and made a public confession of Jesus as her Savior and became a member of the church. The utmost faithfulness characterized her attendance on the church, and she was in every way a most devoted Christian.

Her family were none of them Christians, and there she met with only sneers and opposition. This was very hard to bear, but Christ faithfully kept his promises with her, and she lived conscious of the peace of God in her heart.

And now comes the results of her Christian faithfulness. Some months passed away, another series of revival meetings was in progress in that church, when, one Sunday evening, as

the preacher was about to begin his sermon, he saw the door open at the left-hand side-aisle, and, to the surprise of all, Josie's mother walked in by her side. They walked half way down the aisle, taking a seat together. The little girl's torch had shone so clearly and faithfully through all the trying months that it had thrown the light of Christ into her mother's heart. All seemed to have been understood between them before coming to church; as soon as the invitation was given the girl took her mother's arm, and led her to the altar, where she gave her heart to Christ and became an earnest Christian.

I doubt if there is one here to-night who would not win, very soon, some other one to Jesus if you would only give yourself to him in earnest love.

A LION AND A BEAR AS STEPPING STONES TO A GIANT.

“The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.”—1 *Samuel* xvii. 37.

THERE were giants in those days, and the chiefest of them all defied the armies of Israel. How hard it is to get the picture into our minds! In that old day, before there were cannon, or guns of any sort, men met each other face to face with sword and spear, with stone and club; or with the clutch and struggle of arms and strangling fingers fought out their battles. The armies lay over against each other for forty days, and every day there was a most dramatic and exciting occurrence in which Goliath, the giant, was the chief actor, and the interested armies on both sides were the audience. Goliath was a descendant of that race of giants, the sons of Anak, who kept their ground in Joshua's time. Physically speaking he was certainly a man worth seeing; he was over eleven feet high, and his armor, made of brass plates laid over one another like the scales

of a fish, was of vast weight. His weapons of war were naturally in proportion to his size; his spear was like a weaver's beam. Not considering himself in need of any shield, he let his squire carry that in front of him as a matter of state. Every day this man strode out, towering aloft in his mighty strength, and shouting to the armies of Israel: "Am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us." And after making this announcement he would close the scene by declaring, "I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together." And every day there was the same result. In the army of Israel, from the king down to the last hanger-on in camp, all were frightened out of their wits. The enormous size of the man, his dash and spirit, the utter impossibility of sending anybody to fight him, nonplussed and baffled them completely. And day after day this went on, until we can well believe that after forty days of it the army of Saul was in a desperate state of mind.

Then it was that David came over from the

hills of Bethlehem, a shepherd lad with a bag of parched corn and ten cheeses, and a little money in his pocket to take his brothers' garments out of pawn if they had been in hard luck. Anybody meeting that young man with his ruddy cheeks and sun-burned face and homely little country outfit would not have supposed there was much hope for the army of Israel there. But appearances are often deceitful. David came up to the army just as the play of Goliath was coming on the stage for the fortieth time, and this young poet-shepherd of Bethlehem, having all a poet's dreams and ideals about the army of the Lord and the power that ought to belong to those who represent God, was shocked when he heard the blasphemy of the giant as he defied the armies of the living God. But David was still more shocked to see the cowardice of the people of Israel. To his astonishment not only was no one willing to go out and fight Goliath, but their hearts melted like water at the sight of him, and they ran trembling and cowering on his appearance.

David asked what was the matter, and some one answered, "Have ye seen this man that is come up? Surely to defy Israel is he come up: and it shall be, that the man who killeth him,

the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel." And David replied in astonishment, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

Just then Eliab, David's elder brother, with all the young soldier's contempt for the youngster that is left at home to herd sheep while he himself goes to battle, came up, and hearing David's proud, brave speech, vented his fear of Goliath in angry words to David. Turning with flushed face and excited tones he said, "Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle."

If David had wanted to be sharp with him he might easily have taken the wind out of his sails by remarking on the fact that there did not seem to be any particular chance for a battle just then, unless Saul's soldiers came to have more pluck and courage. But David mildly replied, "What have I now done? Is there not a cause?" And he turned away to talk to somebody else about Goliath. The man who has a big thought in his mind and a great

purpose in his heart can afford to let the curs bark without stopping to kick them.

But it is an evidence of the excitable condition that was in the army that some of the soldiers overhearing the shepherd boy's talk thought it important enough to go and tell the king about it; and so, ere long, David was ushered into the presence of Saul. By the time David came before the king he had made up his mind what he would do. What a picture it would make for a great artist: The young David in his shepherd toggery standing before King Saul, and saying with all the assurance imaginable, as tho he were going out to attack a prairie chicken or a rabbit, "Let no man's heart fail because of him: thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine."

Now Saul with all his faults was a big man, and he liked pluck, but he took no stock in David's being able to back up his proposition, and so with a look, I imagine, of mingled admiration and pity, in which combination pity was in the majority, he said to David, "Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth."

Then David squares himself about to tell his story. "Thy servant," he says, "kept his

father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock ; and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth : and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear ; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God." Then David sums up his faith from these experiences, and with flashing eyes exclaims, "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine."

And as Saul listened to the boy the mighty soul of the young man towered aloft in the king's presence ; something of the majesty of his sublime faith in God fascinated the king and communicated itself to him. And solemnly Saul said to David, "Go, and the Lord be with thee."

That is the spirit in which David went to his victory over Goliath. I have recounted the story at length because I think that there is comparatively little study of this part of the story of David's victory over the giant, while to my mind it is the most important of all.

Our theme is in this background to that pic-

ture which has a world-wide canvas, where David slew the giant of Gath with the smooth stone he had taken from the brook. Our message is that the preliminary battles of life are all-important; that it is a very rare thing indeed that any man or woman ever comes to achieve great victories for God and humanity who has not been winning skirmishes for the Lord throughout the days of youth. What David did that day in the valley of Elah was determined that other day on the hills of Bethlehem when the bear came and seized his lamb. If David had run then and left the lamb to its fate, we should probably have never heard from him again. But he would not run; the true shepherd's instinct was in him. A pious boy, brought up to trust God, he believed that God would help him to do his duty and defend his flock. And with a daring, self-abandoning courage he ran in and attacked the bear. So fierce was the onslaught that the bear rose up to fight this new enemy, and I have no doubt but that as he rose on his haunches he expected to make mince-meat of that shepherd lad in short meter. But ere he had time to carry into execution his brutal instinct, David's sharp knife was in his heart.

Naturally this gave David courage and faith,

and so we are not astonished that when, a little while after, a lion came and seized a lamb, David gave chase to him. If he had fled from the bear, he would have fled from the lion. But having killed the bear, we can now believe he is ready to fight the lion. A lion is a more terrible foe than a bear; but he went down before David's dash, and courage, and skill. Now in all this David was reverent; he sincerely felt that it was not his own strength or his own skill that gave him the victory in these cases, but that it was God who gave him deliverance. This is important. For you can easily see that tho this shepherd lad, born among the hills, cunning in the habits of wild beasts, had managed to slay a bear and a lion, it would have given him no particular confidence in this fight against the giant of Gath if he had been trusting entirely in himself. But that is not the way David puts it; he bases his confidence entirely on other grounds. He says, "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." So, you see, it is from the back of the bear and the lion, step by step, that David mounts to that plane of courage and faith which makes him willing to go out and face the mighty giant.

Now in all this I wish you clearly to see that we have nothing unusual so far as the law of God's dealing with David is concerned. We have revealed, rather, in this picturesque story of David, a law of God that is as wide as humanity. The illustrations are abundant. Daniel got the strength to go down in the lions' den, and take the biggest of them all for his pillow, away back yonder in those boyish days when he refused the king's wines and meat. If he had lost that first battle, he never would have won the others that glorified his career. Joseph gained the strength and wisdom and steady nerve to rule over Egypt, and become the mightiest statesman of his time, when, in Poti-phar's palace, he retained his manhood at the loss of his liberty and the threat of his life. Moses laid the foundations for the mighty strength which stood him in such good stead throughout the forty years of wandering in the wilderness, in that first choice in the schools of Egypt, when he chose rather to endure persecution than to be the wealthy and luxurious tool of tyrants.

But we do not need to go back into the past to seek for illustrations ; all the modern world is full of them. Take the case of Dwight L. Moody. A gentleman in Chicago tells how in

those days before the world knew of the great possibilities that were in him, he found Moody in a Chicago garret. It was the miserable home of a poor colored woman in whose anxious heart solicitude concerning the future of her little child mingled with her sensations of pain and with her solemn thoughts as she was going down into "the valley and shadow of death." Moody sat in a chair by her death-bed. He had the little black child on one knee, and one arm was about it. The hand of that arm grasped a candle, the feeble rays of which fell on the pages of a well-worn Bible. The other hand held the Holy Book, from whose pages, with tearful eyes and tender tones, he read aloud to the Negro mother the words of everlasting life. The woman's face kindled with hope, while the wondering child gazed into the face of the man whose voice in after years was to speak to tens of thousands of people the glorious Gospel of Christ. It was in such scenes that Moody got his courage and his power.

Somebody asked him once in what theological seminary he was educated. Moody said that it was among the poor children. He remarked that a great many men want to do great things at first, and that was the mistake he made when he started out. He said he

wanted to preach to intelligent people, but he soon found that the people didn't like to hear him. "So," said Moody, "I began with the children. They liked to hear me and I got along very well. I grew right up along with them. But it was years before I could talk profitably to grown-up people. I talked to the children, and it was the preparation I needed. That was my theological seminary."

Now, I hope in all this we are not failing to get the message I want to preach to you this morning,—that we must not despise the day of small things. We must not refuse the opportunity to do good, or to help introduce Jesus Christ, because it seems an insignificant or commonplace chance. In the first place, we are very poor judges of what is small and what is great in God's sight. David the shepherd lad was a very insignificant individual in the mind of Eliab, his elder brother ; but before nightfall every man in the army knew that he was the most important man in the nation.

The story is told of a young bugler in the French army who lay on his narrow bed in the camp hospital mortally wounded. The commander, passing from bed to bed to speak a kind word to each occupant, paused by the little bugler, and laid a cool hand on his fevered

brow. "O General," said the little fellow, "if only I were a man, I might have helped to win the battle yesterday." "Win the battle!" replied the general. "Why, without your aid we should never have won the day; tho your duty seems so simple and so insignificant, I could not have done without you." Let us do what we can. If it is only to blow our bugle of testimony for Jesus in weak and simple words, let us do it with love for Christ, and in faith that the God who nerved the arm and directed the weapon of David will not forget us, but will use our efforts for the glory of God and the salvation of men.

Let us not fail to learn our proper relation to the great opportunities of life. It is for us to be ready to do the duty God points out to us, whether it be great or small, and then we may be sure that he will give us opportunities for service. Mr. Beecher once used this illustration to show how God and man must work together to perform the work that needs to be done in the salvation of men: A ship is stuck on a mud-bank and the tide is going out; it careens over, and there it lies, like many discouraged Christians. They do not need to anchor. The anchor is out, tho. By and by the tide begins to come in, little by little. The

captain calls up the crew, and orders them to hoist in the anchor. It is hoisted in and stowed away. "Trim the sails," is the next command; and that is obeyed. The tide is still coming in, coming in, coming in; and by and by the vessel floats off; and the crew look up with admiration, and say, "What a captain we have! It was the hauling in of the anchor and the trimming of the sails that saved us. The captain gave his orders, they were obeyed, and then she floated." But no, it was not the captain's doings. The Lord God, who swings the stars through the heavens and exerts his power upon the ocean, did it. The captain was ready; that was his part. He foresaw the coming of the tide, and adapted the circumstances of his vessel to meet it.

Brothers and sisters, are you ready for whatever God wants you to do? Our message this morning is both to Christians and to those who are not. Those of us who are Christians should have emphasized on our hearts this morning that it is in the doing of daily duties, in self-denial under commonplace circumstances, in the patience and love developed, it may be in pain and sorrow, that there is brought out in us a courage, and a faith, and a beauty of character that in the great emergency, in the great

opportunity of life, will not fail us, but will stand us in stead for victory.

And to you who are not Christians have I no message? Is not life passing, and all its opportunities and privileges hastening away? Every moment's delay in yielding yourself up to do the will of God is leaving you unfitted for the great work which God is so willing for you to do, and the great victories he so desires you to win. Come to him to-day, and let not another hour be lost in fitting yourself for the noblest manhood and the loftiest womanhood which God has in his thought for you.

THE LOVE STORY OF DAVID AND JONATHAN.

“Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.”—1 *Samuel* xviii. 3, 4.

THAT was a great day for Israel when David came back with the sword of Goliath in one hand and the head of the giant in the other. He had come down to the army in the morning a humble shepherd lad, for altho Samuel had already anointed him king, it was not known abroad; and now, before the day is over, he is the most picturesque, the most famous, hero in all the land. He brings back the bloody trophies of his great victory and stands modestly in the presence of Saul. Saul was not always kingly in his character, but in his physical appearance he looked every inch the king. He stood head and shoulders above ordinary men, and had now for many years been accustomed to govern, and to be ushered into his splendid presence was a thing to remember.

Now Saul had been very much impressed with David from the first, and when he had gone out against Goliath he had said to Abner, the general-in-chief of the army, "Abner, whose son is this youth?" But Abner had shaken his head and replied, "As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell." Then Saul said, "Inquire thou whose son the stripling is." Of course on David's return he was at once brought into the presence of the king. There he stood, the flush of victory on his face, the great bloody sword, tall as he almost, in one hand, and the still bloodier head of Goliath in the other. And Saul said to him, "Whose son art thou, thou young man?"

Joseph Parker aptly says that David might have startled Saul as he was never startled in his life, if he had chosen to do so, in his answer. Suppose David had said to Saul, "Samuel came to my father's house the other day in search of a king. He passed by my brethren one by one; I was sent for at length in the sheepfold, and Samuel anointed me king of Israel. Behold in this bleeding head and captured sword the first sign and pledge of my kingly power!" There would have been excitement that day if that had been the answer, but David had rare wisdom in holding his tongue. It is a great thing

not to tell all you know on all occasions. It is a strange fact that people who tell all they know, usually tell more than they know. It is better never to tell anything unless some good is going to come from it. We have two eyes and two ears and only one tongue, which ought to suggest to a man of even limited imagination that the Lord intended we should hear and see together at least four times as much as we tell. David was wise in keeping silent where it could do no good to speak, and so instead of giving himself the pleasure of making a sensation he held his peace and answered with becoming modesty, "I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite." One delightful result to David was that his modesty, taken with the courage and valor which he had already shown, completed the capture for him of the heart of Jonathan, the eldest son of Saul, and one of the noblest men that ever lived. David never made a better investment than that. Self-pretension and arrogance, and looking out for number one, are often tempting; but after all they are poor shoddy things compared with simple, unaffected helpfulness and manliness.

A pretty little story illustrating this comes from Seattle: Jimmy Brennan, ten years old and son of Police-officer Brennan of Seattle,

was standing on Yesler Way, when a stranger came along. He looked like a man who had just returned from a logging camp.

“Boys,” he said, “where is the Butler hotel?”

“I’ll tell you for a quarter,” said one of Jimmy’s companions.

“I’ll show you where it is for ten cents,” chimed in another.

“Say, I’ll do it for five cents,” remarked a third.

“Mister,” said Jimmy, “I will point out the Butler to you for nothing.”

“You’re my man,” said the rough-looking stranger; and the two went down Yesler Way together, while Jimmy’s companions stayed behind to call him a chump. Jimmy led the stranger to the Butler.

“Come in here,” said the man; and he led the boy into a clothing store. “Give this boy the best suit of clothes in the house,” said the stranger. Jimmy simply opened his mouth. Soon he had on a fine suit.

“Now give him an overcoat,” said the stranger; and Jimmy’s eyes tried to pop out of their sockets. The clerk adorned Jimmy with an overcoat.

“Now a hat,” said the stranger. Jimmy wanted to cry. He thought it was Christmas

time and that he was by the side of a grate fire, reading one of Andersen's fairy tales.

Soon he was arrayed in new hat, new suit, new overcoat. The stranger paid for all. Jimmy started out of the store. He was so bewildered that, if several goblins had put in their appearance, he would have joined them in their fairy-land festivities.

"Just wait a minute," said the stranger. Jimmy waited. If the stranger had said, "Go roll in the dust of the street," Jimmy would have done it.

The stranger went down in his pockets and closed his dealings with Jimmy by giving him a five dollar gold piece and a gold nugget worth as much more. Then Jimmy thanked the stranger and went off to tell his companions about the man to whom he showed the Hotel Butler "for nothing."

David's experience was much the same in its kind; if he had been self-sufficient and arrogant he would have driven Jonathan from him; but instead, by his humility and modesty, coupled with his courage and manliness, he won Jonathan's devoted love. And Jonathan immediately sought to make a covenant with David. There would have been nothing strange if David had sought to make a covenant with

Jonathan ; in such an attempt any of us would have seen simply worldly wisdom. But Jonathan was prince of the realm and heir apparent to the crown, and David only a brave shepherd lad who had suddenly sprung into fame. But Jonathan saw in David something which he loved, and he longed to make David love him as he already loved David, and so he persuaded David to make a covenant of everlasting friendship between them.

Now, altho David was by this time a famous man in the army, his appearance was very shabby and countrified to the young army officers who hung around the court of King Saul, and Jonathan, loving David as he did, could not bear to have anybody point the finger of scorn at him and sneer at his appearance, and so, as an evidence of his great love for him, he stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David. He dressed David throughout in his own garments. He even went to the length of giving him his own sword, and bow, and girdle.

Now it is my purpose this evening to use this beautiful love scene between David and Jonathan as an illustration of the love which Christ offers to us. In the first place, it truly suggests that Christ, the Prince of Heaven, comes seek-

ing a compact with us. It astonishes us to see Jonathan seeking a compact with David the shepherd boy ; but how much more wonderful when Jesus, the Son of God, rich in all the glory of heaven, comes down to earth and suffers hardship, and poverty, and bitterest temptation and trial, and finally dies on the cross for us, that he may be able to make a compact between himself and poor sinners. Ah, what could prompt that ? Surely nothing but love could prompt it. Only sweet, precious love could have made Jonathan do such a wonderful thing as he did to David, and only love, indescribable, deathless love, could have brought Jesus down from heaven to die for us. Christ sees something in men, not in good men only, but in bad men, in man at his worst, that he loves, and that seems to him worth living and dying to save. Some one sings the thought very beautifully : —

“ When the Christ, my Lord, hung dying,
Dying on the shameful tree,
Men in all their madness mocked him ;
Yet no word at all said he.
But when at his side a sinner,
Hanging there in shame to die,
Pleading, sought his loving favor,
Swiftly came love’s glad reply.

“ ‘When thou comest to thy kingdom,
 Lord,’ he cried, ‘remember me.’
 ‘Yea, to-day, with me in glory,’
 Jesus answered, ‘thou shalt be.’
 Was not this most wondrous pity,
 So to bless a dying thief ;
 E’en amid his own deep anguish,
 Thus to give a soul relief ?

“ ‘Tell it in the highest heaven,
 Tell it in the depths below,
 Tell it to the lost and outcast,
 Tell it in the haunts of woe :
 To the very chief of sinners
 Let the blessed tidings go :
 He who asks the Savior’s mercy
 Shall the Savior’s mercy know.’ ”

There is another suggestion that is very precious and comforting, and that is that as Jonathan’s love prompted him to give his own clothes to David, so that his humble friend might look as much the prince as himself, Christ comes offering to clothe us in his own beautiful garments of purity and righteousness. It is the glory of Christians that Christ helps them to become like himself. Christ does not propose to save us in our sins, but to save us from our sins. Our ragged clothing of sin and of evil habit is to be cast off, and we are to be clothed with goodness and gentleness and meek-

ness and love and hope. That is the most glorious thing about Christianity. It is not that a man may be simply saved from sorrow and despair and punishment on account of his sins, but the sinner's nature may be transformed and he may become a prince of God's realm, a holy man. The drunkard may put on sobriety, the gambler may put on honor and integrity, the impure may become wholesome and noble, the low and the vulgar may be lifted up to have high ideals and brave and splendid purposes. And the promise is that this robing of the soul, this beautifying of the character, shall go on until, when we awake in heaven, we shall awake in the likeness of Jesus Christ. Then for the first time we shall see him with perfectly clear eyes, and shall be satisfied, for we shall be like him.

There is one other suggestion here which we find also fulfilled in Christ's treatment of the sinner: Jonathan bestowed upon David, not only his own clothing, but he gave him his own armor and weapons. So Christ equips us with the very weapons with which he battled in this world when he was tempted in all points like as we are and yet came off victorious without sin. Paul declares that our Lord gives us the whole armor of God, and that, thus arrayed,

we are able to withstand all the wiles of the devil. He gives us the girdle of truth, and the breastplate of righteousness ; on our feet he puts shoes made of the preparation of the Gospel of peace ; on the left arm we carry the shield of faith — a wonderful shield that is able to stop every fiery dart of the wicked one. On our brow he sets the helmet of salvation, and in the right hand he puts a sword far more splendid than that which David captured from Goliath,—the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. To all this he adds communion with himself. Day by day we may pray to him, and breathing out our hearts to him we may feel that we have a friend and a brother who will never fail or desert us in any hour of need. I offer you this love of Jesus Christ, with all that it means in purity of heart, in successful career, in glorious happiness, both now and forever. Accept it now and be saved !

“Oh,” but you say, “I have sinned against his love so long he will not hear or heed me now.” That shows you do not know the love of Jesus Christ. No mother ever had a heart so tender as Jesus. A young man was once coming home on the steamer from England to New York and was taken very sick. His friends were alarmed for him and feared he

would not live to reach New York. He was anxious to have a dispatch sent at once from the custom house to his mother, who lived in a New England town, that she might come to take him home. A friend sat down beside him to write the dispatch and said: "What shall I say?"

"Just say, 'I am real sick, mother. Charlie.' Sign it Charlie."

"Well, but shall I not tell your mother to come?"

"Oh, no ; when she hears that I am sick she will come."

Ah, he knew that when the mother learned her boy was sick and needed her, the fastest train would seem too slow to take her to him.

So when the soul gets sick of sin, Christ will come. If you are sick of your sin and will turn from it to-night, Christ will meet you at the mercy-seat and save you.

THE DIVINE USE OF SHAME.

“ Fill their faces with shame ; that they may seek thy name, O Lord.”— *Psalm lxxxiii.* 16.

AT first glance this seems like a hard prayer, but after all, if you study it, you will see it is very much the same thing that we sing in the hymn which has leaped over all sectarian walls and become the universal cry of Christian hearts in which to voice their sense of need:—

“ Nearer, my God, to thee !
Nearer to thee !
E'en tho it be a cross
That raiseth me ;
Still all my song shall be,
Nearer, my God, to thee,
Nearer to thee ! ”

We often sing that hymn carelessly, without really taking in its meaning, but multitudes sing it honestly, and with them it is a prayer to God that he will not cast them aside even tho it takes pruning, and discipline, and the hard whip of defeat and humiliation, to save them to himself.

Multitudes of men and women who have been brought to pure lives, and have lived to be very useful in the world, and have gone home to heaven at last "with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads," were brought to the Lord only through the shame and humiliation which came to them because of their sins.

The dying thief who was crucified with Christ did not find Jesus while he was free, but only came to him after he had been condemned to die a shameful death because of his crimes.

Jacob, when he went out an exile from his father's house because of his own wrongdoing, was met by the Lord at Bethel; and God gave him a great vision showing him the stairway between earth and heaven, with the angels coming and going upon it, and assuring him of his willingness to forgive his sins and be merciful to him and bless him. And the next morning Jacob set up a stone for a pillar and worshiped God, and decided that his life should be in accordance with God's will; but when he got farther away from home, and got into business under new surroundings, he was like a great many young men who have come to Cleveland with high purposes and resolves, and amid the hard, unscrupulous experiences of business life have lost the high ideals which

they brought to the city; so Jacob fell into selfish, mean ways, and it was not until he was on his way back and had camped at Jabbok Ford, and the news came that his brother Esau whom he had wronged was coming to meet him with a small army of rough riders, and his old sin against Esau stared him in the face, that he, shamed and humiliated, plead with God for forgiveness, and really entered upon a new and holy life.

You may see the same lesson in the story of Lot. Lot had had a splendid bringing up in the family of Abraham; he had been trained to be a prayerful and godly man, and had been taught by his uncle, Abraham, both by precept and example, that the first and greatest and most important thing in life was to obey God and please him. But Lot loved money and determined he would get on and be successful, honestly if he could, but by outwitting tricky Sodom if he could succeed in no other way. So Lot pitched his tent on the way to Sodom and entered into business relations with the people of that doomed city. The result of it all was that tho he was finally saved alive, with two of his daughters, it was to remember with a breaking heart his ruined fortunes, his desolate family life, and the failure of every-

thing to which he had set his hand ; and it was only through the shame and humiliation of a complete overthrow that he escaped with his own soul.

I read you over again this evening that old, old story of the Prodigal of whom Jesus tells us, a story which is after all ever new and ever being repeated in the modern life of to-day. It was shame only that brought the Prodigal to his senses. So long as his money lasted, and he had his fast friends about him, he forgot about his father's house. No doubt there were times when his heart was sore and lonesome, and he thought of the good old father waiting at home, and wondered if he were anxious and worrying ; but he drowned all this in drink and revel, and went on until he got to the bottom of his purse. And then, when his money was gone, his fast friends were gone too. They were friends for revenue only, and when he could no longer pay for fine dinners and revels they had no more use for him. That is the way the devil always treats those who serve him. The man who serves the devil most devotedly is turned off with the most shame. And it was the Prodigal's shame that opened his eyes to his folly. Standing there among the swine, hungry enough to eat the husks, he

remembered his father's house, where there was plenty of food and to spare. Then, shamed and humiliated, but at last awake to wisdom, he started on the homeward journey. He does not look so attractive as he goes along with his head down, every now and then sobbing tearfully, as he used to look when he went swaggering down the street in his fine clothes with a jolly crowd of revelers about him ; but he is a great deal wiser man now than he was then, and the prospect for his peace and happiness has infinitely brightened.

Put this down as a central truth, that there is no hope for any man who is sinning against God until he becomes ashamed of his sin. So long as a man is rather proud of his sin or is complacent about it, there is no hope for him. That must have been what Jesus meant when he said to those self-righteous Pharisees who were proud of their own outward morality, but were, nevertheless, in their hearts wickedly sinning against God, that the disgraced publicans and harlots would go into the kingdom of heaven before them. This latter class knew they were sinners, their sins shamed them and hung about their necks like millstones until they longed for freedom, and the very shame because of their sin would drive them to Christ.

I want to call your attention to the fact that this is no hard and cruel law of God which attaches shame to sin. Instead, it is infinitely merciful. The fact that the way of the transgressor is hard, that the sinner's path is full of thorns, that the sting of remorse is full of agony, is one of the surest indications of God's compassion and tenderness, for in that way by his warning and rebuke God seeks to save us from going deeper into sin. It was Peter's shame and humiliation on that night when Jesus was arrested and he had denied his Lord that drove him broken-hearted from the presence of Jesus to cry his heart out in the darkness and seek and obtain forgiveness. There was something in that look which shamed Peter out of his sinfulness. The record says that on Peter's denying his Lord the third time, "the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly." Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, of London, commenting on this scene, says that this is one of the things in these Gospel stories that one cannot explain—the look which Christ gave Peter. There, in the judgment hall, stood the Man of Sorrows,

acquainted with grief, suffering all sorts of indignities ; there, outside, in the distance, sat Peter, warming himself at the fire which the world had built, denying his Lord with oaths and curses. The Master was in the midst of men who were swearing away his life, and stood with the shadow of the cross already upon him ; but when he heard the denial of Peter he turned and looked at him. There was no theology in that look ; but God's heart was in it. There was no resentment in it. The thing that touched the heart of Christ was not the wound that Peter was inflicting upon him, but the harm that Peter was doing himself. He looked upon Peter, and there was heaven's pity in his look ; heaven's love was in it, and God's heart was in it. No man can tell you what that look was like. We only know something of what the look was by the illumination of the Spirit, and by the result which it produced in Peter. "Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said." The look brought conviction of the sin and folly not merely of denying his Lord with oaths and curses, but of ever having boasted of his own stedfastness. What a fool he must have felt himself just then ! But there was something further and deeper and more blessed than that. The look

not only quickened the memory and brought conviction — it brought penitence ; it broke his heart, and he “ went out and wept bitterly.” Ah, can you imagine Peter’s shame that night ? All his pride, all his sense of self-respect, all his self-consciousness of strong manhood, were overwhelmed in a great shame and humiliation that he had sinned against the most loving heart that ever throbbed in tenderness and fidelity to man. And it was that shame that saved him. It was the way the Lord took to bring him back to God. Tho Peter did not know it, when he went out that cold, dark night, sobbing in his sorrow, he was already on his way back to the joy of conscious forgiveness and the blessed peace which came from communion with Jesus.

Now I have called your attention to these numerous illustrations to-night, that God’s message might come home to your hearts. Some of you have been sinning against God, and your sins have already brought you much sorrow and trouble and shame. I beg of you that you do not allow this fact to harden your heart against the Lord, as tho he had been unkind to you in this, for it is a sure indication of his divine love. God could not do a more cruel thing to you than to let you go on in sin and

yet prosper in it, and be happy, and have peace. How soon that would make a perfect hell of this world! No, indeed; you could not have a surer proof that God loves you, and wants to save you, than the trouble and discomfort and humiliation and shame which your sin has brought you.

There are some others who hear me who have not yet got to that place. You have sinned against God, and when I bring it home to you, and you are compelled for the moment to face it, you acknowledge that you are a sinner in his sight. There have been times when you have been ashamed of your sins, but your sins have not yet specially shamed you. Are you going to wait until they do? Or are you going to do the wiser thing, repent of them now, and give your heart to the Lord at once, and escape the pain and misery that Peter knew, but which never came to John? I pray God it may be so!

The best possible thing you can do is not to undertake to turn away from sin piecemeal; that is unworthy of you and unworthy of the Savior. The most radical change you can make is the easiest and the best.

Edward C. Delavan, the well-known philanthropist and successful business man, tells how

his whole life's course was changed. He had been led into bad company and was on the downward course, with other lads. One night it came to him forcibly : " If I continue to visit that house I am ruined." Still, on the ensuing evening he went forth as usual. He paused on the opposite side of the street. Before him stood the house where his companions were assembled. He struggled for a few moments against the temptation. Suddenly the thought came over him, " If I cross the street I am ruined." Instantly he made the decision, and exclaiming at the top of his voice, "*Right about face,*" he turned, and, hastening back to his room, threw himself down on his bed, slept soundly throughout the night, and arose with an approving conscience in the morning. He ever after considered the struggle of that evening as the crisis of his life, and whatever good he accomplished, he traced back to the decision made by him when, resolutely changing his purpose, and suiting the action to the word, he exclaimed, "*Right about face.*"

It is an interesting fact, and one which illustrates how graciously God deals with men who surrender themselves completely to do his will, that Delavan lived to buy the block in which stood that great liquor saloon from which he

turned that night, and directly opposite the spot where he formed that decisive resolution. He tore down the saloon, and erected on the ground occupied by it and other buildings of like character which he demolished a large number of dwellings and stores, and for many years he could from his desk look down upon the very spot where he uttered in his boyhood the laconic but decisive sentence, "*Right about face.*"

Speaking to a friend a while ago he said that of the fifty young men from whom he then separated, leaving them to enjoy the pleasures of that eating, drinking, and gambling establishment, forty-four had already gone to destruction. One, a most promising youth, and heir to great wealth, became so destitute and degraded that he would brush boots at three cents a pair to obtain the means for buying a glass of rum. Some of them came to a most terrible end. One, in a state of intoxication, fell, headforemost, from the pier at Havre, France, and became imbedded in the mud. The receding tide exposed his sad and dishonored remains to the public view. Others came to an end, if less terrible, scarcely less sad. Young man, heed the words, "*Right about face.*"

If every one here this evening who has not

yet come out openly for Christ will heed this appeal, God will bless your decision, and you will not only never regret taking the step, but you will thank God for giving you the courage to take it, not only while you live on earth, but throughout all eternity.

THE GLORY OF MANHOOD.

“What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?”—*Psalm viii. 4.*

IT was a contemplation of the vastness and the beauty and the glory of the universe that caused David to ask this question in wondering awe. David reasons within himself that here is the Great Being who fills the midnight sky with suns and moons and planets and worlds, like shining jewels, and yet cares so much about man, who is physically so insignificant when compared to these creations, that he visits him, and holds communion with him in loving tenderness. It would be inconceivable if man were only an animal; it is not the outward man which can be seen with the eye, but the inward man, the unseen, the spiritual personality, which chooses and decides, which forms purposes and devises schemes to carry them out,—that is the man whom God visits, and whose prosperity is important.

There could be no greater folly than for men or women to treat themselves as tho the physical life, which needs to have clothing of more

or less fashionable cut, and food that may please the palate or nourish the body, were the real man or woman whose comfort is to dictate the decisions of life. The folly is evident when we consider that this outward, physical life is a very fragile and temporary affair, which has no certain lease of existence, and is liable to be pulled down at any time, liable to be snuffed out like a candle, while the inner, spiritual personality is to go on living forever.

One of the keepers in the British Museum once found pinned to a skeleton preserved in that institution a poem entitled, "Lines to a Skeleton." Search was made for the author, but, tho finally a reward of five hundred dollars was advertised, his identity was never discovered. These lines set forth with great clearness the great, essential, and important facts about manhood :—

“ Behold this ruin ! ’Twas a skull
Once, of ethereal spirit full ;
This narrow cell was life’s retreat ;
This space was thought’s mysterious seat.
What beauteous visions filled this spot,
What dreams of pleasure long forgot,—
Nor hope, nor joy, nor love, nor fear,
Has left one trace of record here.

- “ Beneath this moldering canopy
Once shone the bright and busy eye ;
But start not at the dismal void !
If social love that eye employed,
If with no lawless fire it gleamed,
But through the dew of kindness beamed,
That eye shall be forever bright
When stars and sun are sunk in night.
- “ Within this hollow cavern hung
The ready, swift, and tuneful tongue ;
If falsehood’s honey it disdained,
And where it could not praise was chained ;
If bold in virtue’s cause it spoke,
Yet gentle concord never broke,—
This silent tongue shall plead for thee
When time unveils eternity.
- “ Say, did these fingers delve the mine,
Or with its envied rubies shine?
To hew the rock or wear the gem
Avails but little now to them ;
But if the page of truth they sought,
Or comfort to the mourners brought,
These hands a richer meed shall claim
Than all that wait on wealth or fame.
- “ Avails it whether bare or shod
These feet the paths of duty trod?
If from the halls of ease they fled
To seek affliction’s humble shed,
If grandeur’s guilty bribe they spurned,
And home to virtue’s cot returned,—

These feet with angels' wings shall vie,
And tread the portals of the sky."

Our poet teaches, in harmony with God's Word, that the highest characteristic of manhood is the recognition of responsibility to God, and the living in harmony with God and our duty. Dr. Parkhurst says that the first compensation that comes to a man who chooses to accept Jesus Christ as his Savior and King is that it silences the quarrel inside his own heart. A man does not need to know a great deal about himself, or about other people, to be aware that outward circumstances go but a very little way in deciding the questions of the inward quietness and comfort of his own mind. Many people make the mistake of supposing that if they could have certain physical conditions and surroundings which strike their fancy, they would be happy ; a little observation would show them that happiness does not come from these things, and that many people who have the very things which they think would make them happy are miserable ; and, perhaps, are themselves making a catalogue of other surroundings which they fondly imagine would make them happy. The fact is that clothes, and books, and furniture, and money, cannot make men or women happy. Happiness must

come from something altogether deeper and more spiritual than that. The quiet joy and peace in a man's heart can do infinitely more to beautify his circumstances than the most delightful circumstances he can imagine could do to create that quiet joy and peace in his heart. The truth is that no man can have real peace unless there is harmony in his own breast. So long as there is discord inside a man's own nature, so that his passions and desires are at war with his conscience, he cannot have real happiness. But change that man so that in his heart he wants those things his conscience approves, silence the quarrel within himself, and give him peace, and you have a happy man. Many a man carries hell in his heart every day ; he carries it to his business and makes a little taste of hell there for his employees to work in ; he carries it into his home, and all peace and joy flies away ; he lies down with it at night and gets up with it in the morning. On the other hand, there are multitudes of men and women who carry heaven around in their hearts. Whether the day is pleasant or stormy ; whether the body is sick or well ; whether outward circumstances are pleasant or otherwise, there is a sweet communion and peace, a harmony of conscience

and purpose, a peace of God that casteth out all fear from their hearts, which communicates itself in such a gracious influence as to make their coming into the business house or the home a benediction.

As some one has well said, were you shot up into heaven for a few days, and then shot down again, you would find that the life of blessedness both in heaven and in earth is being at one with God. No soul out of harmony with God, whether in the body or out of the body, can be happy in his presence. Heaven is the state in which God's presence is specially manifest. It can be enjoyed only by those who are at home with God. We cannot conceive of a wicked man being happy in the presence of a holy God. A good man may be happy anywhere because he carries happiness with him ; but a bad man is a hell in himself, and never sees any lasting peace. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Heaven consists in the development of the heavenly spirit and the heavenly graces in the heart life. When I ask you to be a Christian I ask you to yield your heart to Christ so that he may take away from it the sense of guilt, may cleanse it from impure and wicked desires, may plant in it the graces of the Spirit, and bring your life

into such a spiritual atmosphere that those heavenly growths will develop and blossom and bear fruit.

There is nothing that ought to alarm a man more than the fact that his heart and conscience respond to all this, and cause him to say within himself, "I ought to make up my mind at once and begin to be a Christian now," and yet he does not decide and does not choose, but drifts steadily in the wrong direction with ever-weakening will. For a man to undertake to attribute to his circumstances, or to the lack of Christian interest on the part of his friends and associates, his own personal responsibility, and to give that as an excuse for not becoming a Christian, is a sure sign of the fact that he is losing that supreme mark of strong manhood, the power to choose to do that which commends itself at once to his judgment and to his conscience. It is always the indication of a strong man that he is able to choose what he will do promptly and decisively. In General Horace Porter's book, "Campaigning with Grant," he states that the Army of the Potomac began to move forward at once when General Grant abolished the nightly council of war which previous commanders were accustomed to hold. The general who is always

seeking advice wins few victories ; the business man who always asks his right hand neighbor when to buy and his left hand neighbor when to sell will surely come to bankruptcy. It is the mark of a fine, strong character when a man, asking help of God, decides according to the best judgment and conscience he has on the subject, and then follows that course tho the heavens fall. It is better to make a great many mistakes than never to make a decision. The question of our personal allegiance to Jesus Christ is not one that we can transfer to anybody else ; it is a question that must be decided in our own conscience, and it is the chief glory of manhood that man has the power to decide, and through God's grace the power to carry out such a decision.

How clearly this quality of decision and the gracious results which flow from it show forth in the case of Paul. Paul was on his way to Damascus to fight against Christianity and to do all he could to oppose Christ. But on the way, at high noon, he was smitten down with the conviction that he was wrong, and that the Christians were right. He was suddenly confronted with the truth that Christ was a divine personality and had a right to his service. How clearly Paul shows forth the pure metal

of manhood that was in him! He did not quibble about it, and say in response to Christ's appeal for his open confession and service, "O Lord, you know how I have been such an opponent of Christianity; you could not expect me all at once to turn right about and to begin to openly serve you. True, I do now believe that you are the Christ, and that if I am ever to be saved I must be saved in your name, and I feel that you have a right to my service. I know it is ungrateful for me to delay; my conscience tells me I ought to be an open Christian, but then, how people will talk if I do that now without any time between to think it over." How many men quibble like that now! But Paul did not; no, indeed! The moment he was convinced that Christ was true, he was ready to follow his duty, and his first prayer was not, "Lord, let me wait awhile; let me think it over; excuse me till I can talk with my friends about it;" nothing like that, but this, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And it was that earnest decision, followed up with a complete transformation in his life and conduct, that made him the great and glorious influence he was in the world.

I call upon you for that kind of a decision to-night. It is not worthy of your manhood or

your womanhood to remain halting and undecided after your judgment and your conscience are convinced as to what you ought to do. This is not a time for dallying ; there is not a man or woman here who has not thought it over and over again, and you know there is no valid excuse for you to delay longer to become a Christian. Ten minutes of acting on the conviction you already have will do more for your salvation than ten years of further consideration. Act, and act now ! “Choose ye this day whom ye will serve !”

THE SINNER HIS OWN JAILER.

“ So I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lust : and they walked in their own counsels.”— *Psalms* lxxxii. 12.

GOD makes here an appeal to history. He calls attention to the fact that the sorrows and woes that came upon the Israelites in their wanderings in the wilderness did not come upon them because he was indifferent to their needs, or failed in his love toward them, or in his willingness or power to bless them. The reason was that they refused to hearken to his counsels ; they refused to permit their lives to be guided by the Lord ; like a stubborn horse they took the bits between their teeth and went their own way, until at last God gave them over to their own hearts’ lust, and they went whithersoever they would. We all know what the result was. Plague after plague, trouble after trouble, pursued them. The graves of lust had their share, the stinging serpents came in for their part of the revel, and for forty years the wanderings of a stubborn and wicked people could be traced by the graveyards they left behind them where they had buried the victims of sin.

Now my theme to-night is very simple and easy to understand, yet it is exceedingly important, and often overlooked. The essence of it is this: That no man is ever held in bondage to sin, or ever finds himself in misery and shame and woe because of sin, on account of any arbitrary decree of God. Men say foolishly, "The God that I worship is too kind and too gracious to punish sin." If these blind people would only look about them they would see that the God whom they worship is not so kind and gracious but that the drunkard gets a red nose, and a blear eye, and a bloated body, a trembling hand, a staggering limb, an aching head, and a degraded heart; the God whom they worship is not so loving but that the man who gives himself over to vice and dissipation carries the record of it in his body, and plants there the seeds of disease and shame which brand him with a mark as enduring as Cain's as long as he lives. It is the height of foolishness to talk about the God who does not punish sin. It is not that God is not loving, but that sin carries within itself the seeds of sorrow and death. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all;" "God is love," and his love is beyond all our thought and conception; he sees things in us to love when we are unlovely to

any human eye ; but even the infinite love of God does not take away our power to choose and decide for ourselves, and a man may refuse God's counsel, he may say no to Christ's love, and, knowing that "the wages of sin is death," he may still take the bits between his teeth and go recklessly on to his undoing. And if he does that, you have God's word for it, and you have all history to back it up, that there will come a time—and when that time comes no man can foretell—when God will stop interfering with him ; he will simply let him alone and give him over to his own evil ways, and after that the man will hold himself bound by the chains of his own sin until on the day of judgment he stands before the great white throne.

All history is full of illustrations. Hosea says, "Ephraim is joined to idols : let him alone." You have the same teaching there that we have in the text ; there is no declaration of vengeance against Ephraim, there is no desire that he shall be miserable ; but miserable he must be when he is left alone by God. When God ceases to disturb a man in his sins, and he goes on thinking God has forgotten, it does not mean that God has forgotten ; it means that God has given over the keys of his life into his own wicked hands. So long as a

father has any hope of saving his son from ruin he cautions him, he counsels with him. Sometimes he appeals to his better nature, sometimes he rebukes, and chides, and punishes. All his dealing has the one purpose and is born of his great love for his son, and because he still has hope that he may bring him back from his folly and cause him to learn wisdom. But when the father has lost hope that anything he can do will help his son, he lets him alone. If he has decided to disinherit him, and, tho it tear his heart, to cease to interfere with him, and to arrange all his plans as tho he were not living, then he will say nothing more to him. The day of rebuke, of discipline, of chiding, has passed away because the day of hope is gone. So God says to us that if a man goes on in his sins, and will not hearken to God's counsels, will not be taught by the divine discipline which shows him the folly of his sin, will not heed the appeals that call him to repentance, will not respond in gratitude to the love of Christ, the time will come when the Lord will give him over to his heart's lusts, and let him go on in his own ways.

Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage and God let him go on in his own way ; there came a time, we do not know how long after,

when Esau would have given everything he had on earth if he could have bought back that birthright. But tho he sought for it with tears, he found no place for repentance. Repentance means more, you see, than being sorry because you have sinned ; it means changing your conduct and going the other way.

Samson dallied with sin, and played with it as a man might play with a dangerous serpent ; he knew his danger, but he was self-sufficient in his own eyes and presumed on God's patience with him. So there came a day when Samson passed under the shearers and his strength was taken from him. He did not know that he had lost it at first ; when the alarm came he said to himself, "I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself." He thought he could shake off the spell which his sin had over him ; he thought he could shake off the results of his sin as a man shakes sleep from his drowsy eyes, or shakes dust from his coat. But, alas, it was too late ! God had left him ; the Word says, "He wist not that the Lord was departed from him." Left to his own ways, ruin came speedily. He is tortured by his enemies ; with only blackened holes where his eyes used to be, he grinds corn for the bread of his enemies as tho he were only

a huge beast of burden. God had simply abandoned him to his own heart's lust ; he had given him over to his own way.

There is always something very pathetic about anything that is abandoned ; an abandoned farm, where the field used to be filled with busy activity in the springtime, and where later the waving billows of grain rose and fell before the wind ; the orchard that once was kept neatly pruned, and where the children played and the birds built their nests, and all watched for the first ripe apples of summer ; the garden near by, that once was the object of so much care, now desolate ; the front yard that used to have its long rows of hollyhocks and sweet-williams ; the porch where once hung fragrant roses ; the house that was the abode of love and joy, where dwelt hearts full of all the hopes and fears, the plans and purposes, that animate men and women and little children, a house made sacred by births and marriages and deaths,— all now desolate and despoiled. The front gate is broken down ; great clumps of weeds have displaced the hollyhocks and other flowers ; the roses have been torn from the rotting porch ; the windowpanes are broken out from the house, which is given over to the bats ; it is a sad thing, an abandoned home.

An abandoned ship is also a sad picture. It started out from port with laughter and joy and hope. It had a precious cargo. It carried passengers full of courage for the voyage. Some, going home after long journeys in foreign lands, weary with travels, lonely with exile from loved ones, hummed over again and again to themselves, "Home, home, sweet home." Others, starting for a new world, leaving failures behind and hoping for successes before, trusted all to the ship beneath their feet. But the storm came up, the ship was driven out of its course, the captain lost his reckoning, his chart was swept overboard, and in the blackness of the night and the tempest the ship swung aground on a ledge of rocks; every effort was made to get her afloat again, but she only settled the more solidly into her rough bed. The priceless cargo was thrown overboard in order to save the ship, but even that failed, and at last, when the sea threatened to break the vessel in pieces under their feet, and all hope of ever floating it again had been given up, the small boats were lowered, the passengers and the crew, and last of all the captain, went into them, and the wreck was abandoned. They rowed away and left it to its fate. After a few days, perhaps, it will

break down in the middle, and for a long time it may float about the sea a huge derelict, the most terrible of all the enemies of living ships. And, before it is finally destroyed and goes to the bottom, it may wreck some noble vessel and send a thousand human lives to their death.

But all these are cheerful subjects for contemplation compared to the thought of an abandoned man or an abandoned woman — the soul made in the image of God ; fitted for a high and lofty destiny ; that might hold communion with heaven ; that might live a life so sweet and pure, so brave and splendid, that the angels would look upon it with admiration and delight, and yet drifted from its course, with compass gone, with reckoning lost, stranded and broken, abandoned at last by God and man ; given up to its own lusts, to perish in its own evil ways.

I thank God to-night that I am not preaching to men and women who have been abandoned, because God is still disturbing you in your sins. Even as I speak your conscience, which is God's voice in your breast, is rebuking you for your transgressions and arousing within you shame and repentance. God help you to act on it to-night. The fact that you have such feelings is no sign that you will act on them or repent ; it is only an indication that you may repent now

if you will. No man ever had a more earnest call from God to salvation than Balaam. God sent his angel to stand with a drawn sword to block the path through which Balaam was going on his way to ruin. Balaam was brought tremendously under conviction of sin. He knew his duty without a doubt, but he neglected to do it until at last God ceased to disturb him, and he met a miserable doom among the enemies of God.

Don't be deceived in thinking that it is a small thing when God says that he will turn you over to your own heart's lust. I can imagine that in folly some reckless soul might say, "What do I want better than that? Just let me have my heart's desire. Surely that won't be very bad." Ah, do you think not?—to let the man who is getting fond of strong drink just go on getting more and more drunken, more and more like a beast, the hellish thirst for strong drink ever increasing in his parched and bloated body, his veins running with the fire of the insatiable longing until he cries out as others have done that even the fires of hell would be a refuge if it could quench this horrible and awful thirst. Do you think that means nothing? To let the man or woman with impure thoughts and imaginations just go on

thinking impure things, and meditating on wicked and evil pictures, until good thoughts come no longer ; until the mind is full to overflowing with unholy and bestial imaginations ; until after a while the soul loathes itself as a dirty thing ; until the man or woman wallows in moral filth. Do you think that means nothing ? To let the greedy man go on with his greed, becoming more and more avaricious, until at last honor and love and faith and truth and goodness are idle words to him unless they bring him in money ; until the soul is withered and dried up so that the one cry of the man's nature is for gain ; and grim and miserly, unloving and unloved, the man gets old in a hard and bitter and greedy spirit. Does that mean nothing ? To let envy and jealousy have their way until all life's sweetest blessings are poisoned, until gratitude is a dried up pool, until thanksgiving is an unknown virtue, until generous appreciation is never felt, until a gossiping scandal-monger, hated by everybody, dreaded by everybody, grows old in loneliness and despair. Does that mean nothing ? To let anger and hate have their own way ; to let them brood in the heart and hatch their young ; to let them seek for vengeance until a man watches on the path of his enemies that he may

make life harder for every one who has offended him ; until all love and generosity and forgiveness and gentleness are crushed down under the heel, and a gruff, rough, brutal-hearted man hides in ambush waiting for revenge. Does that mean nothing ?

But, after all, any picture than I can draw is only a faint likeness of what it means to any one of us to continue to sin against God until he gives us over to our own hearts' lust and abandons us to our evil ways. Some of you, it may be, are quaffing the first draughts of sin, and the intoxication of it is in your blood, and you think the preacher maligns and slanders sin. May God save you from the bitter dregs at the bottom of the cup !

George Arnold, a newspaper man in New York in the days of the Civil War, wrote a little poem entitled "The Lees of Life." It sounds like the sob of a man who has tasted sin to the bottom of the cup. He says :—

“ I have had my will,
Tasted every pleasure ;
I have drunk my fill
Of the purple measure.
It has lost its zest ;
Sorrow is my guest ;
Oh, the lees are bitter, bitter,—
Give me rest !

“ Love once filled my bowl,
Running o'er with blisses ;
Made my very soul
Drunk with crimson kisses.
But I drank it dry ;
Love has passed me by ;
Oh, the lees are bitter, bitter,—
Let me die ! ”

May God save you from such a fate as that !
And you may be saved if you will here and now
confess your sins and turn from them by repent-
ance. The man who covers his sins will not
prosper, but if you will turn to God and confess
your sins, he has promised to forgive them, and
to cleanse your heart from all iniquity. Do not
run the risk of delay, do not drift farther on
the wrong track, but turn to God here and now !

LIGHTING OUR CANDLES AT HEAVEN'S TORCH.

“For thou wilt light my candle: the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.”—*Psalm xviii.* 28.

THAT which makes a candle what it is, is its adaptation to receive light, and by burning itself to transmit that light. God is the great light of this universe and we know not of how many universes besides. “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” That is the one great central fact which keeps mankind from despair,—the assurance that at its heart the universe is not dark but bright; it is bright with wisdom, bright with power, and bright with love. It is man’s supreme glory that he has this kinship with God. However dark his nature may have become through sin, it is of such a kind that it can be lighted from heaven’s torch. There has never yet been discovered any man or any tribe of men who did not have this power or capacity to receive divine illumination. This is sure evidence that God has made of one blood all that dwell on the face of the earth, and however marred or hurt or

darkened by sin the souls of some may be, there is yet that in their nature which may be lighted up by the Spirit of God, and show forth their brotherhood to Jesus Christ.

There was preaching in this country last year a very remarkable man known as Tamil David, from Ceylon, India. He has a very interesting story. He was born in South India in 1853. His father was a mission agent, his mother was a school mistress who when she was young had worshiped idols. All his ancestors had been idol worshipers. His father died when he was only two years old, and he was brought up by his mother till he was sixteen. He was a very self-willed, bad boy, and at sixteen ran away from India and drifted to Ceylon. There this little black waif fell in with the very worst of people and became an adept in every evil way. He drank and gambled and ran riot. He became a bartender and was a liquor-seller for several years. He hardened his heart against everything he had known in his youth; for years he would not answer his mother's letters. But finally his mother, with the wonderful tenacity of a mother's love, got track of him and went to Ceylon in search of him, and persuaded him to go back to South India with her. After a while

he was married. His wife had been converted to Christianity a little while before. She was a good woman and his love for her led him to salvation. One day she gave him Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," and it got hold of his heart. His wife kept praying for him, and conviction seized upon his soul. One day he was walking along the street in Colombo, when suddenly his conscience spoke to him, so sharply that it was almost as clear as if he had heard a voice, "David, David, you are wrong." He tried to silence the impression and forget it, but the conviction that he was wrong grew deeper and deeper. He said to himself, "I am not wrong," but all the while he knew better, and it did not lift the burden from his heart. He went home and told his wife, and said: "I am very, very sorry; my heart is breaking. What a wretched and miserable sinner I am!"

She said, "Praise the Lord!"

He said: "I tell you I am very miserable and you say, 'Praise the Lord!' What makes you say that?"

She replied, "I know it is all right now. My Lord has answered my prayer."

David did not understand her, but said: "What am I to do now? Tell me how I may get clear of this burden, this heavy load on

my conscience. I can hardly breathe, I can't eat, I can't sleep. Please tell me the way."

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

"I know that, but what is it to 'believe'?"

She did not know how to explain. She had the blessed experience, but she did not know how to interpret it.

David said: "Is that all your creed? You don't know how to lead a poor sinner to Christ?"

She was very sorry, and cried because she could not help him.

He found some tracts, and in one of them he saw a verse of Scripture which came home to his heart. It was from Paul's letter to the Romans: "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." The man who believes finds salvation; that was the message it brought to him. Then he got another verse from Isaiah, "All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

The word "hath" caught his eye. Hath, hath, hath, hath!

The Lord put this on his heart: "David, on whom did the Lord lay iniquity?"

“ On Jesus.”

“ Whose iniquity ?”

“ The iniquity of us all.”

“ Are you one of that ‘ all ’ ?”

“ Yes, I am one of that ‘ all.’ ”

“ If you are, where are your sins ?”

“ On Jesus.”

“ Who put them there ?”

“ God put them there.”

“ Whose sins ?”

“ David’s sins.”

“ On whom ?”

“ On Jesus.”

As soon as he saw that his sins could not be on him and on Jesus at the same time, the thought came to him, “ If my hat is on the peg it cannot be on my head at the same time.” That made it clear at once, and he said : “ Praise the Lord ! God says it, I believe it, I have it !” He went and told his wife. He said, “ I have got the truth ; I have got Him.”

Then his mother was converted, and afterwards his brother and others of the family were saved. Everybody that lived in the house was converted, and they began to sing and pray and shout so much that the heathen man who lived next door said, “ Go and live somewhere else ; we can’t stand your shouting.”

But David was past making angry then. He said gently but rapturously, "We may quit the house, but we can't give up praising the Lord."

And what God did for Tamil David he is ready and willing to do for you.

Now there is one thing to which I specially desire to call your attention, and that is that the candle, in order to receive the light from the match, or the taper, or the torch, must yield itself to the light. There is no way to shine except by burning ourselves. Tho we were created as the candles of the Lord, we have the power to refuse to give our hearts up to be lighted by heaven's fire. Indeed, we may, if we are foolish and wicked enough to do it, lend our hearts to be lighted by the devil's fire, and give forth a baleful flame that will make the darkness deeper not only for ourselves but for every one who is influenced by us. It is a solemn and awful reality that we have the power even to thwart Almighty God in his efforts for our salvation. God will not forcibly take our candle and light it at the heavenly fire. We must yield it to his hands through our own decision.

I once heard Mr. Moody relate that at the close of a meeting one evening in Chicago, he inquired: "Are there any here who would

like to have me remember them in prayer? I would like to have them rise!" A man arose, and when he saw him stand up, Mr. Moody said his heart leaped in him for joy. He had been anxious for this man for a long time. He went to him as soon as the meeting was over, and took him by the hand, and said: "You are coming out for God, are you not?"

"I want to," he replied, "and I have made up my mind to be a Christian, only there is one thing stands in my way."

"What is that?"

"Well, I lack moral courage." Naming a friend of his he said, "If he had been here to-night I should not have risen; and I am afraid when he hears I have risen for prayer he will begin to laugh at me, and I won't have the moral courage to stand up for Christ."

Moody said, "If Christ is what he is represented in the Bible, he is worth standing up for; and if heaven is what we are told it is in the Bible, it is worth our living for."

He said, "I lack moral courage." And the man was trembling from head to foot.

Moody thought that he was just at the threshold of the kingdom of heaven and that one step more was going to take him in, and that he would take the step that night. He talked

and prayed with him, and the Spirit seemed to be striving mightily with him, but he did not yield his candle to receive God's light. Night after night he came to the meetings, and the Spirit still strove with him ; but just that one thing kept him back—he lacked moral courage. At last the Spirit of God, who had striven with him so mightily, seemed to leave him, and there was no more striving. He left off coming to the church, was off among his old companions, and would not meet Moody in the street ; he was ashamed to do so.

About six months afterward Mr. Moody got a message from him, and found him on what he thought to be his dying bed. He wanted to know if there was any hope for him at the eleventh hour. Moody tried to tell him there was hope for any man who would accept Christ. He prayed with him, and day after day he visited him.

Contrary to all expectations, he began to recover ; and when he was convalescent, finding him one day sitting in front of his house, he sat down by him and said, "You will soon be well enough to come up to the church, and when you are, you will come up ; and you are just going to confess Christ boldly, are you not ?"

“Well,” said he, “I promised God, when I was on what we thought to be my dying bed, I would serve him ; and I made up my mind to be a Christian ; but I am not going to be one just now. Next spring I am going over to Lake Michigan, and I am going to buy a farm and settle down. And then I am going to be a Christian.”

Moody said, “How dare you talk in that way ! How do you know you are going to live till next spring ? Have you a lease of your life ?”

He said, “I was never better than I am now ; I am a little weak, but I will soon have my strength. I have a fresh lease of my life, and will be well for a good many years yet.”

Moody said, “It seems to me you are tempting God.” And he pleaded with him to come out boldly.

“No,” he said. “The fact is, I have not the courage to face my old companions, and I cannot serve God in Chicago.”

The evangelist said, “If God has not grace enough to keep you in Chicago, he has not grace enough to keep you in Michigan.” With all the energy of his soul he urged him then and there to surrender himself completely to the Lord Jesus, but the more he urged the more irri-

tated the man got, till at last he said, "Well, you need not trouble yourself any more about my soul ; I will attend to that. If I am lost, it will be my own fault. I will take the risk."

Moody left him. Within a week a message came from the man's wife. Going to the house he met her at the door, weeping. He said, "What is the trouble ?"

"Oh, sir, I have just had a council of physicians here, and they have all given my husband up to die ; they say he cannot live."

Moody asked, "Does he want to see me ?"

She replied, "No."

"Why did you send ?"

"Why," she said, "I cannot bear to see him die in this terrible state of mind."

"What is his state of mind ?"

"Why, he says that his damnation is sealed, and he will be in hell in a little while."

Mr. Moody went into the room, but when the sick man saw who it was he turned his head away.

Moody gently inquired, "How is it with you ?"

Not a word ; he was as silent as death.

He spoke the second time, but the sick man made no response.

Moody bent over him and looked him in the

face and called him by name, and said, "Will you not tell me how it is with you?"

He turned, and fixed an awful deathly look upon him and, pointing to the stove, he said, "My heart is as hard as the iron in that stove; it is too late, my damnation is sealed, and I shall be in hell in a little while."

Moody said, "Don't talk so, you can be saved now if you will."

He replied, "Don't mock me, I know better."

Mr. Moody talked with him, and quoted promise after promise from God's Word, but he said not one was for him. Said he: "Christ has come knocking at the door of my heart many a time, and the last time he came I promised to let him in, and when I got well I turned away from him again, and now I will have to perish without him."

When Moody saw he could do no good talking, he fell on his knees by the bed.

The sick man said, "You can pray for my wife and children; you need not pray for me; it is a waste of your time, it is too late."

Moody tried to pray, but it seemed as if what the man said was true—it seemed as if the heavens were brass over him. He rose at last and took the man's hand, and it seemed to him that he was bidding farewell to a friend

that he never was to see again in time or in eternity.

He lingered till the sun went down, and with the day his life went out in darkness. The wife told Mr. Moody that the end was terrible. All that he was heard to say after the evangelist left him were these fearful words: "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved." There he lay, and every little while he would take up again the awful lamentation, "The harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and I am not saved." And just as the sun was sinking behind those western prairies, he was going into the arms of death. As he was expiring, his wife noticed that his lips were quivering, he was trying to say something, and she bent her ear down to catch the last whispered words, and all she could hear was, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved." He died with those words on his lips.

God save any one here from making that awful mistake! This man might have had the light of God, but he would not yield himself to be the candle of the Lord. The same precious opportunity comes to you to-night. How are you going to deal with your opportunity?

LEAN SOULS IN THE MIDST OF FAT PASTURES.

“He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.”—*Psalm cvi.* 15.

IN Pharaoh's dream, which was an important factor in the chain of events which brought Joseph to the front as the great statesman of Egypt, he saw seven well-favored and fat-fleshed kine come up out of the river and feed in a meadow. And as he looked on them seven other kine, ill-favored and lean-fleshed, came up out of the river as if following them, and came and stood by the other kine by the brink of the river; and while he watched in wonder, the ill-favored and lean-fleshed kine turned on the fat ones and ate them up, and when they had eaten them up they were still as scrawny and lean as they were in the beginning.

Pharaoh's dream in many ways vividly illustrates the story of men and women who live in the midst of this wonderful world which God has filled with such abundant opportunities for doing good and gathering good, so rich in privileges for the development of the spiritual

nature, who yet go lean and hungry amid all, and tho they devour the good things of God, get no good, because they fail to be nourished by them through lack of reverent and loving motive on their part. A selfish man can absorb like a sponge the richest blessings God can give, and be lean and starving in the end.

In the Psalm from which our text is taken attention is called to the fact that when God delivered the children of Israel by the miracle at the Red Sea, and their enemies were overthrown and destroyed as they pursued after them, the people at first naturally were very grateful, and sang anthems of praise to God. But they soon forgot all God's wonderful works in their behalf. It was not long before they became stubborn and self-willed and refused to hearken to the counsels of God. They gave themselves over to their own lusts and followed their own way. They were like the people now who are determined to get on in a worldly way at any cost; they will succeed by fair methods if they can, but they do not intend to let their church, or religion, or conscience stand in the way of their worldly success. And God gave these people, as he does similar people now, over to their own ways, and they seemed to succeed; but leanness of soul came to them, as it does to

their followers to-day ; and in the end they found that they had been cheated—terribly, fatally cheated.

It is a good lesson for all of us to learn, both those who are Christians and those who are yet neglecting their return to God, that it is only by giving up the heart to a complete and earnest service of God that the soul may be fat and flourishing. God cannot give spiritual riches and blessings to men and women who still cherish sinful desires and purposes in their hearts. You may hear sermons till you are gray-headed, and say prayers all your days, and yet die lean and starved at last unless you give your soul to whole-hearted doing of the will of God. Dr. Merle Smith, speaking last summer at Northfield of the secret of Peter's power, draws a very graphic picture of the way Peter escaped his leanness of soul and came to be so rich in spiritual power and blessing. He says he thinks if Peter were here to tell us all about his Christian experience on earth, he would say: "Three times during those years I and the other disciples disputed as to who should be prime minister in the earthly kingdom that we thought Jesus was about to establish. I felt some way that I ought to be first, because Jesus had said to me, 'Peter, thou art a rock, and on

this rock will I build my church.' But Thomas and James and John each thought they ought to be first, so we were all the time striving and looking out for ourselves. As I look back upon it, I can see how unfaithful I was to Jesus all that time. Some way we didn't understand that Jesus was to die ; he told us, but we didn't really get hold of it. And by and by there came that awful night when, in the high priest's house, I denied my Lord. I went out and wept bitterly ; for three days the scalding tears coursed down my cheeks ; no man ever went down so near to the depths of hell, or was ever rescued by such loving grace, as was I. On the morning of the third day Mary Magdalene came to me and said, ' Peter, the Lord has risen.' I said, ' It is impossible.' She said, ' Yes, Peter ; more than that, too, the Lord wants to see the disciples ; the angel told me that he especially wanted to see you.' I said, ' Mary, did he say that, that he wanted especially to see me ?' ' Yes, the angel told me to tell you that the Lord wanted especially to see you.' " And then Peter would tell us about that secret meeting between him and Jesus, and would doubtless say, " It was so sacred I cannot describe it to you " ; for there is nothing told about it in the Bible, but no doubt he would

tell us how he lay with a broken heart right down at the feet of Jesus, and how the Lord just poured out the wealth of his forgiving love upon him. Then no doubt Peter would go on and point out how Jesus, at that wonderful breakfast on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, said to him, "Simon, you said a few weeks ago that you loved me more than these other brethren ; Simon, lovest thou me more than these ?" He would tell us how he answered three times, "Yea, Lord ; thou knowest that I love thee." Then Peter would take up the story of those wonderful days before Pentecost : "Jesus ascended, and we all went back to Jerusalem into that upper chamber, where the Lord had eaten his last supper. It was endeared to us by many a sacred memory, and we went there and waited for the power which he had promised. We thought it would come in the morning, and we began to pray, but the power didn't come. We prayed one day, two days, three days, for the power, and it did not come. One day Thomas arose and said : ' Brethren, I believe the trouble is in me ; I do not believe I am entirely cleansed from doubt. I think there is a lot of sin in me, and the Spirit cannot come because of the sin that is in me.' Then I began to see what the trouble was, and I began to see that it was with

me, that my own sin had not been entirely cleared away, and I asked the brethren to pray for me. We just went round in a circle, and we stopped praying for power and prayed for cleansing; we prayed that our sins might be revealed and all our defilement might be shown to us and be cleansed away through the sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost. We did not think much about the power; we were not praying for the power; what we wanted was to get clean in the sight of God, to get the consciousness of defilement away, to feel that we had been cleansed in that precious blood that was shed for the cleansing of sin. By and by—I don't know how it was—but on the morning of the tenth day there came such a wonderful power upon us through the Spirit that he had promised. We had been cowardly before, so that we hardly dared to leave that room, but after that we went out and preached that Jesus had risen from the dead, and with what wonderful power! There were three thousand men converted under one sermon; I don't understand how it was; but ever since, wherever I have gone, even the shadow that has fallen from me has been a blessing to others. I do not understand what it means; but the power of God seems to be on me, and it all came when

the cleansing of God was made complete in my own heart."

Sure it is that Pentecost is the story of a hundred and twenty men and women whose souls were fat with joy coming from conscious communion with Christ and from the assurance that they were the accepted children of God. Lean-hearted, discouraged men and women never could have won that victory. And if we would win victories in the name of the Lord we must not cherish anything in our hearts that will cause God to send leanness there. David said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." And if he will not hear us he will not use us, and cannot use us, for we shall be so starved and beggared in our spiritual life that there will be no overflow to bless any one else.

Is not this the secret of the fact that there are many men and women who have sought to live Christian lives, and have come into the church, but live without peace with God, have no religious enjoyment, and their influence wins no one to Christ? Is the secret not in this, that they are cherishing in their hearts some sin that makes it impossible for God to nourish their souls? If I speak to any this evening who are thus lean-hearted, I beg you

to fly to the Great Physician that you may be healed of your dire malady, and God may be able again to bestow upon you the riches of his grace.

Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman tells how he was once preaching in one of the cities of Massachusetts, when one of the ministers of the place, introducing a gentleman to him, remarked that he was the principal merchant in the city. He was a professing Christian, but they had never been able to get him to do anything in Christian work. They were much pleased because he was then acting as chairman of the ushers' committee for the meetings. In his first sermon Dr. Chapman said that God never used a man who had sin in his heart. Soon afterward he saw this merchant rise and leave the church. As soon as he got a chance the minister who had introduced the merchant to Dr. Chapman said: "You made an awful mistake; you ought not to have said that at the first meeting." For three days they did not see that man in the meetings. But on the morning of the fourth day he sought out Dr. Chapman, and told him this story :—

"When I began business here my partner was in Springfield with the same kind of business. When I figured the first year of business

there was one hundred and twenty-five dollars that belonged to no particular department and which would never be noticed in balancing the books. I had not made very much money and I took the one hundred and twenty-five dollars. The second year came around, and there was one hundred and seventy-five dollars over, and I took the one hundred and seventy-five dollars. When the third year came, I saw where I was going. There was the three hundred dollars. I was afraid to tell my partner for fear he would break the partnership, and I could not afford that. But when you said that God never used a man if he had sin in his heart, I knew that was the reason why all the years that I had been in the church I had had no power with God and no power with man. I went over to Springfield and took the three hundred dollars. My partner was not a Christian, but when I told him about it, and put the money down on his desk, he got up and put his arms on my shoulders and said, 'I think if I could be a Christian like that, I would begin to-day myself.'"

Dr. Chapman said that during the series of meetings a minister from one of the little neighboring towns came in to know if some one would not come and speak to them. This

merchant, whose lips had been sealed for years, came up and said he would take the service. On Monday morning the minister reported that the merchant rose up at the time of the sermon and took the text, "God so loved the world," but all he could say was the text. Then the tears came and the sobs stopped his utterance. After he had repeated it the second time he simply told his own story, that for twelve years he had been lost in the house of God; going lean-hearted and useless; that only the week before his lips had been unsealed. And while with the tears running down his cheeks the merchant told his own story, and how God had sent the fat joys of salvation to him when he put sin out of his heart and life, every unconverted person in the house, man and woman, boy and girl, came to Christ.

God help us to search our hearts, our own hearts, to see if there be any wicked way in us! And if we have been cherishing any unholy desires, any selfish motives and purposes, that have caused us to go with lean hearts, and silent lips, or, what is worse, with a testimony that has sounded hollow and hypocritical, let us pray God's mercy and forgiveness, and, as we first came to the Lord, come again in humble repentance.

But I am sure there is here a message for those who have never yet started to be Christians as well as to the backslider who has fallen away from his first love. Sin makes all its victims lean-hearted. Sin forever starves and beggars the soul. The Prodigal found only hunger and leanness among the husks, and I am sure you have found no fatness or joy or peace as you have turned from God by sin and neglect. But, thank God, you need not go on that way. This is the day of grace and mercy; this very message I bring to you to-night may be for you the trump of jubilee. I come to call you away from the husks of sin that are ever promising much to the sinner but are always deceiving him. The Prodigal went away from home to find the good time, and found the swineherds, and the husks, and the hunger. When he came back home he found that there was where the good time was, in his father's house. The rich robe of sonship, the kiss, the ring of love, the feast, the music, the loving welcome,—all these were at home. And so I say to you to-night, the devil will promise you that you will find fatness and joy in self-indulgence, and in sinful pleasures; but he is false, and every sinner that ever trusted him has found him so. Turn back before you reach the

depths of sin's beggary ; turn back while this rich opportunity is offered, and Christ is saying, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out !"

THE TEARS OF THE SOWER AND THE SHEAVES OF THE REAPER.

“They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”—*Psalm cxxvi.* 5, 6.

THIS is a song of grateful remembrance celebrating the return of the Jews from exile. But tho it begins, as so many of the Psalms do, with a local reference, it ends with a general application to universal human life. The end of the captivity came unexpectedly ; the singer declares that it was like a dream to them ; they could hardly believe at first that it was true. But when they were sure that they were awake, and that the long exile was really over, that they were going home again to rebuild the temple, and the city of their pride and love, their mouths were filled with laughter and their voices burst forth into singing. Gratitude toward God swelled their hearts ; they gave God all the glory ; they bore testimony before the heathen that it was God who had done these great things for them.

Studying this signal illustration of the sweetness of victory after defeat, of the blessedness of home after exile, of the glory of the harvest after the long seedtime and waiting, the singer bursts forth into inspired poetry, drawing from this illustration a beautiful truth applicable to human life in general, and of special spiritual significance to those who seek to bless and uplift human hearts. "They that sow in tears," he sings with confidence, "shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

There could be no more apt and beautiful illustration of the history of all Christian workers who are seeking to sow the seeds of eternal life in the hearts of men, and who long to gather sheaves of immortal souls for the garnerers of heaven.

We should miss the meaning of our illustration if we should infer from it that the Christian life, as compared with a worldly life, is a life of sighing and tears and sadness. That is not so; but the teaching is that in comparison with the harvest the seedtime is always a time of anxiety and earnestness. While there is anticipation in it, there is also the tremulous feeling that the seedtime lasts but for a little while,

and will soon pass away not to come again for a whole year, and that the garnerers in the autumn will be empty unless faithful, earnest work be done in the seedtime.

Spiritualize that feeling of the earnest sower and you have the feeling in the hearts of men and women who are looking forward to the harvest-time of eternity, and are planning and working now to sow by their lives and influence and words seeds which will bear a harvest of rejoicing and blessing: All successful workers for Christ have had this spirit of tremulous earnestness which is most fittingly expressed by tears. Paul had it; he said one time that he was willing to be accursed himself, if necessary, that certain people in whom he was interested might be saved. Our Lord himself had this feeling. He was known as the man of sorrows, and one acquainted with grief, not because he went about with a long face, but because of the great earnestness and intense sympathy which he showed in trying to comfort and bless and save the world.

I am sure we ought to get a great lesson from this theme. Do not imagine for a moment that I am bringing you a sad lesson. It is exactly the opposite of that. No life pays so great dividends of joy and blessedness as the sincere

Christian life which is given over with such heartfelt completeness to do God's will that one goes forth in tearful love as the messenger of Jesus. Such a life has never yet gone empty-handed to the judgment. Sometimes, looking on, we think such lives have failed, and that those who have lived them have gone without their sheaves; but they have not. God looks out for that. There is a little book, called "Miss Toosey's Mission," which tells the story of a strange little old woman, seventy years of age, who heard a sermon by a missionary bishop which wonderfully inspired her, and resulted in her going to her rector and offering herself as a missionary to Africa. The rector was filled with amusement that this little, feeble woman, seventy years of age, should offer herself as a missionary; but he finally told her that her mission was to stay at home and give all she could to the cause, and by her prayers and gifts try to help the missionary cause along. Most pathetic were the ways in which this dear old lady saved her scanty income for the Master's cause. There was a young Englishman in that village, rich and prosperous, without much religion; a generous, manly fellow, fond of his dogs and horses; and he found himself often attracted to this quaint

old Miss Toosey, at whom all the village was laughing for her strange ways and missionary enthusiasm. One night this young man, John Rossiter, heard that Miss Toosey was ill, and he went to see her, and found her in tears over what she called the failure of her work. She said between her sobs, "John, my money only counts up a few small shillings, and my influence is not anything, for the people laugh at me. The five barley loaves and the two small fishes that I tried to bring to the Master are all valueless." That night Miss Toosey died, and John Rossiter sat all the next day in that lonely little house with his head in his hands. There was something in that simple, noble, pure Christian life that touched him; and that night John Rossiter wrote to the missionary society of the Church of England offering himself as a missionary to Africa. Miss Toosey's loving Christian service and her tearful devotion did not fail of their sheaves. And yours will not fail; you may be so hedged in, your hands may be so tied by difficult circumstances, that you will often feel like saying, with Paul, when signing his name to a letter in prison, "Remember my bonds"; but God is not bound, and if you live faithfully in God's sight, the gracious influence of your devotion and love will be as

seeds sown in the earth that shall bear fruit unto eternal life.

In the early part of Mr. Moody's evangelistic work he was once stopping in a home in the West and saw there a bright boy about thirteen years old. He did not bear the name of the family he was living with, and yet he was treated like one of the family. He asked the lady of the house who he was, and she said: "He is the son of a missionary; his parents couldn't educate their children in India, so they came back here. But they had learned the language of India, and they did not feel that it was right for them to stay. Finally the husband said, 'You stay here and educate the children, and I will go back.' The mother said, 'No, God has used me there with you, and we will go together.' 'But,' the father said, 'you can't give up those children. You never have been separated from them since they were born. You can't leave them in this country.' She said, 'I can do it for Christ, if he wants me to.'" They made it a matter of prayer, and put a notice in the papers that they were going to leave their children, asking Christian people to take and educate them. This lady saw the notice and wrote that she would take one child and bring it up for Christ's sake. She said in

telling about it: "His mother came and stayed a week, and observed everything. She watched the order and discipline in my family, and after she was convinced that it was a safe place to leave her boy, she set the day to leave. My room was adjoining hers, and when the time came to start I heard her pray, 'Lord Jesus, help me now. I need thee. Help me to give up this dear boy without a tear, that I may leave him with a smile. The last time he sees me I don't want him to see a tear in my eye. O God, help me, and give me strength.'" Then she said that mother came down and took her boy to her bosom, hugged him and kissed him with a smile on her face—not a tear—and left. She went to five homes in the same way. She went back to India, but only lived a year, and then went to meet her Lord and Master.

Some years after, Mr. Moody was preaching in Hartford, Conn., and found a young man who was in the habit of picking up the rough boys of the streets and bringing them to his meetings. He would sit with them around him, and after the sermon, with great tenderness and skill, he would lead them to Christ. It pleased Mr. Moody very much, and he asked who he was. They told him his name and said that he was in the theological seminary. He

found that he was one of those five sons, and that all of them were devout Christians and were preparing themselves to return to India to take up the work that their father and mother had left.

The world may think that the lives of such men and women as that missionary and his wife are of small account, but God and the angels know better. And if you and I are so happy as to get to heaven at last, we shall hear shouts of rejoicing, and behold great gladness when the army of redeemed and ransomed ones who were won from heathenism and sin by this unknown man and woman, and the sons they laid on God's altar, comes up before the throne.

As I study the Christian church to-day, it seems to me that above all things else the rank and file of the membership of the churches need humble willingness to do anything for Christ, to take the smallest and humblest service if only they may do something for Christ's sake. I have heard an Oriental story of a beggar who lay at the king's gate, and day by day received alms from the king's hand. One day the king came out from the gate and found that he had forgotten something, and he called to the beggar, "Run me this errand." But the beggar looked haughtily up into the king's face and

said, "Sire, I solicit alms ; I do not run errands." It seems to me that there are a great number of such people in the church to-day. Look into your own heart, I beg you, and see if the message is for you. Is it possible that we who are beggars upon God's bounty from day to day, we who solicit alms from God's mercy all the while, are still too proud, too self-sufficient, too ungrateful, to do service for the Lord unless it be something that we think suited to our dignity? If so, repent, oh, repent this day, as in sackcloth and ashes, before the mercy-seat, and promise God here and now that he cannot send you on errands so humble but you will gladly run them for Christ's sake!

People who have been very successful in gathering sheaves for the heavenly garner have been those who gloried in small opportunities, and delighted in the slightest chance to sow seed for the Lord. One day, many years ago, two disappointed soldiers who had never been in London before stood before the closed door of Westminster Abbey too late to be admitted. While the soldiers lingered, deploring their tardiness, a man with a grave, earnest face approached them, and learning of their bitter disappointment said, "Come with me. You shall see the Abbey."

They did see it, indeed, and learned more about its great memorials than most people know, for their guide was none other than Dean Stanley, tho they did not know him then.

Pausing before a soldiers' monument, their guide said, "I suppose you both would like to do some great deed, and gain a monument like this." They both spoke up and said they would indeed. Then, laying a hand on the shoulder of each soldier, the Dean said in a voice of thrilling sweetness and solemnity, "My friends, you may both have a more enduring monument than this, for this will molder into dust and be forgotten; but you, if your names are written in the Lamb's book of life, will abide forever!"

Those words brought four souls to Christ—the two soldiers and their wives. And yet who of us does not have similar opportunities almost every day of our lives? But we must live in the proper spirit, or they are not opportunities for us. If our hearts are tremulous and tearful with earnestness to win to Christ those whom we meet, we shall be in the right frame of mind to do this blessed work.

An earnest Christian woman who was ever seeking in her own gentle, loving way to be a soul-winner, had one day bought a garment of a shop girl whose spiritual history she well

knew, and as it was being wrapped up she said, "Will you send these goods up to-day?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied the girl.

"Are you sure, my dear, that you will not wear it out first?"

"Why, what do you mean, madam? You do not know this house when you talk that way!" Her guards were all up instantly, and her spirit was up, too.

"But, my dear," went on the lady, "Jesus bought you and paid for you with his own precious blood, and here you are wearing yourself out before you take yourself to him."

The girl, taken by surprise, sobbed aloud: "No one ever spoke to me like that since mother died."

Oh, how many girls there are who have never known what real, unselfish tenderness was since mother was laid under the sod! They have found out by bitter experience that this is no mother-hearted world. There are multitudes, both of young men and young women, who are drifting into sin and will be lost unless some man or woman, with the self-denying love of a father or a mother, seeks after them with tenderness and sows the seeds of eternal life in their hearts.

And just a word to you who are not Chris-

tians. There ought to be here a message for you. I ask you to become a Christian, and you say, "It is so hard to start ; it is so hard to give up and decide." Ah, yes, but that is only for a moment ; but the joy that follows shall be eternal. It is hard to turn from your sins. Repentance means tears and turning away from every wicked and evil thing ; but every tear of sincere repentance shall be a seed that shall yield a glorious harvest of joy. Go on in sin, and the path will get harder and darker and blacker until the end. But if you will break off your sins by righteousness, if you will turn from your sins by confessing Christ and seeking forgiveness at the mercy-seat, your tears shall be turned into joy and your sorrow into singing. Of nobody else on earth is it more true than of the repenting sinner that "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."

DAVID'S THIRST FOR THE OLD WELL.

“ And David longed, and said, Oh, that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate ! ”—2 *Samuel* xxiii. 15.

THIS text suggests one of the most splendid stories of all this book of hero tales, the Bible. Let us try to bring back the picture, by letting our imagination clothe the outline sketches that are given here. It is easy to do so, for there is an air of romantic chivalry about it all which appeals to the fancy. It is a battlefield, and David and his knightly followers have fought bravely against tremendous odds. David has been in the thick of the fight, and has led his gallant warriors to victory. Yet the Philistines, tho defeated in the battle, are still camped near in great numbers, and it is only a breathing time that is left to David before the battle must come on again. David is tired out, his lips are parched with thirst, and in his thirst he remembers the old well by the gate at Bethlehem, where he had slaked his thirst a thousand times in the happy days of his youth as a shepherd lad. It all comes back to him now,

and his mouth burns to taste a gourdful of that sweet, cool water from the old well. And without any expectation of any one undertaking to fulfill his wish, his fierce thirst wrung out of him the cry of the text, "Oh, that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!"

But there were among those men who followed David some as brave and daring characters as ever lived, and three of the strongest and most valorous of these, who loved David with all their hearts, set their heads together and determined to accomplish what seemed to be impossible and bring to David his drink from the old well. That it was perilous and might cost them their lives did not count with men of their caliber. They dashed out against the enemy, and cut their way through. Perhaps in the very daring of it lay its success. The Philistines were taken by surprise, and tho they did everything they could with javelins and arrows to stop them, and tho the men were wounded again and again, they forced their way on until they reached the cold fountain of living water by the old Bethlehem gate, and got the drink for their king. What they brought it back in I do not know; perhaps in an old leathern water bottle, or, what is more

likely, one of them may have taken his helmet from his head, and brought that soldier's cup back full of drink to his king. They ran the gauntlet again in safety, and ere long, wounded but not defeated, they stand again before David, and hand him the water for which he thirsts.

What a picture that is ! Yonder are the tents of the Philistines, and you hear the noise of the shouts of excitement among the enemy who have been trying to capture these brave warriors, or kill them ; and now David's little army are gathered about, cheering and shouting over the gallant deed of their brave comrades. And these three mighty men stand before David ; and one of them, bowing before him, hands him the helmet full of water from the well of Bethlehem. He offers the sparkling draught, and is happy beyond words that he may present such a gift to his king.

Then the greatness of David shines forth. A very small man would have taken it as a matter of course. An average man would have been deeply touched, and would have been full of thankfulness to these men for thus fulfilling his wish. But David was neither a small man nor an average man. Among the great poetic and chivalrous souls who have

lived in the world, David must be counted one of the most interesting. So David lifts the helmet in his hand, and then lifts his eyes up to the sky, the tears flow down his cheeks, his heart is full of worship ; it is not enough to thank these men, he must thank God that he has bestowed upon him such gifts as to make it possible for him to win the love and devotion of such gallant men. And tho he is thirsty, and the water is tempting beyond description, he pours it out upon the ground as a libation before the Lord, and says, "Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this : is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives ?" What a sight ! And how those men must have loved and admired David more than ever. A deed like that showed that David was worthy of the devotion which they rendered to him.

Now I have selected this beautiful picture because it suggests to me a spiritual lesson which is as beautiful as the picture. My particular message to-night is this : That in the great struggles and experiences of our lives it is natural for our thoughts and affections and longings to go back to the scenes and comforts and anchorages of our childhood. David remembered the old well at the gate. No other water tasted like

that. And so every man remembers something precious in that early time to which, when he is tired, or weary with the struggle of life, or needs the help that every man needs sometimes in his career, he turns in his thought. I am sure that, preaching to so many young men and women who are away from home, my message cannot fail to strike a responsive chord in your hearts. O men and women, don't try to forget the old well out of which you drew your childhood's blessings! It is not good for you to forget it, and it will keep heaven nearer to you, and hell farther away, if you will cherish it in your hearts.

And deal tenderly, I pray you, with the old folks at home, and those other brothers and sisters that are in the home nest. Mark Guy Pearse says that when he was about to make a trip to Australia from London, every day for weeks before he sailed there came to him letters from all parts of the country, entreating him to inquire for sons and daughters of whom nothing had been heard for months, sometimes for years. And he would take up one of those letters and dream over it, and there would rise before him a little cottage where the roses grew about the porch; and every day as the postman passed there would come the

mother to the door ; the roses faded from her cheeks, and the light gone from her eyes. She hears the words so often spoken, "Nothing for you to-day, ma'am." And she creeps back to her little kitchen, and setting her arm against the old blackened mantelpiece, she rests her head. The firelight glistens in the tears, and her heart swells with pain. O young man, young woman, vow to God that you never will hurt the old mother by so neglecting her. A man said to me the other day, "I remember how I used to be out at the plow with my father, and many a time I have seen him walk along the furrow quite quiet, with his lip bitten, and the tear creeping down his cheek. And when I saw that, I knew he was thinking of his boy who had gone away, and he had not heard from him for many a month." Some of you ought to go home this very night and write to some of those dear ones before you sleep. Oh, the loving letters I get these days from fathers and mothers about their sons and daughters. These letters breathe such a spirit of love that they bring the tears to my eyes many times as I read them, tho about people who are entire strangers to me.

I want you to think to-night of that old well of happy childhood associations. There was

the old family Bible, the Bible your father and mother used to read, the Bible out of which your mother taught you the first Bible texts. Can there ever be any Bible just like that? At a great meeting of the American Bible Society, held in Boston the other day, Dr. Plumb spoke on the theme, "Christ's Reverence for the Old Testament." And he referred to the sayings of some so-called literary critics of the Bible, that "We must come to the Old Testament without any prepossessions in its favor." Then he drew from his pocket an old-fashioned little book, and opened it at the fly-leaf, and began to read in tender tones the inscription thereon. At first no one understood just what it was, but as he proceeded his hearers perceived that he was reading from his mother's Bible, her maiden name, and then her married name, and as he read every one could feel, as the speaker plainly felt, and that very deeply, all the hallowed memories and associations of the saintly life that seemed embalmed in the volume which he was reverently handling. "All her life she lived by it," he continued, "and all my lifetime since she left it to me I have carried it—the pillow of a dying saint and the staff of a man's own life! This is the book that I am told I must approach without any prepossessions."

Dear friends, I call you back to your mother's Bible to-night, and to all that early faith so sweet and pure and precious. Some of you have been getting away from it, a long way from it, since you came to the city. You have been accustomed to eat your meals at a table where no blessing was asked on the food, and where, in the conversation, it was popular to sneer at the Bible and at the church. You have been going to the theater, and you have heard prayer, and home religion, and married love, and all the pure things that were once the great pillars of your thoughts about life, used to point jokes and puns, and to give barbs for sneers. At first it shocked you to hear all this, and you didn't like it, but you are getting used to it now. You are not the happier because you are getting used to it, and you know very well that you are not the better because you are getting used to it.

Now, the thing I want to tell you, just as honestly and just as plainly as I can, and yet with all the sympathy and tenderness of my heart, is, that notwithstanding all these jokes and sneers, and all this foolish pride that you have in feeling that you are beginning to be a man or woman of the world, whatever that may mean, there will come a good many times

in your life, and they will be the most important times, when you would give everything if you could have a drink of water of life from the old well in the Christian home where you were brought up. Some day some great disappointment will come into your life ; maybe it will be business trouble ; you will find yourself, after doing the very best you can, at the end of your rope, and it will look like failure. You will plan and scheme until your head aches and your heart aches over it all, and there will be a feeling, tho you may not put it into words, "I wish I could have the old simple faith in God, and the old childlike prayer, that father and mother used to have when they were troubled about anything. If I could just talk it over with the Lord, as they did, and lay my aching head and my sore heart down on God's promises, what a comfort it would be !"

Perhaps you have a home of your own, and the children are beginning to come up around you like little sprouts about a tree in the orchard. How dear they are to you ! How they comfort you in the midst of all your work for them ! How wonderfully their childish prattle, their tender little caresses, and their loving trustfulness compensate us for all the harder work to care for them ! But some day

one of them is sick ; the little face is flushed with fever ; the doctor comes, and, tho he speaks bravely enough, looks a little anxious, and says he will be in again in the morning. But the little face is so hot at night that you go and bring him ; and when he comes again he shakes his head and looks grave,—and then those anxious days that follow ; and those nights ; I've been through them, and I know. Oh, the terror of it, and the awfulness of it,—of feeling that a little life is slipping out of your hands, a life that is dearer to you than your own life is slipping out of your arms, and you cannot hold on to it. And at last it is gone, and you take the little thing, cold and still now, with all the laughter gone out of the eyes, and the dimples out of the cheeks, and you put it in the little white coffin and cover it over with flowers, which sometimes seem to me to make death harder than ever, as tho they mocked us. And you lay it away out of your sight. O my brother, I have been through that, and I know there is only one thing on earth that can comfort you in an hour like that, and that is a drink of water from the old well of your mother's Bible, and your father's prayer to God, the simple prayer they taught you to say when you were a child.

Then there come times when, do your best, you cannot lull your conscience to sleep ; days and nights when it rouses up to full life, and will be heard ; when it points a sad, accusing finger at you, and you stand condemned before God's court, held in the court-room in your own breast, and you know and feel that life is passing and, whatever the world may think or say, you are making a failure of it. All your successes pall on you, and you feel that everything you have won is transitory and will soon be gone ; and if they could last, they do not and cannot make you happy. O brothers, sisters, there is only one thing can save you in such hours, and from such hours—and that is a drink of the water of life from the old well of God's infinite love in Jesus Christ.

Then, some of these days, you are going to be called to go out into the eternal world. In youth and health one may often drown care with excitement and jollity ; but there comes a time when the doctor will not allow any excitement, when the door-bell is muffled lest it make you nervous, when your friends are not allowed to see you, and all alone you must face the problems of your own conscience, your past life, your relation to God and eternity. In such an hour there is only one cordial that gives the

soul courage and nerves it for the great ordeal of the dying hour, and that is a draught of the water of life from the well of faith in God's mercy through Jesus Christ. In such an hour how glorious it will be if Jesus is there to whisper to you, with tender love, "In my Father's house are many mansions. I have prepared a place for you, that where I am there you may be also. When you get close to the dark stream you shall not be afraid, for I am the Good Shepherd, and my rod and my staff shall comfort you." Trust Christ now, give him your heart now, and he will stand by you then.

But some one says, "I know I need these things; you cannot tell me anything new about that. In the loneliness and trouble and sorrows that come to me I know I need God, and the Bible, and prayer, and the Savior; but I have gone so far away from them that I do not know how to get back. It is easy enough for you to say, 'Come back to Christ,' but there are all these years of indifference, and wicked habit, and sinful ways between me and those holy realities of my childhood, and I cannot get back to them." O my brother, God can take you back in just one step if you will. Ah, it would be a long journey if you tried to go back step by step the way you came; you never

could do that ; no man could do that. But there is a short cut. It goes by the cross where Jesus died in your stead, and if you will just take him at his word to-night, Christ will make all the journey for you ; and because he died for you, God will lay the burden of your sins on his shoulders, and you may be free. I bring you the old well to-night—the old Bible, your mother's God, the simple prayer of your childhood, the Savior you used to wonder about when you pictured him as a little babe in Bethlehem ; I bring him to you to-night. God bless you, he is able to save you !

THE UNIVERSAL PRESENCE.

“Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?”—*Psalm cxxxix. 7.*

THE paragraph from which this is taken is from one of those sublime and comprehensive pictures in which the Bible more than any other book abounds. Every Christian man ought to know it by heart, and thereby broaden his horizon and encourage his soul, amid all the experiences of life.

“O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me.
Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising,
Thou understandest my thought afar off.
Thou searchest out my path and my lying down,
And art acquainted with all my ways.
For there is not a word in my tongue,
But, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.
Thou hast beset me behind and before,
And laid thine hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
It is high, I cannot attain unto it.
Whither shall I go from thy spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there:
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there.

If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea ;
Even there shall thy hand lead me,
And thy right hand shall hold me.
If I say, Surely the darkness shall overwhelm me,
And the light about me shall be night ;
Even the darkness hideth not from thee,
But the night shineth as the day :
The darkness and the light are both alike to thee."

Whether the consciousness of God's presence brings us joy or sorrow depends entirely upon our own attitude toward God. If we are conscious that we are sinners against God, that we have broken the divine law and are under its condemnation, then the thought that God sees us, and that our hearts are open and naked to his eye, causes sorrow and terror. David feels this, and hence he prays for sincerity and genuineness. He closes his Psalm by crying out to God in prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart : try me, and know my thoughts : and see if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." That is the only possible attitude for a soul conscious of sin, for we can never hide from God. Men have been trying it ever since sin came into the world. Adam tried it in the Garden of Eden. In the shame that came upon Adam and Eve with the dawn of guilt, they

tried to hide themselves amid the trees of the Garden, but it was not possible, and a little while afterwards the voice of God sought out Adam with the ringing question, "Where art thou?" And his answer was, "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid." He was not afraid of God's voice when he was doing right; so long as he retained his innocency he rejoiced and was glad in the presence of God, and talked to God face to face; but when he had sinned against the Lord, fear came into his heart and robbed him of his joy and drove him into hiding.

God does not seek out men in their sins in the spirit of a detective, but rather in the spirit of a loving father seeking to save them. Professor H. M. Hammil has recently retold a very interesting story of the conversion of Valentine Burke. Burke was a burglar, a very wicked man, and had been in prison for twenty years in different places. He had a hard face, and a terrible tongue for swearing, especially at officers of the law, whom he regarded as his natural enemies. Twenty-five years ago Burke was in jail in St. Louis when Moody, then comparatively a young man, came there to hold a series of revival meetings. One of the daily newspapers announced that it was going to

print every word he said — sermon, prayer, and exhortation. Moody said it made him quake inwardly when he read this, but he made up his mind that he would weave in a lot of Scripture for the paper to print, and that might do good even if his own words failed. He did it, and his printed sermons from day to day were well sprinkled with Bible texts. The reporters tried their cunning at putting big, blazing headlines at the top of the column. Everybody was either hearing or reading the sermons. Burke was in the St. Louis jail awaiting trial. Solitary confinement was wearing on him, and he put in his time railing at the officers when they came around. Somebody threw a newspaper into his cell, and the first thing that caught his eye was a big headline like this: "How the jailer at Philippi got caught." It was just what Burke wanted, and he sat down with a chuckle to read the story of a jailer who had got into trouble. "Philippi!" he said, "that's up in Illinois. I have been in that town."

But somehow the reading had a strange look, out of the usual newspaper line. It was Moody's sermon of the night before. "What rot is this?" asked Burke. "Paul and Silas, a great earthquake—what must I do to be saved? Has the *Globe-Democrat* got to printing such stuff?"

He looked at the date. Yes, it was Friday morning's paper ; fresh from the press. Burke threw it down with an oath, and walked about his cell like a caged lion. By and by he took up the paper, and read the sermon through. The restless fit grew on him. Again and again he picked up the paper and read its strange story. It was then that a something, from whence he did not then know, came into the burglar's heart and gave him a sharp thrust of pain. "What does it mean?" he began asking. "Twenty years and more I've been burglar and jailbird, but I never felt like this. What is it to be saved, anyway? I have lived a dog's life, and I'm getting tired of it. If there is such a God as that preacher is telling about, I believe I'll find out, if it kills me to do it."

He found it out. Away toward midnight, after hours of bitter remorse over his wasted life, and humble, broken prayers for the first time since he was a child at his mother's knee, Burke learned that there is a God who is able and willing to blot out the darkest record at a single stroke. Then he waited for day, a new creature, crying and laughing by turns. Next morning, when the guard came round, Burke had a pleasant word for him, and the guard eyed him in wonder. When the sheriff came,

Burke greeted him as a friend, and told him how he had found God after reading Moody's sermon. "Jim," said the sheriff to the guard, "you better keep an eye on Burke. He's playing the pious dodge, and first chance he gets he will be out of here." But Burke made no attempt to get away.

In a few weeks his case came up for trial, and through some legal entanglement failed, and he was released. Friendless, an ex-burglar in a big city, known only as a hardened criminal, he had a hard time for months of shame and sorrow. Men looked at his face when he asked for work, and upon its evidence turned him away. But Burke was as brave as a Christian as he had been as a criminal, and struggled on. Seeing that his sin-blurred features were making against him, he asked the Lord in prayer if he wouldn't make a better looking man of him, so that he could get an honest job. You may laugh at this, but God answered that prayer in a wonderful way, and the consciousness of the love of Christ in his heart transformed Burke's face until it became full of a benevolence and a gentleness that made people trust him when they looked him in the eyes. Not being able to get steady work, Burke went to New York, hoping that, far from his old haunts, he might

find honest labor. He did not succeed, and, after six months, came back to St. Louis, much discouraged, but still holding fast to the God he had found in his prison cell.

One day there came a message from the sheriff that he was wanted at the court house, and Burke obeyed with a heavy heart. "Some old case they have got against me," he said; "but if I'm guilty I'll tell them so. I've done lying."

The sheriff greeted him kindly. "Where have you been, Burke?"

"In New York."

"What have you been doing there?"

"Trying to find a decent job," said Burke.

"Have you kept a good grip on the religion you told me about?" inquired the sheriff.

"Yes," answered Burke, looking him steadily in the eye. "I've had a hard time, sheriff, but I haven't lost my religion." It was then the tide began to turn.

"Burke," said the sheriff, "I have had you shadowed every day you were in New York. I suspected that your religion was a fraud, but I want to say to you that I know you lived an honest Christian life, and I have sent for you to offer you a deputyship under me. You can begin at once."

He began. He set his face like a flint. Steadily, and with dogged faithfulness, the old burglar went about his duties until men high in business began to tip their hats to him, and to talk of him at their clubs. Moody was passing through the city, and stopped off an hour to meet Burke, who loved nobody as he did the man whose sermon had saved him. Moody found him in a close room, upstairs in the court house, serving as a trusted guard over a bag of diamonds. Burke sat with a sack of the gems in his lap and a gun on the table. There were sixty thousand dollars' worth of diamonds in the sack.

"Moody," he said, "see what the grace of God can do for a burglar. Look at this! The sheriff picked me out of his force to guard it." Then he cried like a child as he held up the glittering stones for Moody to see.

Years afterward, the churches of St. Louis had made ready and were waiting for the coming of an evangelist who was to lead the meeting; but something happened and he did not come. The pastors were in sore trouble, until one of them suggested that they send for Valentine Burke to lead the meetings for them. Burke led night after night, and multitudes crowded to hear him, and many were saved

from their sins. When Burke died, rich and poor came to his funeral, and the great men of the city could not say enough over his coffin.

That is a sample of what the grace of God can do when a poor sinner stops trying to hide from the Lord and repents of his sins and accepts forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

Once give your heart to the Lord, and then the presence of God becomes your chief joy. The fact that God knows all your thoughts and purposes becomes your greatest happiness when with all your heart you are seeking to please God and do his will. It is a terrible thing to live in God's world, where we are dependent upon him for every breath of life, and where death may at any moment summon us before the judgment seat, and yet be afraid of him. Make your peace with God to-night. How tender and compassionate it is of our Heavenly Father that he comes seeking after us to offer us forgiveness and peace.

THE TRAGEDY OF A USELESS LIFE.

“ Let them be as the grass upon the housetops, which withereth afore it groweth up : wherewith the mower filleth not his hand; nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom. Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the Lord be upon you : we bless you in the name of the Lord.”
— *Psalm cxxix.* 6-8.

WHEN Napoleon Bonaparte was making his expedition across Egypt in command of the French army, they found themselves one morning traversing boundless plains of sand without water or shade, and with a burning sun over their heads. All the wells on the road were either filled up or exhausted. Hardly a few drops of muddy or brackish water were to be found to quench their thirst. In the midst of the general depression and hopelessness of the situation, a sudden gleam of hope illuminated the countenances of the soldiers. In the distance they beheld a lake, with villages and palm trees clearly reflected in its glassy surface. Instantly the weary troops burst into shouts of gladness, and tho their lips were parched with thirst, they hastened forward to

the enchanted spot. But it receded from their steps. Again they pressed on with burning impatience, but it forever fled from their approach ; and they had at length the mortification and sorrow of discovering that they had been deceived by the mirage of the desert.

The delusions which come to men and women who are deceived into giving themselves over to worldly and sinful lives are very much like that. God has made the mind and heart of man in too large a mold to be satisfied and find permanent peace in earthly things alone. And tho worldly men and women have a variety of ambitions, and travel widely different paths, if they have no hope in God, no fellowship with heaven, no title to a blissful immortality, no enjoyment of the spiritual life, they find at last that all the paths of mere worldliness lead into the desert where all streams die down in the sand, and every promise made to them of permanent peace proves to be but the deception of a mirage.

How clearly this is set forth in our text ! A life that neglects God is compared to the grass upon the housetops. On the old flat-roofed houses it would not be uncommon to see grass seeds that had been dropped by the birds getting root enough in the little pockets of earth

to start up green in the springtime. But having no deep soil, and no nourishing earth or streams of water beneath, it withers before it grows up; it never gets tall enough to be mowed, and it is dead and blown away by the wind before the sheaves in the field are bound in the autumn. Now our text says that an irreligious life is like that. Such people have their dreams of success and happiness, and they imagine in youth that this will be sufficient, and that they do not need Christ, do not need a religious life. I talked last night with a young man and also with a young woman, both of whom told me frankly that they did not feel the need of being Christians. They are deluded with a feeling that the promises of life are sufficient without Christ and the Gospel. But our text assures us that all these promises are deceptive, and tho they may be very green now, they will wither and die long before the harvest time of life comes.

The more you study this the truer it will appear to you. Think for a moment of the chief things which attract the attention of people, and which promise to take the place of Christianity in making them happy. One of them is money; a young man says to himself, "I am going to set myself to make money and

to succeed in a business life, and that will so take up my time and attention that I shall not need Christianity." I read you this evening for our Scripture lesson the result of that in the case of a man who was very successful ; a man who had large farms and fruitful fields that produced enormous crops, so that his barns would not hold what he raised. Now this man was a purely worldly man who proposed to find happiness in his success in business. There is no evidence that he was dishonest, or that he was cruel, or drunken, or uncomfortable as a neighbor ; indeed, there is only this one picture of him, which indicates that he was a very shrewd, successful business man, but one who had been so busy with these things that he had paid no attention to God or the Bible, and had neglected the salvation of his soul. Now what was the result ? Christ says the result was that in the very day of his highest success, the day when he was congratulating himself on getting on so splendidly, a thunderbolt of doom fell out of a clear sky, and God said to him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee : then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided ?" Money has no power to give real peace to the heart ; it promises much, but multitudes of

people with large prosperity in a financial way are so miserable that life seems a curse instead of a blessing to them, because their sinful hearts will give them no peace.

Another says, "I do not specially care for money ; but I am going to win fame and honor, and I shall not need Christianity ; it would only hamper me in my ambitions for success." But the whole history of mankind shows how transient and uncertain is the happiness that comes from the applause of men, and how useless it is unless founded on a bed-rock of righteous character. There never was a more brilliantly successful man of the type to win wide applause than Lord Clive, of England, the great conqueror of India. The triumphs of our Dewey, which were wonderful enough in their way, were after all very insignificant in their far-reaching importance as compared to the great conquests of Lord Clive in India. When he came back to England the king elevated him to a peerage, and parliament gave him every honor it knew how to give. His father wrote to him, "The whole kingdom is in transports at the glory and success you have gained. Come away, and let us rejoice together." And yet, notwithstanding all his wealth and honors, the afternoon and evening of that man's life were

most miserable. He had conquered many provinces, but he had not learned, under God, to master his own spirit. He was poor in the midst of wealth, wretched under all his honors, and at last in despair died the death of a suicide. The promises of life were green with hope for him, but they withered before the harvest.

Some one else says, "I shall devote myself to culture ; there are pleasures of the mind which do not wither like money or fame." That is true, but all these wither before the harvest, and have no power to give permanent peace, unless God is worshiped in them, and his love nourishes the soul. There never was a more brilliant literary success than Lord Byron, and there never was a life more utterly unsatisfactory, nor one which, coming to its close so young, drank deeper of the dregs of sorrow and despair. While yet a young man, when if he had been a good man he would have had his golden age yet before him, Byron dipped his pen in the anguish of a broken heart, and wrote of himself on his last birthday : —

“ My days are in the yellow leaf,
 The flowers and fruits of love are gone ;
 The worm, the canker, and the grief
 Are mine alone.

“The fire that in my bosom plays
Is lone as some volcanic isle ;
No torch is kindled at its blaze,
A funeral pile.”

Still others say, “I intend to have a good time ; life is too short to give over to solemn things, and I propose to look on the bright side and have pleasure.” How soon they find out that to have a good time in this world one must not make that the chief end in life ! God gives the best good time to the people who give themselves over to serving him and helping humanity. The people who give themselves over to fun and humor often have an aching heart beneath. I suppose the most popular man of mirth that ever lived was Theodore Hook. His wit gained him such success that he was made treasurer to the Island of Mauritius by the English crown at a great salary. He was able to earn twenty thousand dollars a year with his pen. He was the lion of the fashionable and society world. He gave himself over to happiness. But the end was sorrow and despair. He has left a journal which shows that the worm was at the man’s heart all the time. One day at a dinner party all were struck with his ghastly paleness. Turning round to a mirror, he himself bitterly ex-

claimed : " Ah ! I see how it is. I look just as I am — done up in mind, in body, and purse." Returning home, he took to his bed. A friend calling on him found him there. " Here you see me," said the great wit, " all my buckling, and padding, and washing dropped forever ; and I a gray-headed old man." He died a few days afterward in despair.

The pride of personality, of beauty, is equally as transient. I suppose the most beautiful woman Europe ever knew was Lady Hamilton. She ruled over the great by her personal beauty. But a little time passes, and one day a lady was buying some meat for her dog in Calais, France, when the butcher's wife said to her : " Ah, madam ! You seem a benevolent lady ; and upstairs there is a poor Englishwoman who would be glad of the smallest piece of meat which you are buying for your dog." The woman who was glad to get dog's meat at the hand of charity was Lady Hamilton, the greatest beauty of Europe. She died in poverty and despair. Many a saint has died in poverty, but never one yet died in despair, or in poverty because of his own sins.

And so we have gone the round of the circle, and have taken them at their best ; we have taken the most distinguished examples, and

those who succeeded as well as anybody can hope to succeed, and yet there is always failure. I have not told you of the multitude who, like Esau, sell their souls for a mess of pottage, hoping to get money, or fame, or pleasure, and never get the pottage, but lose their souls just the same. But what I urge upon you is that a worldly, irreligious life, a life that neglects God and Christ and duty, is at its best a failure.

There is another tragic suggestion in our text—that a life neglectful of God not only fails of its ambitions, but it is a useless life. It does no good. It is a terrible thing to live in this world and not be of value to it. I cannot imagine anything sadder than to live so that your example and influence may, instead of helping somebody, hurt others and lead them astray. It is impossible for us to do good with our lives without being good ourselves. A stream can never flow higher than its source. It will never rise above the fountain where it started. If you are going to help the world and be of use, then you must do your duty to God yourself. The very first condition of usefulness is to recognize your own responsibility to God and act upon it at once by obeying his commandments. It pleases me to make this appeal to you because in doing so I am appealing to

the very noblest thing in you. I am not appealing to that which is least and most selfish in you, but to that which is noblest. I beg of you to do right, to obey God, to accept Jesus Christ as your Savior, not only because in doing so you will obtain the forgiveness of your sins, and will get deep peace and happiness in your own heart, but because it will place you where God can use your life in making it a blessed influence to help others.

Finally, it is certainly a very suggestive thing, and a very important one, that a worldly, irreligious life is not only temporary and useless, but it is a life which is unblessed by others. See what the text says : " Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the Lord be upon you : we bless you in the name of the Lord." Worldly applause is very fickle, but it is a precious thing to be blessed in the name of the Lord by people to whom you have been helpful, because God has given you the strength to so live and act before them, and so influence them, that you have been God's messenger to them and have made them stronger and better.

This, then, is the message which I bring to you to-night : To be happy yourself, to be useful yourself, to build up a character so that others will rise up and call you blessed, you must give

your heart to God and seek to serve him with fidelity and devotion. And God is ready now to receive you; the door is open into divine mercy, and no hand can shut it but your own. If you will say, here and now, "Trusting in God, I will begin the Christian life," there is no power that can stand in the way. Choose life and not death this night !

THE KING'S SON COMING HOME FROM EXILE.

“ Yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him.” — 2 *Samuel* xiv. 14.

DAVID'S favorite son, Absalom, had been in exile for three years. His own sins had driven him away into banishment. The heart of David was heavy, and he longed to see his son. Joab, who was at the head of the king's army and close in his confidence, perceived that David was pining for Absalom, and he sought to devise some plan which would cause David to decide to bring him home again. He finally decided on a very ingenious scheme. He went to Tekoah and secured the services of a very wise, brilliant woman, and arranged with her to assume the rôle of a mourner, and in that way obtain an audience with the king, and when she had the chance to talk to David, she was to make her petition to him in the words which Joab himself suggested. The woman arrived at the court and was ushered into the presence of David. She bowed with great reverence and cried, “ Help, O king.”

And David inquired, "What aileth thee?" The woman then proceeded to tell him this story: She said she was a widow woman and the death of her husband had left her with two sons, and the two had got into a quarrel one day in the field, and in the struggle one smote the other, and slew him. And all her family had risen up and demanded that she should deliver up the boy that did the deed, that they might kill him in punishment for the life of his brother. The woman pleaded that if this boy were taken it would be all she had, and the family name would be cut off. So she begged for her boy's life. David told her she might return home, and set herself at rest, as he himself would take charge of the matter. And as she continued to plead, he reassured her that not a hair on her son's head should be harmed. Having won her petition, the woman now begged that she might speak a word on another matter to the king, and he, no doubt wonderingly, granted her permission. And to David's great astonishment she went straight home to his own heart, and wanted to know why "the king doth not fetch home again his banished," and continued to philosophize in a most eloquent manner. "For we must needs die," she said, "and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be

gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person : yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him." She continued in a very suave and diplomatic way to press the matter home at length on David's heart, until, finally, David wanted to know if Joab had not had a hand in this matter, and she was compelled to confess that he had. But it is not in human nature to be long angry with the man who seeks to devise for us a way to do the thing we want to do ; so David did not hold the matter against Joab, but sent for the old warrior and said, "Behold now, I have done this thing : go therefore, bring the young man Absalom again." Joab in great delight bowed low and thanked the king and said, "To-day thy servant knoweth that I have found grace in thy sight, my lord, O king, in that the king hath fulfilled the request of his servant." And so Joab went after Absalom.

I have told this interesting little story that we may get at the suggestion already made for us by this wise woman who thus secured mercy for Absalom at the hand of David. She truly said that God does devise means by which he seeks to bring back those that are banished from him on account of their sins.

There are several suggestions in our message

which I wish very earnestly but very briefly to present. The first is that the plan of salvation began in God's own heart, full of love for us. The idea has been sometimes presented that God was only willing to save men after Christ had died for us and paid our debt. But the whole plan of salvation, and the coming of Jesus Christ to die for us on the cross, began in God's own heart. It is much more clearly so than is suggested in the story we are studying. True, the return of Absalom was made possible because of David's love for him and his longing to have him brought home. And though David had said nothing about it, Joab saw what the king's heart was suffering, and discovered David's secret desire. He never would have acted as he did if he had not known that. So the bringing back of Absalom began in David's heart. But much more definitely we are assured by Christ himself that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." Christ came as God's messenger, the only being in the universe great enough and glorious enough to take upon himself our sinful

nature and bear our sins on his own body on the cross and thus open up a way by which God might be just and yet pardon and justify those who are reconciled to him through Jesus Christ.

The next suggestion I want to bring to your mind is that sin alone exiled us from the presence and favor of God. Absalom fled from his native land and from the presence of the king, his father, because he had not only sinned against David's love and fatherhood, but had broken the law of the land. It was his own deed which sent him into banishment. So it is not because God has ceased to love us and long for our salvation that sin makes us unhappy and that the sinner is the victim of remorse and fails to find peace; it is rather that man was made to find happiness in the presence of God and in the consciousness of harmony with him. As Absalom flew into exile because he knew there would be no peace for him at home, because of his own acts, and as after he came back he found no pleasure because his heart was not in harmony with his father, so man, made to be the child of God, can find no real peace and no permanent joy in this world so long as he is conscious that his heart and life are wrong in God's sight. Many a man and woman have turned from one thing to another,

seeking to satisfy their restless, banished souls, who did not understand their own case, and did not appreciate the truth of God's Word that there is no rest to the wicked heart, that like the troubled sea it will be forever casting up the mire and the clay of its own evil imaginations.

The story is told of a man who once came to England from the Continent, bringing with him to a famous physician a letter from the Emperor of Germany, which said : "This man is a personal friend of mine, and we are afraid he is going to lose his reason. Do all you can for him." The doctor examined him and concluded that the difficulty was in something which weighed upon his mind, and made it impossible for him to have peace. He asked the patient if he had lost any dear friend, or any position of importance, or what it was that depressed his spirits and robbed him of zest in life. Thus questioned, the young man finally said : "No ; but my father and my grandfather and myself were brought up infidels, and for the last two or three years this thought has been haunting me, 'Where shall I spend eternity?' And the thought of it follows me day and night." The doctor said, "You have come to the wrong physician, but I will tell you of a Physician who

can cure you"; and then he told him of Christ, and read to him the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, and with wondering ears, as though it were something new that he had never heard about before, that young man, born to wealth and power, the friend of an emperor, listened to those wonderful words: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." The young man said, "Doctor, do you believe that?" The doctor told him he did, and knelt in prayer with him until he got a vision of the glorious Christ who came to heal sin-sick souls. And there on his knees, in that physician's office, he found the Great Physician who made him every whit whole, and he went away with the question of where he was to spend eternity settled, for he had gained a title to an inheritance that is undefiled and that fadeth not away.

There is another point where I should like to lay the emphasis, and that is on the need of the

sinner to be reconciled to God, and not God to the sinner. David's heart was broken over Absalom's sins, and he longed to save the young man from his folly and guilt and redeem him to a noble career. The one thing that never was accomplished in Absalom's case was his becoming in his inmost heart reconciled to David. That is what I want to press home on you to-night. God is reconciled to us through the death of Jesus, and all that remains for us to do is to accept it.

Once when France and England were at war, a French vessel had gone off on a long whaling voyage. When they came back, the crew were short of water, and, being near an English port, they wanted to get it; but they were afraid they would be taken prisoners if they went into that port. Some people in the port saw their signal of distress, and sent word that they need not be afraid, that the war was over, and peace had been declared. But they couldn't make those sailors believe it, and they didn't dare go into port, although they were out of water. At last they made up their minds that they would better go in and surrender their cargo and their lives to their enemies than to perish at sea without water; and when they got in, they found out that what had been told them was

true, and that peace had been declared. There are many poor sinners who occupy the position of those sailors. They are thirsting for the Water of Life, and know that they must perish without it, and yet they will not receive the good news of salvation which offers them a free pardon for their sins and peace with God through the merits of Jesus Christ.

I want to call your attention, in conclusion, to the fact—and it is a very sad and heart-breaking fact—that it is possible for the sinner to thwart God's love, and make all the loving purpose of God and all the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ of no effect so far as he is concerned. Absalom did just that with those who sought so earnestly to save him. He came back and turned against Joab, who had interceded for him, and destroyed his fields; he cherished bitterness and treachery in his heart against David, his father, and finally openly rebelled against him and sought his life. Through it all David did everything he could to save him. And there is nothing sadder in history than that day of the battle between the king's troops and the rebels that followed Absalom, when David watched and waited earnestly the result of the battle, and when they came and told him of the death of his son,

David went up to the chamber over the gate and wept, and as he went he cried : “ O my son Absalom ! my son, my son Absalom ! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son ! ” But all David’s love could not save Absalom against his own folly, and his own wilful sins ; and the very hour that David longed to press him to his heart, Absalom lay yonder in the woods under his heap of stones, buried as contemptuously as one might bury a dead dog, because he would not respond to his father’s love but sinned against it.

So I bring you this message to-night : God loves you ; he seeks after you for your salvation ; Jesus Christ was not only willing to die for you, but he did die for you ; he drank your cup of sorrow to the very dregs ; he was crowned with the thorns meant for you ; it was your sins that helped to nail him to the cross ; and if you are not saved it will not be for lack of love in God, nor for lack of virtue in the blood shed on Calvary, nor for lack of warning in God’s Word and through his Holy Spirit ; it can only be because you refuse. If you never before heard an invitation to come to Christ, I give it to you now, and you cannot stand in the day of judgment and plead that you did not have a fair chance. Don’t wait, I beg you, for

some overpowering wave of feeling that you cannot resist to sweep you off your feet into the kingdom; if you do you may be sure it will never come. But if you will heed it, I am sure there is a breath from heaven to-night sufficient to show you the way thither.

I have heard of two old miners in an English coal mine who once lost their way. Their lights went out, and among miles of dark tunnels traversing each other they were in danger of losing their lives. After wandering in vain for awhile, one of them said: "Let us sit perfectly quiet, and see if we cannot feel which way the air is moving, because it always moves toward the shaft." There they sat for a long time, when all at once one of them felt a slight touch on his cheek, and he sprang to his feet and said: "I felt it." They went in the direction in which the air was moving, and reached the shaft. I am sure that there is a breath from God to-night, which touches some of your souls. If you will rise and follow it, it will lead you to the mercy-seat; it will bring you to him who is "the Light of the world," and he himself has assured us that if we will follow him we shall not walk in darkness.

THE SINNER'S EMPTY BOAST.

“Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God endureth continually.” — *Psalm lii. 1.*

BEHIND this Psalm is the story that inspired it. On the day when David fled from Saul to save his life, he stopped at the house of Ahimelech, the priest, to get food and weapons. David was worn and weary, and, without telling the priest his business or his danger, he besought of him help. Ahimelech was a noble and generous man, and not only gave David five loaves of shewbread from the house of God, but on David's inquiry about weapons reminded him that there was kept there, in the museum of relics—for this house of the Lord, presided over by Ahimelech, was a kind of rude Westminster Abbey for the land of Israel—the sword which David himself had taken from Goliath of Gath when he had slain that giant. I can imagine the way David's face lighted up as he responded, “There is none like that; give it me.” Surely nobody had so good a right to that sword as David, and the priest could not righteously be blamed from any standpoint for

thus giving help to David, as he had no knowledge that there was any difference between him and Saul.

The matter would never have come to notice, and probably have never been recorded, if it had not been that there was a certain man there that day named Doeg, an Edomite, who overheard the conversation and saw the gift of the bread and the sword. David saw Doeg there, and was at once alarmed, for he seems to have known the fellow, that he was a man who had more pleasure in doing evil than in doing good, and that it would be just like him to go to Saul with the story of his presence at the house of the priest.

Not long after, when Saul heard that David was gathering his friends about him and preparing to resist arrest, he gathered his officers together and made them a speech in which he wanted to know if they had all conspired against him. It was a very shrewd sort of speech ; he appealed to their self-love and their greed ; he pointed out that David was poor and had no power to reward them. He said, " Will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds ? " And so he appeals to their love of spoil,

and then demands that they shall tell him what they know about this league against him. This was Doeg's chance, and he at once told Saul about the visit of David to the house of Ahimelech, and how the priest had prayed for David and given him food and the sword of Goliath.

Saul was filled with anger against the priest, and sent to the town of Nob, where he lived, and had not only Ahimelech, but all the other priests, brought before him. On being questioned by Saul, Ahimelech, with perfect frankness, for he had done nothing that any good man would want to cover up, told all he knew concerning David's visit, of his ignorance of any trouble between Saul and David, and that he had done simply what he had considered his duty. But the old proverb is very true, that "whom the gods destroy they first make mad," and Saul, believing that the priests were on the side of David and against him, determined to at once crush their power by killing them. So he gave orders to his guards to attack and destroy the priests. But, to the honor of these officers and soldiers, they refused to stain their hands with the blood of the Lord's priests. In his wicked rage Saul turned to Doeg, who had given him the information, and said, "Turn

thou, and fall upon the priests." And Doeg, who was a wicked, bloody man at his heart, saw what he thought was a great opportunity to gain the good-will of the king, and so he killed that day eighty-five priests, and went to Nob, the city of the priests, and put to death men and women and little children at the edge of the sword.

One of the sons of Ahimelech escaped, a young man by the name of Abiathar. This young man fled to David, and told the horrible story of butchery, and David was greatly grieved that he should have been the cause, unintentionally, of bringing about this great sorrow, and treated Abiathar with kindness. He says, "I knew it that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul: I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house. Abide thou with me, fear not; for he that seeketh my life, seeketh thy life: but with me thou shalt be in safeguard."

Now these were the occurrences that occasioned this brief Psalm. I think it will certainly be profitable for us if, with the story fresh in our minds, we recall David's poem as a whole:—

"Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man?
The mercy of God endureth continually.
Thy tongue deviseth very wickedness;

Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.
Thou lovest evil more than good ;
And lying rather than to speak righteousness.
Thou lovest all devouring words,
O thou deceitful tongue.
God shall likewise destroy thee for ever,
He shall take thee up, and pluck thee out of thy tent,
And root thee out of the land of the living.
The righteous also shall see it, and fear,
And shall laugh at him, saying,
Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength ;
But trusted in the abundance of his riches
And strengthened himself in his wickedness.'''

And then David, with prophetic vision, sees that the same God who will pull down this wicked man, and will make even the friendship of a king of no avail to him, will on the other hand reward righteousness; and the young poet-prince, tho he is hunted like a wolf and is hiding away in caves from his enemies, suddenly is exalted in his heart, and by the eye of faith sees the day when God shall bring him out of all his troubles; and he determines to be loyal to God under all circumstances. And so this Psalm, which he opened in a burst of righteous indignation against Doeg, and continued into a prophecy of his destruction, he concludes in a sublime outpouring of confidence in God, and in the divine goodness to those who trust him. He says :—

“ But as for me, I am like a green olive tree in the house of God :

I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.

I will give thee thanks for ever, because thou hast done it :

And I will wait on thy name, for it is good, in the presence of thy saints.”

The real message of our text, with all the light of the story thrown upon it, is only a picturesque putting of the same message which Paul gives us in his letter to the Galatians, when he says : “ Be not deceived ; God is not mocked : for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing : for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” Sometimes there is such a long time intervening between the sowing of the seed and the reaping of the harvest that men imagine that God has forgotten and that they have successfully defied his law of cause and effect and will not be called upon to suffer for it. But in the end the harvest must be reaped. Joseph's brethren, moved by their envy and jealousy, sold him away into Egypt, and twenty years passed by before they reaped

the harvest of their sin. Then they went down into Egypt, and when ruin stared them in the face, they turned to one another with remorse and said, "We are guilty of the blood of our brother." Don't think because you sinned against God five years ago, or ten or fifteen or twenty years ago, and your sins have never been detected, that therefore God's laws have failed. God is in no hurry, and there is time enough, but his word will never fail.

But some one says, "If God forgives my sins, then does not that do away with the teaching of the Bible that 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap'? How do I reap what I sow if God forgives me?"

That is occurring all the time. I know two men who were little twin brothers together, and once when they were boys they had a quarrel, and one rose up and struck the other in anger. He hit him over the head, and forever after that brother, who had been so bright and beautiful, became simple-minded and almost an idiot. The blow which blighted one life completely for this world, laid also a burden on the other that has been yielding its harvest for fifty years. The young fellow who struck that blow has been reaping that harvest every day since. He has made his brother his

special care ; he has supported and cared for him all his life ; but none can tell the agony he has endured that he should have taken from his brother by his own act all the joy and beauty of living. He became an earnest Christian, God forgave his sin, and he has the deep peace of knowing that he is forgiven ; but the harvest that he sowed he has had to reap.

When Jerry McAuley was dying in New York, where he had led so many hundreds of men to Christ, dying a comparatively young man, he said that he was reaping in his early death the harvest of the sins of his youth. God had forgiven his sins, and had given him wonderful blessing in making him a soul-winner of marvelous power, but he had to reap in the disease of his body and in his early death the results of the seeds he had sown.

Rest assured, a man cannot mock God. No man or woman could be guilty of greater folly than to go on sinning against the Lord, presuming on God's patience and forbearance, thinking that sometime forgiveness will annul the penalty of the misdeeds. Do not, I beg you, thus treat him with contempt.

A young man once stood up in one of Mr. Moody's meetings and said, "If you have friends praying for you, if you have mothers

praying for you, treat them kindly, for you will not always have them with you." Then he went on to tell how he had once had a father and mother who had loved him dearly, and who prayed continually for him. He was an only child. His father died, and after the burial his mother became more anxious for his salvation. Sometimes she would come to him and put her arms around his neck and say with kindness, "O my boy, I would be so happy if you would only be a Christian, and could pray with me." He would push her away. "No, mother; I am not going to become a Christian yet; I am going to wait a little longer and see the world." He would try to banish the subject from his mind altogether. Sometimes he would wake up at the midnight hour, and would hear the voice of that mother raised in supplication for her boy: "O God, save my boy; have mercy upon him." At last (this is the way he put it), "It got too hot for him." He saw that he had either to become a Christian or run away; and away he ran, and became a prodigal and a wanderer. He heard from his mother indirectly; he could not let her know where he was because he knew she would go to the end of the world to find him. One day he got word that she was very sick. He began to think: "Suppose mother

should die, I could never forgive myself," and he said, "I will go home." But then he thought, "Well, if I go home, she will be praying at me again, and I can't stay under her roof and listen to her prayers," and his proud, stubborn heart would not let him go. Months went on, and again he heard indirectly that his mother was very sick. His conscience began to trouble him. He knew he could never forgive himself if he did not go home, and he finally started. He arrived at the little town at night. The moon was shining, and he could see the village. His mother's home was about a mile from where he landed, and on his way he had to pass the village grocery, and as he went along, he thought he would pass through the graveyard and see his father's grave. "What," he thought, "if my mother has been laid there!" When he got up to the grave he saw by the light of the moon a new-made grave. He felt the turf, and the earth was fresh and soft. He knew who had been laid there, and for the first time in his life the thought flashed upon him, "Who will pray now for my lost soul? My mother and father lie there, and they are the only ones who ever prayed for me." "Young men," said he, "I spent that night at my mother's grave, and before the sun rose my mother's God had be-

come my God. But I can never forgive myself for murdering my mother, altho Christ has forgiven me." Surely he had to reap what he had sowed.

Do not, I beg you, be putting thorns in your pillow for all the years to come. Determine here and now that not another sin, not a single other night's neglect of God, shall be added to furnish its sting of sorrow and remorse. Come to Christ now, and accept salvation!

THE HARPS ON THE WILLOWS.

“ We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.” — *Psalm cxxxvii. 2.*

WERE you ever homesick? Did you ever sit down in a strange city, a city full of people, and watch them go by the window for hours, and never see a face you knew, until the feeling crept into your heart that you were alone among strangers and that your friends were far away? If you have, you have experienced one of the hard things to endure in life. And yet any experience you may have had of that sort in our modern life would but faintly indicate the sorrow of these young Jewish captives who had been taken out of their own loving homes and carried away as prisoners of war to Babylon. They were in the midst of a great city, the very language of whose people was strange to them, and they were captives. They had no friends, no homes, and no sympathy. They saw contempt or hate or curiosity upon every face. And then their captors, to make it worse, asked them to sing the songs which they had been accustomed to sing in the temple service in

Jerusalem. They could not do it; their hearts broke at the thought of it. They could not sing the Lord's songs in a strange land. And so they sat down and cried beside the river, and hung their harps upon the willows that fringed its shore.

There is nothing sweeter in the Gospel than the promise of Jesus Christ that he will never leave comfortless those who give their hearts to him. When he was passing through his great trial before the crucifixion, he told his disciples that when he went away he would send the Comforter to them, and that they should never be left to bear the burden of their sorrows alone. I do not believe we appreciate how much that means in the ordinary experiences of life. It is a terrible thing to be alone; to be left comfortless.

A little before the Chicago fire in 1871, there were a father and mother who lived in that city who had two young sons. The father fell sick very suddenly and died, and the blow was so terrible to the mother that she only survived it a few days and died of a broken heart. Then the question came, "What shall be done with these two boys?" A wealthy banker came and said that he would take one of them; he would keep him and make him his heir. His offer

was accepted, and the boy was taken away. The other one was taken to an orphan asylum. They had never been separated, and when the little fellow was taken away from his brother to the asylum, he cried bitterly every night.

One night, when they came to put him to bed, they could not find him. They made search everywhere, but failed to find him. Next morning he was found on the steps of the banker's house. The poor little fellow had gone that cold night and lain down on the doorsteps, and when they asked him what he did it for, he said he wanted to get near Charlie.

He knew that if he rang the bell to get in they would send him back, and so he lay on the steps all night to be near his brother, because it was comforting to know that he was near him. Oh, how many aching hearts have been consoled by the words of Jesus, "I will not leave you comfortless." Many and many a man, and many a woman, have said to me, "I could not have lived through my sorrow or trouble if it had not been for the comfort I had in the conscious presence of Jesus."

But the presence of Jesus gives songs in the midst of all the sorrows and trials of life. There is no place so dark, no night of trouble so severe, but God can give songs at its midnight. God

can give songs to his people even amid the pain and suffering of death. People take their own lives in despair, sometimes, but the only people who ever meet death with songs of peace are those whose hearts are inspired with immortal hope through their faith in Jesus. Some one sings :—

- “ I asked the glad and happy child
Whose hands were filled with flowers,
Whose silvery laugh rang free and wild
Among the time-wreathed bowers ;
I crossed her sunny path and cried :
‘ When is the time to die ? ’
‘ Not yet, not yet ! ’ the child replied,
And swiftly bounded by.
- “ I asked the maiden ; back she threw
The tresses of her hair ;
Grief’s traces o’er her cheeks I knew,
Like pearls they glittered there.
A flush passed o’er her lily brow,
I heard her spirit sigh :
‘ Not now ! ’ she cried. ‘ Oh, no, not now,
Youth is no time to die.’
- “ I asked the mother as she pressed
Her firstborn in her arms,
As gently on her tender breast
She hushed her babe’s alarms ;
In quivering tones her accents came,
Her eyes were dim with tears :

‘ My boy his mother’s life must claim
For many, many years.’

“ I questioned one in manhood’s prime,
Of proud and fearless air ;
His brow was furrowed not by time,
Nor dimmed by woe and care ;
In angry accents he replied,
And flashed with scorn his eye ;
‘ Talk not to me of death,’ he cried,
‘ For only age should die.’

“ I questioned one for whom the tomb
Had long been all prepared ;
For death, who withers life and bloom,
This man of years had spared ;
Once more his nature’s dying fire
Flashed high, and thus he cried :
‘ Life ! only life, is my desire ! ’
Then gasped, and groaned, and died.

“ I asked the Christian : ‘ Answer thou
When is the hour of death ? ’
A holy calm was on his brow,
And peaceful was his breath,
And sweetly o’er his features stole
A smile so bright divine :
He spoke the language of his soul :
‘ My Master’s time is mine.’ ”

And it is wonderful how God does give his people songs of blessed peace with which to keep step in the valley of shadows. A good

woman, a member of this church, and one who was here with us in the revival meetings less than two weeks ago, was laid away in the cemetery this afternoon. That is, her body was laid there, for her happy soul is singing in the Paradise of God. She was converted here two years ago, in the first revival meetings I held in this church, and came into this fellowship with us. She has seen trouble and sorrow in these years, but Christ has been inexpressibly precious to her, and she met death — that frail, delicate woman — with a smile of glorious courage on her face ; and only a little while before she died she sang softly to herself, “There’s sunshine in my soul.” Ah, no pagan philosophy, no modern agnosticism, no ribald infidelity, ever yet sent one to death like that ! Infidelity hushes its harps in the hour of death ; philosophy is dumb in the face of the pale horse and its rider ; it is only the Christian who sings with joy as, leaning on the staff of the Good Shepherd, he goes to meet his Lord.

Sin puts us into exile, and takes all the music out of our hearts. Music suggests perfect harmony of character. To have a musical instrument that will adequately express musical thought in sound and harmony requires very carefully-selected woods as to acoustic proper-

ties for its construction. John Albert, the famous violin maker of Philadelphia, who has been called "the Stradivarius of America," died the other day at the age of ninety years. His great success in making violins, that won him fame throughout the world, was as much due to the care with which he selected the woods from which they were made as to his skill as a workman. So much depended on the proper woods that Albert sought them sometimes at the risk of his life. Once he lay for weeks between life and death, the victim of an accident while he was on the hunt for a certain wood in an almost impassable forest. Ole Bull, the great violinist, pronounced him one of the great violin makers of the world because he possessed the greatest knowledge of the acoustic properties of woods of any man living at that time. Surely if a violin maker must pay such great heed to the character of the wood out of which he constructs a violin, in order that he may make it a perfect interpreter of musical thought to human ears, we should not wonder at the care of God in seeking to so purify and cleanse our hearts that they shall be resonant, and responsive to the slightest touch of the Holy Spirit, and thus be able to interpret the melodies of heaven.

I am sure that some of you to-night are conscious that your voices are silent, and you no longer sound from the heart the praise of God, because sin has come in and marred and spoiled the soul quality which alone can give real harmony. I thank God that Jesus Christ has the power to take our poor broken heart-instruments, that sin has rendered silent, and cause them to resound again with joyous music.

A beautiful story is told of Jenny Lind. She was once singing in the opera in London in 1849. A young musician who had been led away from the path of right by strong drink, and had gone down and down until, poverty-stricken and ragged, he was a wanderer on the face of the earth, saw the sign at the door. Now it happened that the young man, Max Bronzden, had been a schoolmate of Jenny Lind in her girlhood, and in his boyhood had had as high ambitions and dreams as she, but his sin had dragged him down into the gutter, while she in her purity had mounted up "with wings as eagles." As Max Bronzden stood there at the door, he heard a ringing trill from the voice he knew so well. It deeply stirred him, and, tho he was penniless, he determined to enter and hear that voice once more. He watched his chance. A crowd of richly dressed men

and women were passing in. He rushed into the throng, evaded the ticket-agent, and gained entrance. In a shadowed recess he crouched and listened. Like a poor starved flower this man with his sensitive musical temperament drank in the showers of glorious music which filled the great auditorium. And at last, when the climax came, and the tempest of applause which made the house tremble, he forgot all — forgot that he was a wandering vagabond, forgot the throng and the lights, and all save that he saw the little barefoot girl of his boyhood's worship, a queen among men. He rushed forward and cried, "Jenny, my little Jenny! I told you so. I said that you would rule the world with that voice. Speak to me, and tell me that you remember."

"Put him out! Put him out!" shouted the multitude. "He is mad! Away with him!"

A strong arm seized him, and he would have been hurled out in the darkness, but a sweet voice cried: "Spare him, and let me hear him. What is it, poor man?"

Max Bronzden looked up, and like an angel of light she stood above him. "Forgive me, madam," he cried. "I was passing and heard your voice. I stole my way in; it seemed like I had a right to listen. Once the birds and I

were your only auditors ; and yet when I told you, one day, you would be great, you seemed glad of my praise, though I was only Max, the blacksmith's son."

Bending over him, Jenny Lind cried : " Max Bronzden, my first and truest friend, stand ; let this vast throng look upon you. It was he," said she, " who first created in my heart ambition to become great. My stage was a lichen-covered forest log, and he showered upon me wild flowers which I prized more than I now prize the jewels and rare gifts which are emblems of my triumph this night. Rise, my friend," she said to him, " and be worthy of the trust and confidence I will ever give you in all the future years. I have struggled and conquered all difficulties. It is not too late. Be no longer a vagabond, as you say you are, but be a man worthy of my friendship."

The astonished man could scarcely speak, but at last, with hoarse earnestness, he uttered the words, " With God's help I will."

Years afterwards Max Bronzden, describing that wondrous scene, said : " The house had been silent as death ; then it suddenly burst into tumultuous applause, and the curtain fell. I left that place a new man, with new aspirations and courage, and in all the years since

that night I have been, by God's help, a conqueror of sin. I have lived true to my words."

If Jenny Lind, by her graciousness and mercy, given her of God, could inspire that poor dissipated man to cast away the rags of his sin and try again for a noble manhood ; could encourage him to take his harp down from the willows, where he had hung it in despair, and set it again to music and gladness, what cannot Jesus Christ do with your heart and life, if you will but yield them to his fingers !

THE KING'S FERRY BOATS.

“ And there went over a ferry boat to carry over the king's household.” — 2 *Samuel* xix. 18.

THE river Jordan has seen some wonderful sights. It was in Jordan that John the Baptist baptized his converts — people who came out from the city in multitudes to hear the stern preacher of repentance, coming largely out of curiosity, but staying because he gripped their consciences with hooks of steel. It was there that Jesus came to offer himself for the baptism of John, and when John saw him coming to be baptized of him, he was astonished, and protested to Jesus that it would be more appropriate for him to be baptized by Christ. But Christ assured him that it was his purpose to fulfill all the law, and John consented to perform the holy sacrament with reverent hands. It was as Christ was leaving the Jordan that the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove, alighting upon Christ, and a voice out of the heavens said, “ This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

There have, however, been few scenes on the Jordan more interesting than that in which this ferry boat plays a part. David was on his way home to Jerusalem to take up again the reins of government after the death of Absalom. Everything possible had been done to make the return of King David a memorable and impressive event. All Judah came to Gilgal to go and meet the king and conduct him over the Jordan. Even Shimei, who had been full of abuse of David when he fled before the rebellion led by Absalom, came now to make his confession of sin and be forgiven. He had with him a thousand men of Benjamin to join in his protestations of future allegiance. It was arranged that David should cross the Jordan in state, and a ferry boat had been provided to carry over the king and his household. And so this ferry boat, the only one mentioned in the Bible, is intimately associated with this interesting and happy return of David to power and glory in Jerusalem.

It has occurred to me that this figure might be very appropriate and helpful for us to use in studying the preparations which God makes to float his children over the troubles and difficulties and sorrows of their earthly experience. Every man, woman, or child when invited to

become a Christian, is invited to become a member of the household of the King of kings. And when we become members of God's household, he charges himself with our transportation and protection through all the journey of our lives.

We might certainly, without straining to find illustration, see suggested here the King's ferry boat which carries us across the Jordan of our condemnation, and brings us to the land of forgiveness. We have certainly abundant reason for this thought in the case of Shimei, who made his peace with David that day. He had been, in the time of David's great emergency, when he needed soldiers, a base and wicked traitor. He had not only refused to serve David and give him his loyal support, but he had done everything to show his contempt for him. But now that Absalom was dead, and David was coming back to power, there was only one hope for Shimei, and that was to fly to David and surrender himself completely to the king's mercy. Any other course was simply suicide. When David came back into full power he would make short work of Shimei and his little band if he sought to bring them to justice, as he would necessarily have to do. Now Shimei was no fool, tho he had been mean, and he de-

terminated to take the straight course that gave him his one chance of salvation. There was, of course, no certainty that David would act mercifully in the matter ; Shimei had no excuse to offer, and if he had had a man like Saul to deal with his head would have paid the forfeit. But there was one hope, and that was to surrender unconditionally to David and promise allegiance for the future. So there was Shimei waiting at the ferry landing. There was no lagging back ; there was no waiting to be hunted down and have the halter round his neck before he asked for mercy. He was a wise man to come and give himself up. The very first man that David looked on at the ferry was Shimei, and he fell on his face before the king in humility and cried, "Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remember that which thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart. For thy servant doth know that I have sinned : therefore, behold, I am come the first this day of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king." Abishai, one of the leaders of the time, thought this a good opportunity to get vengeance on Shimei, and protested against mercy. He said to the king, "Shall not Shimei

be put to death for this, because he cursed the Lord's anointed?" But David had had enough of war and bloodshed and death, and he was shrewd enough to see that out of this man, who now so completely surrendered himself to him, might easily be developed a loyal, stout-hearted friend, and so David said, "Shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? for do not I know that I am this day king over Israel?" And the king said to Shimei, "Thou shalt not die."

So I bring to any poor sinner here the King's ferry boat, on which you may safely ride across the Jordan of your sins to the blessed shore of forgiveness; it is surrender to God and unconditional acceptance of Christ Jesus as your Savior. You have no more to plead of your own merit than this wicked Shimei had to plead before David—you have sinned against God, you have sinned against light and knowledge, you have known your Master's will and yet you have refused to do it, you have neglected the great salvation, you have grieved the Holy Spirit, you have trampled under your feet in indifference the blood of the atonement. The condemnation of God's broken law hangs over your head. You cannot fight against God. There is only one thing left for you to do, and

that is not to lag behind, not to wait until your many sins put the halter about your neck and drag you to judgment, but to come frankly, openly, promptly, and, throwing yourself on your face at the mercy-seat, surrender yourself unconditionally to God and beg pardon through Jesus Christ. It is the King's ferry boat; it has been prepared at great expense for his household, and it will carry you safe to salvation. It is large enough and strong enough to carry every poor sinner on earth that will come aboard. All things are now ready. Come!

We may see also suggested in this the way God carries his people across the river of their needs. God's Word assures us that the Lord is not unmindful of the necessities of our human lives. Christ says: "Your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." We are assured in God's Word that the man who will surrender himself to do the will of the Lord shall be floated over the needs of life far better than he can himself conceive possible. The man who trusts God is a great deal better taken care of than he who proposes to neglect God and look out for number one.

I was reading an Indian story the other day, in which Chief Mogoloch and an Indian trader named Galphin undertook to get the better of each other. The chief came to stay all night at the trader's. In the morning the Indian said: "Me dream last night."

"Ah!" said Galphin, "what did my red brother dream?"

"Me dream you gave me fine big rifle;"—one the white man then had in his hands.

The trader instantly passed the rifle to the chief, saying, "If you dreamed it, you must have it."

Next morning Galphin said to the chief, "I dreamed last night."

"What you dream?" asked Mogoloch.

"I dreamed you gave me the Chickasaw stallion;"—which the chief was then riding.

"If you dream um, you must have um," said the chief, and the horse was straightway transferred to the trader.

The next morning the Indian remarked, "I dream last night."

"What did my red brother dream?" was the inquiry.

"I dream," answered Mogoloch, "you give me red coat you wear and much calico."

"If you dreamed it, you must have it," said

Galphin, and the Indian received the red coat and the calico.

Next morning it was Galphin's turn; he said to the chief, "I dreamed last night."

"What you dream?" was Mogoloch's inquiry.

"I dreamed," replied Galphin, "you gave me ten miles of land around the Ogeechee old town."

"Wugh!" said the Indian; "if you dream, you must have um; but I dream with you no more."

But we shall never reach the limit of God's infinite grace and mercy by our most exaggerated dreams of good. Does not Paul assure us that God will supply all our need "according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus"? And again he says, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Do not think you are too busy, or have to be engaged too much about other things, to be a Christian. The one ferry boat that is sure to float you across the river of life's needs is a genuine, whole-hearted Christianity.

You may also see in this the King's ferry boat across the river of trouble and sorrow. How abundant are the promises of God that those

who join his household shall be ferried safely across all the sorrows and troubles of life ! The God who planned an ark to save Noah and his family because they trusted in him and were faithful to him, has never left one of his loyal children to go down in the deluge without help. Paul assures us that "All things work together for good to them that love God." Jesus stands with open arms of welcome and cries to all the troubled and tried ones, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

I know there are some people among us, and all of us have had experience at it, perhaps, at one time or another, who call themselves Christians, and who mean to be Christians, and yet are in deep anxiety and trouble ; but I do stand here to maintain to-day, in the light of all the observation and experience of human history, that the difficulty is not with the King's ferry boat, but with ourselves. If any member of David's household had jumped overboard from the ferry boat, and attempted to wade across Jordan, it would not have been the fault of the boat. And so if we sometimes lose our faith,

and refuse to trust God, and be guided by his Spirit, and keep his commandments, and find ourselves wading the cold Jordan of trouble, shivering and alarmed, let us not slander the King's ferry boat, but rather let us clutch at the life-line which is thrown to us, and climb aboard again this day, and commit all our ways unto the Lord.

We may see also in this figure our King's ferry boat across the river of death. God does not leave his saints to die alone. David's idea of dying was passing through a valley of shadows, down into the river of darkness ; but the passage was made comfortable because the Good Shepherd was there, with his rod and his staff to comfort and help. There is something yet brighter and more cheerful in the words of Jesus, in his promise to come to receive us in person and take us to our heavenly home.

Two days before Mr. Moody's death there was placed in his room, unknown to him, a stenographer, who took every word that fell from the good man's lips. And in the last moments he said : " Earth recedes. Heaven opens before me. You say this is death. There is nothing awful here; it is sweet, this place. Do not call me back. God is calling me, I must

go. There is no valley here, it is all beautiful, beautiful." So Moody found, as millions of God's people have found before, that the King's ferry boat is roomy and splendid, and safe in carrying the King's household across the Jordan of death to the shores of that beautiful country "which eager hearts expect."

The ferry boat will not be lonely in crossing any of these streams, for Christ is Captain, and there are no rules that keep us from speaking to him while he is on duty. We may hold sweet communion with him all the way. On the ferry boats which ply between Liverpool and the Cheshire side of the Mersey is the notice, "Passengers are requested not to speak to the captain or steersman while crossing the river." Rev. Henry Burton was once crossing that ferry and seeing this notice was struck with the difference between this rule and that which obtains on the King's ferry boat which carries God's people. Inspired by it he wrote a very beautiful poem, which I pray God the Holy Spirit may use to our great good and comfort.

" There is a stream that we all must cross,
The River of Human Years ;
Now lying calm in the summer light,
Now splashed with a rain of tears ;

Out from the hills of God it flows,
And on to the shoreless sea
Where the noontide sun no shadow throws,
And time is eternity.

“ But why should I faint or falter?
Why are these doubts and fears?
I shall go and speak to the Captain
As I cross the River of Years.

“ There is a stream that we often cross,
The River of Earthly Change ;
As we leave the moorings of the past,
And we seek the new and strange ;
But the shore is veiled by a misty cloud,
And we cannot see it well ;
And the voices of the storm are loud,
As we hear the minute bell.

“ But why should I fear and falter,
Or shrink from the new and strange?
I shall go and speak to the Captain
As I cross the River of Change.

“ There is a stream that we all must cross,
The River of Death so cold
When the lights of earth are seen no more,
And the green moss turns to mold:
When a hand of ice shall push our bark
Out on the swelling tide,
When friends will leave us alone in the dark,
Alone on the waters wide.

“ But why should I fear and falter?
Or cry with bated breath?
I shall go and speak to the Captain
When I cross the River of Death.

“ Say, have you made friends with the Captain?
Have you looked in his loving face?
Have you heard his voice of pardon?
Have you tasted of his grace?
O why do you slight and grieve him,
Counting his love but dross?
Will you sin on, and leave him,
When the River of Death you cross?

“ O speak, speak now to the Captain,
Speak in your sighs and tears!
And he will speak and stand by you
All down the River of Years.”

SAUL'S NIGHT WITH THE WITCH OF ENDOR.

“ And when Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets. Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. ” — 1 *Samuel* xxviii. 6, 7.

THE house of the clairvoyant is often the last waystation on the road to ruin which is visited by the broken-down and the wretched. In the days of his wisdom and strength Saul had despised these frauds who proposed to peddle the secrets of the Almighty at so much apiece, and had ordered them to be driven out of the land ; and it is a confession of his complete overthrow in character that he now seeks one of these despised creatures, as a drowning man clutches at a straw, hoping thereby in some way to thwart the judgment of God.

Saul had come to his present state through his own sin and stubbornness. No man ever had a brighter start or a fairer opportunity than Saul. He was a kingly looking young man, and God gave him a fair chance. But long

before, at his first transgression at Gilgal, God's prophet had announced to him that his kingdom should not descend to his children, but should be turned over to a man who had a better heart than his. Yet after this God gave him another chance, and he might have had an honorable career and have turned the kingdom over to David at the end, both blessing the man that was to come after him and receiving blessings from God and the people. But again he rebelled against God in the war with Amalek. Then the prophet uttered the final judgment of heaven: "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king." This startled even Saul, and as the prophet turned to go away, trembling and afraid Saul clutched at the skirt of his mantle, and tore it in his hand. Samuel turned on him and said, "The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine, that is better than thou." This was the last conversation Saul and Samuel ever had, so far as we know. They met after that, but we have no record of their having conversed together. From that time on Saul's doom was sealed; the Spirit of the Lord departed from him, and he was left to pursue his own wicked career. Then it was

that he was troubled by an evil spirit. At times this was so terrible that the gloom and the melancholy of it almost drove him crazy. David was brought before him with his harp to make sweet music to charm away the evil spirit; it succeeded for a while, but soon lost its power. It has always been so when wicked men have sought to save themselves by any of the outside luxuries and refinements of life. There is no charm in earthly music that can permanently silence the quarrel in the heart of a sinful man. And so as time went on Saul got worse instead of better.

At last Samuel died, and soon afterwards the Philistines came against Israel with a great army. Saul had a presentiment that he was getting close to the end, and that he would probably be defeated and lose his life in this battle. His gloom was so great that he felt that he must do something to relieve the horrible depression that weighed him down. He called on the prophets of God and begged them again to intercede for him, but God would not talk with him. God has ever refused to be used as a convenience for men. Saul was not really repentant of his sin. If he had been, God would have heard him and forgiven him. At heart he was as wicked and reckless as ever;

his after-conduct shows that. It may be that some one hears me to-night who is going on sinning against God, and yet has a hope that somehow in the great emergency of death, or sometime in the future when it suits his convenience, he will repent of his sins and accept salvation. I beg of you do not thus presumptuously sin against God. Saul found that God refused to be used simply as a lever to get him out of the mire into which he had plunged himself.

When Saul found that God would not hear him, he determined that he would endeavor to thwart the Lord by hunting up a witch, or a woman with a familiar spirit, and inquire of her. Strange what folly sin would lead him into; God would not speak to Saul in a vision; he would not speak to Saul by the mouth of the prophets; and so now Saul thinks he will make God do what he wants him to do by the aid of a witch. What fools sin does make of intelligent people!

Saul inquired of his officers, and found out that in a cavern at Endor, some miles away from the army, there was a woman who had a reputation in that part of the country as a fortune teller. She was said to be wise in the arts of divination. So Saul took two of his

men with him, and disguised, so that she would not think of him as being the king, they proceeded under cover of darkness to the witch's cavern. As soon as they entered, Saul, nervous and restless, weighed down by trouble and apprehension, at once opened the subject. "Divine unto me," he said to her, "by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee." The woman was at once on her guard and suspected treachery. She accused him of being a spy who was laying a trap for her destruction. But Saul swore to her that she should not be harmed for anything that night. Then, cautiously, she asks whom he desires to consult. With a tremulous anxiety Saul exclaims, "Bring me up Samuel." Think of Saul wanting to see Samuel again! Samuel had been within reach year after year, and very little Saul cared for him; but now those lost opportunities came back to him and haunted him, and he would have given anything to see Samuel. Are any of you planting thorns like these in your pillow? Are you letting slip opportunities and privileges of communion with God, which after a while you would be willing to give everything you have on earth to get? for just one chance to talk with the Lord, and accept mercy? And shall you, like Saul, find

it too late? God forbid! Use the opportunity which God gives you to-day.

What incantations or peculiar exercises this woman of darkness used we do not know, but something about Saul had still deepened her suspicion, and she determined to test him thoroughly. Suddenly she cried out in alarm, as tho she had seen some great specter, and shouted to Saul: "Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul." Saul again quieted her fears, and assured her that she should not be harmed, and then begged her to tell him what she saw, and she replied, "I saw gods ascending out of the earth." How much that sounds like the fortune teller! And Saul begged to know what the form was, and as he had asked for Samuel, who through a long life had been a familiar figure in the country, it was very easy for her to describe the bent form covered with a mantle which Saul had last seen on the prophet. It is not intimated that Saul saw Samuel; it is said that "Saul perceived that it was Samuel." That is, in his frightened, nervous state, he believed the woman's lie and fell into her trap. And so Saul dropped on his face to try to propitiate Samuel, whom he supposed to be present. And then the fortune teller adroitly draws Saul along; she wants to find

out if possible what he desires to know, and so before she gives him a chance to ask any questions, in a deep, sepulchral tone, which the midnight, and the darkness of the cavern, and Saul's nervous apprehension all heighten, she sets the supposed Samuel to talking. In the quarrelsome, petulant tone of a peevish old man, suddenly disturbed in his sleep, she makes Samuel complain : "Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?" In this speech the woman really betrays herself, and if Saul had been in his senses he would have seen it quickly enough. Imagine a saintly prophet, just come down from Paradise at the command of God, talking that way ! The whole thing is absurd, but it was a shrewd touch on the part of the fortune teller, for Saul uncovers his whole heart to her in his reply to the supposed Samuel. In an agonized appeal he cries out, "I am sore distressed ; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more."

You can very well imagine that a clairvoyant, or a witch, or fortune teller, or woman with a familiar spirit, or whatever you wish to call her, would not want an easier contract than that. Naturally she despised Saul from the bottom of her soul. Had he not been the

enemy of her business? Had he not driven her from pillar to post by his harsh enforcement of laws against such creatures as she, until she had to hide in the mountain caverns? Now she had a chance to get even. I can imagine the chuckle down in her old wizened heart, as she says to herself, "I'll scare this old reprobate king till he will not be much good to the army of Israel to-morrow." The army of the Philistines was only seven miles away from where she was, and it is not thinkable that she was not informed of the great advantage which the Philistines evidently had in the coming contest; she had every reason to believe that in the battle of the morrow Saul would be defeated, and if she could only scare him out of what little wits he had left, she would greatly assist in the destruction of the man she hated. So it was very easy for her to make the supposed Samuel utter words that came true on the morrow. Saul and David had been for years the talk of the country, and it was no wonder that a woman who lived by her wits knew just how to strike Saul to the quick. She made Samuel say, in deep, hollow tones, "Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the Lord is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? And the Lord hath done to him, as he spake by me : for

the Lord hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbor, even to David : because thou obeyedst not the voice of the Lord, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the Lord done this thing unto thee this day. Moreover the Lord will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines; and to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me : the Lord also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.”

Saul, overwhelmed by all this because it fitted in so well with his own fears, and with the remorse and foreboding of his own conscience, fell like a dead man on the ground. But it was no part of the woman's plan to have Saul sick on her hands, and perhaps lose her life by having him found dead in her cave; so she got him some breakfast, and persuaded him to force down enough food to refresh himself, so that he could go on his way to the army.

I have devoted so much time to the story for two reasons. The first is, that this has been quoted ten thousand times as a support of the frauds and vagaries and deceptions of modern spiritualism ; and I think I have shown that the tricks of the witch of Endor are as transparent as those of the frauds who plunder the weak,

and the silly, and the wicked, in our own time. But the second reason is far more important. We have in this story, in the conduct of Saul, an illustration of the folly of undertaking to thwart God. Saul sinned against God until God had departed from him, and then thought he would climb up some other way. It was a failure then and it is a failure now. If Saul had really repented of his sins and gone to God in earnest prayer for forgiveness, there might have been a far different ending. Do you remember that other night, when Jacob was coming back to his native land with his flocks and herds and his family, and the news came to him on the road that his brother Esau was coming against him with a small army, and Jacob knew he could not withstand him if he had evil intent, and the memory of his sin against his brother aroused within him the fear that Esau was coming to get vengeance on him? They were camped at the ford of the Jabbok, and, instead of going to bed at night in his tent, Jacob went out alone into the darkness and spent the entire night in prayer to God. It was a deep humiliation and repentance that went on in Jacob's soul that night. It would have failed, as Saul's failed, if it had been simply a cry to be helped out with Esau. God would as cer-

tainly have refused to be used as a convenience by Jacob as by Saul ; but with Jacob it was a real struggle to become a good man. One came and wrestled with him in the form of a man, but to Jacob it was the Lord. And Jacob said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me," and as the morning dawned God gave Jacob his blessing, and he returned in peace to his people. His pride was gone, he was a humbler man afterwards, but forever after he was a nobler man. From that day his life grew in beauty and strength, and God called him Israel because, as a prince, he had power with God and man.

Now the question before us to-night is, Which path will you take, Jacob's or Saul's? There are these two ways of dealing with sin. One is Saul's way — to try to thwart God, to try to deceive him, to try to escape reaping the penalty of your sins. The other is Jacob's way — to turn to God in humble repentance, to surrender yourself perfectly, to throw yourself upon his bosom and beg his forgiveness and blessing. If you will try Jacob's way you will not have to seek long to find him who comes to bless and to save, for the Savior comes seeking after you even now. Oh, how tender, how loving, is the mercy of God in Jesus Christ !

There used to live a man in Brooklyn, N. Y., without any arms. Possibly he is living there yet. This was his story: When the Civil War broke out he felt it his duty to volunteer. He was engaged to be married, and while in the army letters passed frequently between him and his intended wife. After the battle of the Wilderness the young lady waited anxiously day after day to receive the longed-for letter from him. At last a letter came in a strange hand. She opened it with trembling fingers and foreboding heart, and read these words: "It has been a terrible battle. I have been wounded so awfully that I shall never be able to support you. A friend writes this for me. I love you more tenderly than ever, but I release you from your promise. I will not ask you to join your life with a maimed life like mine." That letter was never answered. The next train that left for the South carried that young lady with it. She went to the hospital; she found out the number of his cot and went down the aisle, between the long rows of wounded men. At last she saw the number. She threw her arms around his neck and said, "I'll not desert you. I'll take care of you." He did not resist her love. They were married, and for many years they lived very happily together.

O my brother, you cannot save yourself. Your sins have maimed and marred you, and you are helpless unless some divine and glorious being shall come to your rescue. But Jesus Christ comes and says: "I was wounded for your transgressions, I was bruised for your iniquities, I bore your sins in mine own body on the cross, and I have gained the right to care for you, and if you will but yield yourself to me, I will care for you through all eternity." That young man could have spurned that noble woman's love; he could, but he did not. So you can, if you will, refuse Jesus Christ, spurn his love, and reject his offered mercy; but I do not believe you will do that. Give him your heart and your confession here and now.

A KING IMPALED ON HIS OWN SWORD.

“ And David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man ; and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die : And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man.”—2 *Samuel* xii. 5-7.

NATHAN was a man who had the courage of his convictions. There are never many of them in any one country at any one time ; but nobody will deny that Nathan belonged to that rare tribe. David the king had sinned against God, and had taken advantage of his position as king to do a deed which would have sent another man to death. Nathan, as God’s prophet, felt that it could not go unnoticed, and that it was his solemn duty to bring the king’s sin home to his conscience. He must have given the matter a great deal of thought, for it was no sermon gotten up on the spur of the moment, the mere condensed outline of which we have preserved here. He came before David as tho he had a wrong to complain of on the part of one of David’s subjects, and presented the case to him as if it were a matter in which another man

was the central figure. It was a neat trap he laid for David. He said to the king in substance: "I have a case which I want to present to your majesty's consideration. There were two men who lived in one city; one of them was rich and the other was poor. The rich man was peculiarly wealthy in flocks and herds, but the poor man was so poor that he had nothing save one little ewe lamb, which had been given him by some kind neighbor, and he brought it up in the house by hand as though it had been a child. The children played with it like one of themselves, and whatever the family had to eat and drink they divided with their one little lamb.

"Well, one day a traveler passing through the country came to pay a visit to the rich man, and then this man of wealth, who had thousands of sheep in his flocks, declined to kill any of his own, but came and took the poor man's lamb, and killed it and dressed it to make a feast for the man that had come to visit him."

David's heart burned within him as he listened to the cruel story, and his eyes blazed with anger as he shouted, "As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die."

Then Nathan squared himself, and, pointing

his finger straight at the face of the king, said, with the dignity and solemnity of a man who is rendering the judgment of God, "Thou art the man."

David, taken aback, was silent, and Nathan proceeded with the application of the sermon. He uncovered to David the wickedness of his conduct. The salvation of David lay in the fact that when his sin was brought home to him, so that he was compelled to confess it, he surrendered at once unconditionally to God. He cried out humbly to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." And God accepted his repentance, and forgave him, and sent by Nathan the message of pardon, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin ; thou shalt not die."

The message that I want to bring to you, very briefly, is this : you can only judge your sin properly when you consider how it would look if it were the deed of another. Now I have no doubt that during all the evolution of the wicked deed that brought David under condemnation and into bitter grief and repentance, he had been finding excuses for himself. His sin had not looked so black until Nathan came and stated it to him as the sin of another man, and David stood off and looked at it without partiality. When he saw his sin incarnate in

another man he loathed it and abhorred it, and at once felt that a man who would do a thing like that ought to die. I wish to apply that principle for a few moments to those of you who have been neglecting to return to God ; and in order that we may bring it clearly before us, let us present the matter in parables, as Nathan did to David.

Here is a man who comes into the country without means and having nothing to sustain the life of himself and family. A man of great wealth and benevolence is very kind and gracious to him. He stakes off a large tract of fertile soil, and tells him that he will be pleased to give him the privilege of cultivating it, and thus find abundant support for his family. He furnishes him with tools, and seeds, and even goes to the expense of irrigating his fields for him. The man who has come new into the country is dependent entirely upon this great man, who is so gracious to him, for everything that he enjoys. The great man does not deed him the land, and the other is but tenant at will ; he can be driven away at any time that he displeases his gracious patron. Would you not say at once that there would be two strong reasons why the new-comer should be loyal and true to his benefactor? First, there would be

the reason of self-interest ; he is dependent for his own happiness and prosperity entirely on the good will of the land owner. If he offend him, if he is treacherous to him, he must eventually lose everything that he has gained through his kindness. Under such conditions it would be the height of folly, from the standpoint of personal safety, for him to be otherwise than a loyal and devoted adherent of his benevolent friend. But this man becomes careless and indifferent ; he begins to live in a manner which is peculiarly displeasing to the owner of the land ; he treats his neighbors ungraciously ; he cultivates the soil in a way to destroy its fertility, and thus lives daily in danger of being driven out of the country and losing everything that he has in the world.

You say at once that that is a very foolish and unwise man. But I turn to you, as God's messenger, and say to every man and woman here who is neglecting salvation, and refusing to give God open service, "Thou art the man." You are tenants at will — at the will of God in this human life. Every day of your life is God's gift. You could not prolong your life a single hour but for God's sleepless care and watchfulness. Your health, your strength, your knowledge, the power to think and act,

your intelligence, which opens windows of communications into the world about, your power to enjoy all these things, are God's generous gift to you every day. And he has the power to withdraw them from you any moment and leave you beggared and bankrupt and in despair. And yet, while this is the case, you are using your lives in a way which you know does not please God. You are directly sinning against him day by day. You are living in a way that is deteriorating your noblest attributes. You are refusing to accept the gracious influences which he offers that would beautify and make nobler your character. And you are thus displeasing the God in whose hand your breath is, and upon whom you depend for every moment's existence. Why not this night be as honest as David was, and frankly say, "I have sinned against the Lord," and turn to him as David did and find forgiveness.

Let us illustrate in another way : There was a woman who was in great personal danger ; danger not only to her person but to her good name and character. And there was a noble, strong, brave man, the strongest and noblest man in the land, a man far above this woman in wealth, in social rank, and in every way ; a man who was welcome everywhere in the

highest and most honorable circles. And this man, knowing of this woman's sad position, took her part and defended her before all the world. In doing this he himself was misunderstood and abused. Finally he was bitterly attacked and severely wounded, but he came off victorious and saved the woman for whom he risked his honor and his life. The only response he asked from this woman, for whom he had risked so much, was that she should always be his loyal friend. On going away to a distant part of the world to be gone for some years he said to her, "I should be pleased if in memory of my great interest in your welfare, and the sacrifices I have made for you, you would hang my picture on the wall of your room, and look at it kindly and with loving thoughts every day. It would also be a great pleasure to me if among all your acquaintances you would let everybody know that you are my friend, and are loyal to me; and when my friends meet together to have a banquet in my memory, and break bread together in love of me, it will warm my heart to know that you are always one of them." And so her great and good friend went into the distant country. But as soon as he was gone the woman he had saved became so taken up with other things

that she forgot all about him ; she did not put his picture on the wall in her room ; she seldom thought of him, and when she heard him criticised, and joked about, and sneered at, she quietly went her way and never once said, "I am his friend." She was invited many times to meet with his friends when they were having a feast of love in memory of him, but she always declined. Sometimes she said, "I suppose I ought to go, but I can't go now ; possibly I may sometime." And thus she was known to every one that knew her as one who was indifferent to the great love her noble friend had shown to her.

Every generous-hearted woman here cries out in her heart, "Ungrateful woman ! A woman like that does not deserve the self-sacrifice and the noble service of a great and good man." But, my friend, you that are living in indifference or neglect of Jesus Christ, I come with a grieved heart to say to you, "Thou art the woman." When you were lost, when your good name and character and everything that was precious to you were at stake, Jesus Christ put aside the riches and glory of heaven and came down to earth, and was poor, and lonely, and outcast, and wounded, and died on the cross in your behalf ; and he rose from the

dead and went up to heaven at the right hand of God to become your intercessor ; and all he asks of you is that in memory of his great love for you, and his sufferings in your behalf, you shall confess him before men, you shall carry his picture in your heart, you shall say lovingly and tenderly everywhere, " Jesus is my friend." He asks that you shall meet with the other friends of Jesus when they gather to praise him, and when they have their communion feast together, and partake of the bread and wine in memory of his dying love, he wishes you to meet with them and lovingly and proudly proclaim yourself a loyal and faithful friend of your divine Lord. And yet you do not do it. You have known of his great suffering and exertion in your behalf for many years ; you have heard his pleading voice, and yet you do not respond. There is no other man or woman in the world whom you call friend that you would treat so unkindly, so ungraciously, as you do the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not, I plead with you, let this record of ingratitude continue, but repent to-night, as David did when his sin was brought home to him, and confess, " I have sinned against the Lord," seek forgiveness now, and sin against his love no longer.

RIZPAH'S WATCH; OR, THE STORY OF A MOTHER'S LOVE.

“And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night.”—2 *Samuel* xxi. 10.

RIZPAH, the widow of Saul, was getting to be an old woman when her two sons, Armoni and Mephibosheth, were hanged in Gibeah, at the demand of the Gibeonites, who had been ravished and desolated by the cruel wickedness of Saul, their father. These men suffered not only for their own sin, but for the sins of the wicked family in which they were born, and especially for the sins of their father. With the causes which led to their ignominious punishment it is not of present interest for us to deal. Their death was peculiarly shameful; it was not given to them to die the death of a soldier, or even of an ordinary prisoner. As if death were not enough, they were condemned to be hanged in chains, and it was not permitted for them to be buried; but from the beginning of summer

at early harvest, when they were executed, until autumn when the fall rains should begin, they were to be left hanging as an indication of the punishment that had been meted out to the family of Saul.

But however shameful or disgraceful a man's career may be, and in whatever gloom his sun may set at the last, he is a rare man indeed who has not one friend whose heart beats true to him under all vicissitude and disgrace, and that is his mother. There is no more pathetic or touching story in history than the story of Rizpah's watch by her dead sons. She left her home and moved such things as were necessary to Gibeah, and there she erected a tent of sackcloth, and made her dwelling-place for the summer. And through all the long summer days and the brief summer nights Rizpah kept her loving watch, driving away the vultures and the evil birds that drew near day by day, and with firebrands and torches fighting off the jackals, the hyenas, and the lions by night, until the weary weeks should pass away when the law would permit the remains of her sons to be buried. I do not wonder that such a picture of motherly devotion and loyalty should have so stirred the heart of David that he had the bones of these young men honorably buried

by the State, and thus did what he could by his kindness to take the sting and bitterness from Rizpah's heart.

Somehow it seems to me that Rizpah, more than almost any other woman in the Bible, stands out as the true type of the undying loyalty of motherhood. There are many beautiful women in the Bible, of whom the world never tires. Mary, the mother of Jesus, with her sweet innocence, with her never fading youth and beauty and goodness, holds her place through all the centuries by her purity, her faith, and her gentleness. But no woman's face, not even that of the Madonna, so stirs my heart as the face of this faded woman, with her long gray hair falling over her shoulders, keeping her weary vigil through the night; standing with haggard look, and firebrand in hand, fighting away the prowling beasts of prey that would devour the precious dust of her sons. Somehow, against the dark background of that rude and cruel past, gray-haired, loyal Rizpah has captured my imagination, and stands for motherhood more than any other woman in history.

What the world owes to good mothers, who have sacrificed themselves with all joy that they might live again in their children, no

statistician will ever be able to adequately determine. John Newton, who caused his mother much sorrow while she lived, was brought back to righteousness long after she had gone to heaven by the recollection of the lessons she had taught him. God brought her back to him again in a vision, and the memory of her prayers and of her tender solicitude broke his heart and turned him away from sin. John Randolph once said : " I should have been an atheist if it had not been for one recollection — and that was the memory of the time when my departed mother used to take my little hand in hers and cause me on my knees to say, 'Our Father, which art in heaven.' "

When General Grant was at West Point, he wrote to his mother : " Your kind words of admonition are ever present with me. How well do they strengthen me in every good word and work. Should I become a soldier for my country, I look forward with hope to have you spared to share with me any advancement I might gain, and I trust that my future conduct will prove me worthy of the patriotic instruction you and father have given me. "

John Ruskin, whose long life was filled with constant benediction and blessing to the world, and who has just been carried to his grave in

peace, with all Christendom uniting in repeating what God will say to him on high, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," wrote in his old age: "My mother's influence in molding my character was conspicuous. She forced me to learn daily long chapters of the Bible by heart. To that discipline and patient, accurate resolve I owe not only much of general power of taking pains, but the best part of my taste for literature."

No human being in this world has so much power over the life of man or woman, taking it all in all, as the mother. A mother gives the very emphasis and tone and color to the speech of her child, and that is only an outward indication of the way she molds the plastic soul within. Of all the most important classes for the welfare of the world, mothers lead the van. No wonder Napoleon said, in his wicked day, "What France needs is good mothers."

A mother cannot overestimate what it means to her children to know that she is a genuine Christian; and to have set the seal of her example in yielding the heart and life to Christ is to her son or daughter in the voyage of life what a lighthouse on a dangerous coast is to a ship.

And as there is no devotion more beautiful and splendid than that of a mother's, so there is nothing that wins a higher meed of love and gratitude in return. The affection which the noblest and truest men and women in the world have had for their mothers brightens up the pages of history. Lord Macaulay once said that it was worth while being sick to be nursed by a mother. William Cowper said : "Every creature that bears an affinity to my mother is dear to me." When Thomas Guthrie, the great Scotch preacher, was on his deathbed, his latest words were these : "How strange to think that within twenty-four hours I may see my mother and my Savior !" And one might multiply the quotations of these grateful utterances which have expressed the feeling of the great men and women for the mothers who have wrought their faith and hope and courage into the hearts and lives of their children.

The story of a mother's prayers is one of the most sacred of all the stories of human life. Dr. Talmage tells very interestingly of the conversion of his father and mother. The event occurred in the first half of the century, in New Jersey. They lived on a farm, and a revival meeting was in progress about ten miles distant. Dr. Talmage's grandfather and grandmother

had gone over to this meeting and spent two days in attendance on it. They came home greatly stirred with anxiety for the salvation of their children. That same evening there was a party at a neighboring farmhouse. The three sons and daughter were invited. At the supper table the mother said to them: "When you are ready to go, I wish you would come into my room a moment."

Just before leaving, they went in, wonderingly, and their mother said: "Now, you are going to this party. I hope you will have a good time. But remember that I am praying for your salvation. I expect to continue in prayer until I hear you come in at the front door."

The children went to the party, but did not have one moment of enjoyment. They knew their mother was on her knees in her room, praying for their salvation. The next day, as the mother was passing through the hallway, she heard her daughter, Phœbe, in her room weeping. She found her under great religious anxiety concerning her soul's welfare. They prayed together. The light came like a flood. Phœbe became one of the most gracious and lovely of women, one whose spiritual influence was a benediction to all who knew her.

Later in the day Phœbe said to her father : “The boys are out at the barn in a dreadful state about their souls’ salvation.” He went out, and found David in great agony of mind. David afterward became the father of Dr. Talmage. After a season of prayer, David found the peace which comes only from above and said, “Father, you had better hunt up Samuel and Josiah.”

Samuel was discovered near by. He was also undergoing a powerful religious awakening. He, too, found Christ and afterward became the leading minister of the South and the president of Oglethorpe University. As soon as Samuel had found peace he said : “Have you seen Josiah, father ? He’s somewhere around. You had better see him.”

After hunting around some time, Josiah was found in the same state of mind as his brothers. In a few moments Christ took possession of his soul. He, too, preached the Gospel for forty years, and died in the triumphs of the faith.

That very evening David went to see the young woman whom he loved, to tell her the new experience which had come to him, and she immediately gave her heart to Christ.

God’s immediate answer to this mother’s prayer, and the interest which was aroused by

these conversions, caused a great revival to sweep through that community, and at the next communion service two hundred persons joined the church.

I am sure that if I were to call on this audience to-night for testimony as to the influence of Christian mothers, there would be abundant witnesses here to all that I have said about the importance and the blessedness of a Christian mother's fidelity. I never shall forget when one of our aged members, Father Edward Lewis, came into my study and told me at length about his mother, and about his coming out to this country alone. He came here to Cleveland among strangers, and he was so lonesome that it seemed as tho he could not live. But in that homesickness and loneliness, fifty-eight years ago, in answer to his mother's prayers over in England, he gave his heart to Christ. The first thing he did after this new joy came to him was to write about it to his mother, and he continued to write to her of his growth in grace, and that mother treasured up those letters, and when she came to die, her last request was that they should put those precious letters under the pillow in her coffin. How precious it is to make such a return as that to a mother for her love! I am sure that of all the

successes and triumphs that have come to Father Lewis in his long and busy life, there is not one of them, nor all of them, that he regards as so precious as that memory of the happiness he gave that Christian mother when he gave his heart to God.

How much it means when God says that he will comfort us, when we give our hearts to him, as a mother comforteth her child ! How can any one fear to yield completely to the mother-like arms of divine love ? It is this mother-God to whom I call you to-night.

THE FLIGHT OF THE SOUL.

“ I flee unto thee to hide me.”—*Psalm cxliiii. 9.*

NEVER was there an eagle with reach of wing long enough, or with pinions of sufficient strength, to mount so high or fly so far afield as the soul of man. God has made us so like himself that it is impossible for the mere accidents of poverty or wealth, of physical bondage or freedom, of pleasant or unpleasant surroundings, to dictate the spiritual history of the soul. The soul dictates its own destiny. It has the power to fly from its environment and take up its abode in an entirely different atmosphere. There have been men whose bodies lived in a palace, ministered to by all the luxuries of wealth and refinement, while all the time their souls groveled in filth and squalor. There have been many other men like Lazarus who lay at the gate of Dives, about whom Jesus tells us, who associated with the dogs of the street so far as his poor, sick body was concerned, but whose soul had many a flight with angels. And Death, the great leveler, who ushered Dives into the hell where his soul's

passions and lusts had always carried him, released Lazarus to be forever in happy fellowship with the angels with whom his pure heart had kinship.

We sing a very precious old hymn sometimes, which runs : —

“ How tedious and tasteless the hours
 When Jesus no longer I see !
 Sweet prospects, sweet birds, and sweet flowers
 Have all lost their sweetness to me ;
 The midsummer sun shines but dim,
 The fields strive in vain to look gay ;
 But when I am happy in him,
 December’s as pleasant as May.

“ His name yields the richest perfume,
 And sweeter than music his voice ;
 His presence disperses my gloom,
 And makes all within me rejoice ;
 I should, were he always thus nigh,
 Have nothing to wish or to fear ;
 No mortal so happy as I,
 My summer would last all the year.

“ Content with beholding his face,
 My all to his pleasure resigned,
 No changes of season or place
 Would make any change in my mind :
 While blest with a sense of his love,
 A palace a toy would appear ;
 And prisons would palaces prove
 If Jesus would dwell with me there.”

Multitudes of people have found John Newton's song to be true, and their prisons have turned to palaces of enjoyment because the soul has flown away and associated with those who were dear, and battled and conquered on noble fields. A wicked king could shut John Bunyan up in prison at Bedford, but he could not chain his soul there. God gave him wonderful soul-flight from that little jail. His spirit took wing and followed Christian in his flight from the City of Destruction; hovered over him in sympathy in the Slough of Despond; abode with him in the House of the Interpreter; climbed with him step by step up the Hill Difficulty; stood by to put courage into his arm in the fight with Apollyon in the Valley of Humiliation; walked with him through the temptations of Vanity Fair; was locked up with him in Doubting Castle, and trembled with him before Giant Despair. Bunyan wandered on with Christian into the Delectable Mountains, and rejoiced with him in the Land of Beulah; crossed with him the River of Death, and stood in Zion before God. One of Bunyan's prison meditations, in his own rude but vigorous rhyme, reveals the freedom and triumph of his soul: —

- “ For tho men keep my outward man
 Within their locks and bars,
Yet by the faith of Christ I can
 Mount higher than the stars.
- “ ’Tis not the baseness of this state
 Doth hide us from God’s face ;
He frequently, both soon and late,
 Doth visit us with grace.
- “ We change our drossy dust for gold,
 From death to life we fly ;
We let go shadows, and take hold
 Of Immortality.
- “ These be the men that God doth count
 Of high and noble mind ;
These be the men that do surmount
 What you in nature find.
- “ First they do conquer their own hearts,
 All worldly fears, and then
Also the devil’s fiery darts,
 And persecuting men.
- “ They conquer when they thus do fall,
 They kill when they do die ;
They overcome then most of all,
 And get the victory.”

Dr. George B. Cheever, commenting on this poem, says that such poetry would have been noble from any man of genius, but it came from Bunyan’s heart, it was his own experience. “I never had in my life,” he wrote in prison,

“so great an inlet into the Word as now. Those Scriptures that I saw nothing in before, are made in this place and state to shine upon me. Jesus Christ also was never more real and apparent than now ; here I have seen and felt him indeed. . . . I have had sweet sights of the forgiveness of my sins in this place, and of my being with Jesus in another world. O the Mount Sion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the innumerable company of angels, and God, the Judge of all, and the spirits of just men made perfect, and Jesus the Mediator, have been sweet unto me in this place ! I have seen that here which I am persuaded I shall never, while in this world, be able to express. I have seen a truth in this Scripture, ‘ Whom having not seen, ye love ; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.’ ” Surely the wicked king on the English throne might well have changed places with Bunyan, if thereby he could have obtained Bunyan’s peace of soul, for Bunyan proved the truth of a celebrated song, sung much in his times :—

“ Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage ;
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for a hermitage.”

Now if we inquire into the secret of John Bunyan's joy and peace, we shall find that it was but a realization of our text. Bunyan fled from his sins to God, and found refuge in the forgiveness of God through Jesus Christ. He started low enough, for he was a poor drunken Bedford tinker, of no account to anybody until his Christian wife prayed for him and plead with him, until he fled for refuge to the cross, and lost there the burden of his sin.

And that is my message to-night ; that God is a refuge for every poor sinner who will flee to him. But the fleeing is our part. We are free men and women, and God will not drive us into the kingdom. He will give us visions of the beauty of it, he will show us his own sympathy and love, and fling wide open the doors to the city of refuge ; but unless we rise up and seek the refuge, we shall perish outside.

Dr. Edward Rand tells the story of a young fellow named Ralph Johnson, who was in the little church of a coast town, sitting in the back seat listening to the sermon and wishing he were a Christian, and yet rather confused as to how to go about it, when suddenly the door of the church was thrown open and a boy shouted that a ship was wrecked off their coast. The church was deserted in a moment, for there

was a life-saving station there, and all ran to the shore to offer such help as they could to those in distress. A shot-line was thrown to the wreck from a gun, the line was pulled in by the wrecked sailors and a life-car was soon sent to them over the frothing waves. The surfmen on shore, waiting to haul in the life-car, were astonished that the wrecked men on the ship did not seem to get in the car, and they began to shake their heads and look at one another.

“It looks as if those aboard the wreck were afraid to quit an old hopeless craft for what will bring them ashore,” spoke up the old minister, whose sermon had just been interfered with by the announcement of the wreck.

“They have got to leave the old thing and take to the car if they want to be saved,” said Ralph Johnson, who a few moments ago was wishing he knew how to become a Christian.

“Hullo!” suddenly cried one of the surfmen.

“What is the matter?” asked another.

“I believe somebody is trying to get into the life-car. There is a pull on this line.”

A shout broke from the waiting crowd.

“Somebody knows what to do! Good!” cried Ralph Johnson again.

“Ready!” ordered the keeper. “Haul away, boys!”

The life-car started. Every eye was fastened on the little vessel of hope suspended from the stout hawser and drawn in by the surfmen.

When it reached the shore a man crawled out, and then two women.

“Hurrah!” shouted the surfmen and all the spectators. The life-car made successive trips to the wreck till all were safely brought ashore.

A week passed and the old preacher was again in the pulpit in the midst of his sermon. Ralph, on the back seat, anxiously listened.

Said the minister as he closed his sermon :
“There are those here to-day who ought to decide this matter of a new life in the Savior. Many, if not all of you, saw the wreck and rescue last week. Don't make the beginning of the new life a mystery on your part. Those on the wreck turned from it, quit it, crawled into the life-car, and were drawn ashore. To you on the wreck the life-car of salvation is run out. Leave the old life of sin and storm, and turn to God's mercy coming towards you. Don't hesitate. In penitence for sin, in trust in Christ, in fully-surrendered submission to him, commit soul and body, everything, to the Lord Jesus Christ. Who will come aboard the life-car to-day, fully, for time, for eternity, forever? Is there one to raise a hand?”

Ralph Johnson's hand went up, and the nail-wounded palm of Jesus took hold upon it and helped him into the life-car of salvation.

Jesus Christ waits to be the refuge of any soul which will flee from sin to-night.

But let us not make a mistake. While the beginning is with us, and nothing can be done toward our salvation till we obey Christ and flee to hide ourselves in him, all our salvation is in Jesus Christ, and he alone can save us. Nothing that we can do, except to obey Christ, can make us any better.

Rev. James Edgerton, a venerable minister of New York State, tells how his old Scotch grandmother found peace in Jesus. She had been brought up to study the Bible and knew a great deal of it by heart. But she had never learned how to surrender her heart to Christ and so trust him as to look up into his face and not be afraid. After her grandson had become a minister and came to visit her, she begged him to talk to her about the witness of the Holy Spirit. He talked to her as best he could and went away; two months later he came back to see her again, and as he entered the room his grandmother rose from her chair and came toward him. She raised her hands and exclaimed, in her broad Scotch dialect, "O

Mairten, how happy I am — I'm that happy I could fly ! Oh, it's a' in Jesus, it's a' in Jesus, it's a' in Jesus ! Oh, I'm that happy !” She could not speak of anything else.

I thank God that there is not one soul here to-night but may enter into that same blessed happiness if you will fly for refuge to Jesus Christ.

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