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THE WAY OF LIFE



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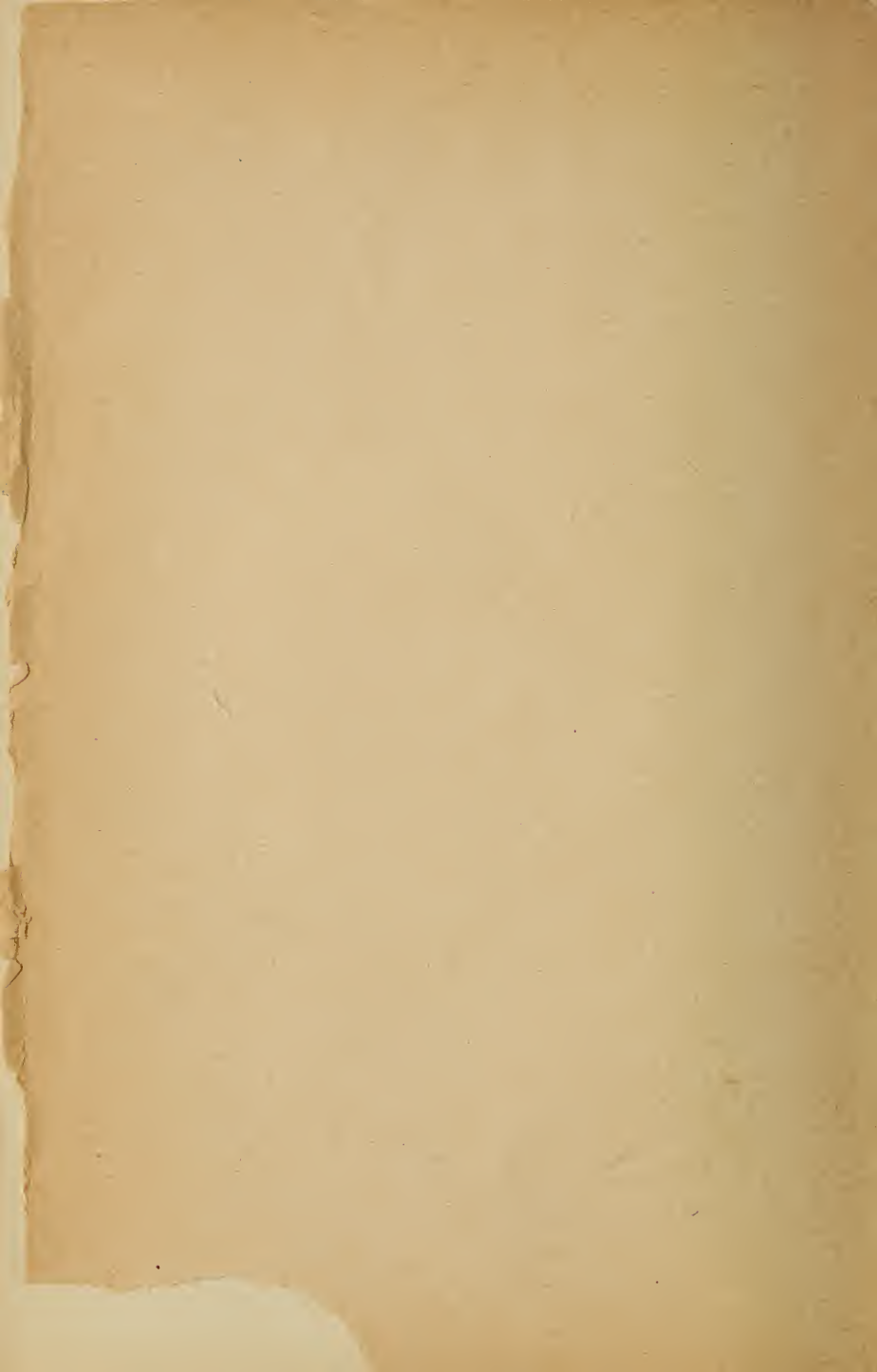
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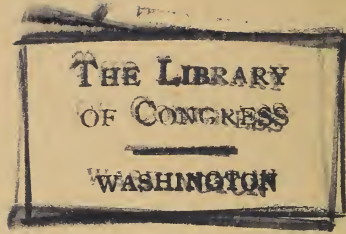


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ALL THINGS ARE READY: COME.

BY

C. H. SPURGEON.

“A certain man made a great supper, and bade many; and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, ‘Come; for all things are now ready.’ And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, ‘I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it. I pray thee have me excused. And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and go to prove them. I pray thee have me excused.’ And another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’

“So that servant came and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.’ And the servant said, ‘Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.’ And the lord said unto the servant, ‘Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.’”

“Come; for all things are now ready.” This invitation was first of all made to the Jews, but it seems to me to have a peculiar appropriateness to ourselves. It is

later in the day that when first the Lord was here, and therefore the supper time is evidently closer at hand. The shadows lengthen, the sun of the present dispensation is nearing its setting; by nearly nineteen hundred years has its day been shortened since first the Lord sent forth his servants at supper time. The fulness of time for the marriage supper of the lamb must speedily arrive. And if all things could be said to be ready even in our Savior's day, we may say it with still greater emphasis now; for when Jesus delivered this parable the Holy Spirit was not given, but Pentecost has now passed, and the Spirit of God abideth with us to accompany the Word, to fill it with power and to bless our souls as we feed upon the truth. Very emphatically then at this time all things are now ready, and the supper awaits the guests. I pray you do not begin to make excuses, but be prepared to follow us when we bid you come, to go with us when we seek to bring you in, or at least to yield to our entreaties when with all the sacred violence of love we would compel you to come in.

INVITATION AND ARGUMENT.

There are two things clearly in the text, and these have a close relation to one another. A plain invitation—"Come," and then a forcible argument—"for all things are ready." The argument is fetched from the divine preparations, gathered from among the dainty viands of the royal feast. "My oxen and my fatlings are killed, come to the supper." The readiness of everything on God's part is the argument why men should come and partake of his grace: and that is the point upon which we will dwell at this time—the readiness of the feast of mercy is the reason why men should come to it at once.

GOD NEVER BEHINDHAND.

It is God's habit to have all things ready, whether for His guests or his creatures. You never discover Him to be behindhand in anything. When the guests come, there is not a scramble to get the table arranged and the food prepared, but the Lord has great forethought, and every little point of detail is well arranged. "All things are ready."

It was so in creation. He did not create a single blade of grass upon the face of the earth until the soil and the atmosphere had been prepared for it, and until the kindly sun had learned to look down upon the earth. Imagine vegetation without a sun, or without the alternation of day and night. But the air was full of light, the firmament upheld the clouds, and the dry land had appeared from out of the sea, and then all things were ready for herb, and plant, and tree. Nor did God prepare one single creature that hath life, nor fowl that flieth in the midst of heaven, nor fish that swimmeth theseas, nor beast that moveth on the dry land, until He had prepared its *habitat*, and made ready its appointed food. There were no cattle before there were meadows for their grazing; no birds till there were trees for there nests, no, nor even a creeping insect till its portion of meat had been provided. No creature had to wait in hungry mood while its food was growing; all things were ready; ready first for vegetation, and then afterwards for animal life. As for Adam, when God came to make him as his last and noblest work of creation, all things were ready. The garden was laid out upon the banks of flowing streams, and planted with all kinds of trees, the fruits were ripe for his diet, and the flowers in bloom for his delight.

He did not come to an unfurnished house, but he entered upon a home which his Father had made pleasant and agreeable for his dwelling. The world was first fitted up, and then the man who was to govern that world was placed in it. "All things are ready," the Lord seems to say, "Spring up, O herb yielding seed;" and then "All things are ready, come forth, ye roes and hinds of the fields!"; and then "All things are ready, stand forth, O man, made in mine own image!"

GOD'S THOUGHTS GO BEFORE MEN'S COMINGS.

Now the fact that in the great gospel supper all things are ready teaches us that *God's thoughts go before men's comings*. "Come, for all things are ready." Not "If you come, all things will be ready," but "they are ready, and therefore come." Grace is first, and man at his best follows its footsteps. Long before we ever thought of God, He thought of us; yea, before we had a being, and ere time itself began, in the bosom of the Eternal, there were thoughts of love towards those for whom the table of His mercy is now spread. He had planned and arranged everything in His august mind from of old, He had indeed foreknown and predestinated all the provisions and all the guests of his supper; all things were settled in his eternal covenant and purpose or ever the earth was. Never think, oh sinner, that thou canst outstrip the love of God. It is at the end of the race before thou art at the beginning. God hath completed before thou hast begun. His thoughts are before ours, and *so are His acts*, for He doth not say, "All things are planned and arranged," but "All things are ready." Jesus, the great sacrifice, is slain, the fountain for our cleansing is filled with blood; the Holy Spirit has been given, the

word by which we are to be instructed is in our hands, and the light which will illuminate that sacred page is promised us through the Holy Ghost. Things promised ought to encourage us to come to Christ, but things already given ought to be irresistible attractions. All things are already completed by the sacred Trinity before we come to cry for mercy; this should make us very hopeful and eager in our approaches to the Lord. Come, sinner, come at once; this ought to encourage thee, since all that God has to do in thy salvation is done before thou hast a thought of Him or turnest one foot towards his abode. All welcome! things are ready. Come!

This also proves how welcome those are who come. If you are invited to see a friend, and when you reach the place you find the door fast, and after knocking many times no one answers, for there is no one at home, you reckon that there is some mistake, or that the invitation was not a sincere one. Even if your host should come to the door and admit you, but should evidently be embarrassed, for there is no meal provided and he has made no arrangements for your rest at night, you soon detect it, and like a wise man you quickly move off somewhere else, for if you had been welcome, things would have been prepared for you. But oh, poor soul, if thou comest to God all things are ready for thine entertainment.

“Spread for thee the festal board,
With his richest dainties stored.”

The couch of rest and quietness is prepared for thee. All things are ready. How freely doth Jehovah welcome thee, how genuine is the invitation, how sincere the desire that thou shouldst come to feast with Him.

I GO TO PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU.

One of these days it may be that you and I shall either be grown very old, or else disease will lay hold upon us, and we shall lie upon the sick bed watching and waiting for our Master's coming. Then there shall suddenly appear a messenger from Him, who will bring us this word, "All things are ready, come unto the supper," and closing our eyes on earth, we shall open them in heaven and see what He has done who so sweetly said: "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go to prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." Oh! it will be a joyous moment when we shall hear the summons, "All things are ready, quit thy house of clay, thy farm, thy merchandise, and even her who lies in thy bosom, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and thou must be there; therefore, rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. The winter is over and past, the time of the singing of birds is come for thee. All things are ready, come!"

THE PERFECT READINESS OF THE FEAST OF DIVINE MERCY IS EVIDENTLY INTENDED TO BE A STRONG ARGUMENT WITH SINNERS WHY THEY SHOULD COME AT ONCE.

To the sinner, then, do I address myself.

Soul, dost thou desire eternal life? Is there within thy spirit a hungering and a thirsting after such things as may satisfy thy spirit and make thee live forever? Then hearken while the Master's servant gives thee the invitation. "Come, for *all things* are ready,"—all, not some, but all. There is nothing that thou canst need between here and heaven but what is provided in Jesus

Christ, in his person and in his work. All things are ready, life for thy death, forgiveness for thy sin, cleansing for thy filth, clothing for thy nakedness, joy for thy sorrow, strength for thy weakness, yea, more than all that ever thou canst want is stored up in the boundless nature and work of Christ. Thou must not say, "I cannot come because I have not this, or have not that." Art thou to prepare the feast? Art thou to provide anything? Art thou the purveyor of even so much as the salt or the water? Thou knowest not thy true condition, or thou wouldst not dream of such a thing. The great Householder himself has provided the whole of the feast, thou hast nothing to do with the provision but to partake of it. If thou lackest, come and take what thou lackest; the greater thy need the greater reason why thou shouldst come where all things that thy need can possibly want will be at once supplied. If thou be so needy that thou hast nothing good at all about thee, all things are ready. What wouldst thou provide more when God has provided all things? Superfluity of naughtiness would it be if thou wert to think of adding to His "all things;" it would be but a presumptuous competing with the provisions of the great King, and this He will not endure. All that thou wantest—I can but repeat the words—between the gates of hell, where thou now liest, and the gates of heaven, to which grace will bring thee if thou believest,—all is provided and prepared in Jesus Christ the Savior.

READY.

And all things are *ready*, dwell on that word. The oxen and the fatlings were killed; what is more, they

were prepared to be eaten, they were ready to be feasted on, they smoked on the board. It is something when the king gives orders for the slaughter of so many bullocks for the feast, but the feast is not ready then; and when beneath the poleaxe the victims fall, and they are stripped and hung up ready for the fire, there is something done, but they are not ready. It is when the joints are served hot and steaming upon the table, and all that is wanted is brought forth and laid in proper order for the banquet, it is then that all things are ready, and this is the case now; at this very moment thou wilt find the feast to be in the best possible condition; it was never better and never can be better than it is now. All things are ready, just in the exact condition that thou needest them to be, just in such condition as shall be best for thy soul's comfort and enjoyment. All things are ready; nothing needs to be further mellowed or sweetened; everything is at the best that eternal love can make it.

NOW!

But notice the word "now," "All things are *now* ready"—just now, at this moment. At feasts, you know, the good housewife is often troubled if the guests come late. She would be sorry if they came half-an-hour too soon, but half-an-hour too late spoils everything, and in what a state of fret and worry she is if when all things are *now* ready, her friends still delay. Leave food at the fire awhile, and it does not seem to be "now ready," but something more than ready, and even spoiled. So doth the Great Householder lay stress upon this, all things are *now* ready, therefore come at once. He saith not that if thou wilt tarry for another seven years, all things will

then be ready; God grant that long before that space of time thou mayest have got beyond the needs of persuasion by having become a taster of the feast; but He doth say that they are all ready, just now. Just now, that your heart is so heavy and your mind so careless, that your spirit is so wandering, all things are ready *now*, though you have never thought of these things before, though your sins be as the stars of heaven, and your soul trembles under an awful foreboding of coming judgment, yet "All things are now ready." And if they are ready *now*, the argument is, come *now*. While the Spirit lingers and still doth strive with men, while mercy's gates still stand wide open that "Whosoever will may come," while life and health and reason still are spared to you and the ministering voice that bids thee come can still be heard, come now, come at once! Delay is as unreasonable as it is wicked, now that all things are ready.

Reader, if you do not come to Christ, you will perish, but you never will be able to say you were not bidden.

YOU NEED NOT WAIT TILL YOU ARE READY.

This text disposes of a great deal of talk about the sinner's readiness or unreadiness; because if the reason why a sinner is to come is because all things are ready, then it is idle for him to say, "But I am not ready." It is clear that all the readiness required on man's part is a willingness to come and receive the blessing which God has provided. Where the Lord has been pleased to touch the will so that man has a desire toward Christ, where the heart really hungers and thirsts after righteousness, that is all the readiness wanted. All the fitness He requireth is that first you feel you need of Him (and that

He gives you), and that secondly in feeling your need of Him you are willing to come to Him. Willingness to come is everything. A readiness to believe in Jesus, a willingness to cast the soul on Him, a preparedness to accept Him just as He is, because you feel that He is just the Savior that you need—that is all; there was no other readiness, there could have been none, in the case of those who were poor and blind, and halt, and maimed, yet came to the feast. The text does not say, "You are ready, therefore come," that is a legal way of putting the gospel; but it says, "All things are ready, the gospel is ready, therefore you are to come."

WHY DO YOU DELAY?

Now notice that the unreadiness of those who were bidden arose out of their possessions and out of their abilities. One would not come because he had bought a piece of land. What a great heap Satan casts up between the soul and the Savior! What with worldly possessions and good deeds he builds an earthwork of huge dimensions between the sinner and his Lord. Some gentlemen have too many acres ever to come to Christ; they think too much of the world to think much of Him. Many have too many fields of good works in which there are growing crops in which they pride themselves, and these cause them to feel that they are persons of great importance. Many a man cannot come to Christ for all things because he has so much already. Others of them could not come because they had so much to do, and could do it well—one had bought five yoke of oxen, he was going to prove them. A strong man quite able for ploughing; the reason why he did not come was because

he had so much ability. Thousands are kept away from grace by what they have and by what they can do. Emptiness is more preparatory to a feast than fulness. How often does it happen that poverty and inability even help to lead the soul to Christ! When a man thinketh himself to be rich, he will not come to the Savior. When a man dreameth that he is able at any time to repent and believe and to do everything for himself that is wanted, he is not likely to come and by a simple faith repose in Christ. It is not what you have not, but what you have, that keeps many from Christ. Sinful self is a devil, but righteous self is seven devils. The man who feels himself guilty may for awhile be kept away by his guilt, but the man who is self-righteous will never come; until the Lord has taken his pride away from him he will still refuse the feast of free grace. The possession of abilities and honors and riches keep men from coming to the Redeemer.

But on the other hand personal condition does not constitute an unfitness for coming to Christ, for the sad condition of those who became guests did not debar them from the supper. Some were *poor*, and doubtless wretched and ragged; they had not a penny to bless themselves with, as we say; their garments were tattered, perhaps worse, they were filthy, they were not fit to be near respectable people, they would certainly be no credit to my lord's table; but those who went to bring them in did not search their pockets, nor look at their coats, but they fetched them in. They were poor, but the messengers were told to bring in the poor, and therefore brought them. Their poverty did not prevent their being ready; and oh, poor soul, if thou be poor liter-

ally, or poor originally, neither sort of poverty can constitute an unfitness for divine mercy.

Another class of them were *maimed*. One had lost a nose, another an arm. So, poor soul, however Satan may have torn and lopped thee and into whatsoever condition he may have brought thee, so that thou feelest ashamed to live—just as thou art, thou mayest come to the table of grace. Moral disfigurements are soon rectified when Jesus takes you in hand. Come thou to Him, however sadly thou art disfigured by sin.

There were others who were *halt*, that is, their leg was no use to them, and they could not come unless they had a crutch to crawl upon, nevertheless there was no reason why they were not welcome. Ah! if you find it difficult to believe, it is no reason why you should not come and receive the grand absolution which Jesus Christ is ready to bestow upon you. Lame with doubting and mistrusting, nevertheless come and say, "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief."

Others were *blind*; but a blind man can come if a messenger brings him. All that was wanted was a willingness to be led by the hand in the right direction. Now you that cannot fully understand the Gospel, that are puzzled and muddled, give your hand to Jesus and be willing to be led by Him, be willing to believe what you cannot comprehend and to grasp in confidence that which you are not yet able to measure with your understanding.

Here comes a poor man who has had nothing to eat for the last forty-eight hours. Look at his eager delight at the sight of the food! If you want somebody to eat largely and joyfully, is not he the man? See how he takes it in! It is wonderful how the provisions disappear before him! Here again is a poor woman who

has been picked up by the wayside, faint for want of bread. She has scarcely any life in her, but see how she begins to open her eyes at the first morsel that is placed before her, and what delight there is in her every expression as she finds herself placed at a table so richly loaded! Yes, the poorer, the more hungry, the more destitute the guests, the more honor is accorded to the king who feeds such mendicants, and receives such vagrants to his table. Hear how they shout the king's praises when they are filled with his meat! They will never have done thanking him. Now, if I address a soul that is very needy, very faint, very desponding, you are a fit guest for my Master, because you have such a fine appetite for His generous repast of love. The greatness of your need is your fitness for coming to Christ, and if you want to know how to come, come just as you are. Tarry not to improve yourself one single atom; come as you are.

HOW CAN I COME TO CHRIST?

"Ah," you say, "I hear that if I come to Christ I shall be saved; but how can I come to Him? What do you mean by coming to Jesus?" Well, our reply is plain and clear,—it is to trust Christ, to depend upon Him, to believe Him, to rely upon Him. You enquire, "But how can I come to Christ? In what way would you recommend me to come?" The answer is, the very best way to come to Christ is to *come with all your needs* about you.

Suppose a physician should come to town and give it out that what he wants is not to make money, but to cure people out of motives of pure benevolence, without charging any fees; the poorest will be welcome and the most diseased will be best received. Well, here is a person who

has cut his finger; will the doctor rush to attend him? Here comes another gratis patient who has a wart on his hand. There is nothing famous about curing cut fingers and warts, and the physician is by no means excited over the work.

But here is a poor forlorn body who has been given up by all the other doctors, a patient who is so bad that he lies at death's door; he has such a complication of diseases, that he could hardly tell what diseases he has *not* suffered from, but certainly his condition is terrible enough to make it appear hopeless. He seems to be a living wonder of disease. That is the man who may come boldly to the physician, and expect his immediate attention and his best consideration. Now, doctor, if you can cure this man he will be a credit to you. This man exactly answers to your advertisement. You say that you only wish for patients who will give you an opportunity of displaying your skill. Here is a fine object for your pity, he is bad at the lungs, bad at the heart, bad in the feet, bad in the eyes, bad in the ears, bad in the head, bad all over. If you want an opportunity of showing your skill, here is the man. Jesus, my Lord and Master, is the Great Physician of souls, and He heals them on just such terms as I have mentioned, Are you a fargone sinner? Are you a deeply sinsick soul? Are you a man or woman who is bad altogether? Come along, my friend, you are just in a right condition to come to Jesus Christ. *Come just as you are*, that is the best style of "coming."

"What," saith one, "can you mean it, that I, an unfeeling, unpenitent wretch, am bidden to come at once and believe in Jesus Christ for everlasting life?" I mean just that. I do not mean to send you round to that shop for repentance, and to the other shop for feeling, and to a

third store for a tender heart, and then direct you to call on Christ at last for a few odds and ends. No, no, but come to Christ for everything.

“Come, ye needy, come and welcome,
God’s free bounty glorify;
True belief and true repentance,
Every grace that brings you nigh,
Without money
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”

I heard of a shop some time ago in a country town where they sold everything, and the man said that he did not believe that there was anything a human being wanted but what he could rig him out from top to toe. Well, I do not know whether that promise would have been carried out to the letter if it had been tried, but I know it is so with Jesus Christ; He can supply you with all you need, for “Christ is all.” There is not a need your soul can possibly have but the Lord Jesus Christ can supply it, and the very best way to come is to come to Him for everything.

Trust Jesus Christ, that is all, just as you are, with all your unfitness and unreadiness. Take what God has made ready for you, the precious blood to cleanse you, a robe of righteousness to cover you, eternal joy to be your portion. Receive the grace of God in Christ Jesus, oh! receive it now. God grant you may, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

BY

J. WILBUR CHAPMAN.

“Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.”— Acts xvi:30, 31

THE Apostle Paul lived in a perpetual state of revival. He had only to come into Philippi, the principal city of Macedonia, and to sit by the river bank, and Lydia, the seller of purple, straightway believed and was baptized. He had only to walk along the streets to the place of prayer, and there was so much of power about him that “a certain damsel, possessed with the spirit of divination” followed him and cried, saying, “These men are the servants of the most high God”; and “Paul being grieved turned and said to the spirit, ‘I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her,’ and he came out the same hour; and when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas and drew them into the market place, tore off their clothes, beat them with many stripes and cast them into the inner prison, fastening their feet in the stocks; but this did not in any way affect these servants of God. It was doubtless true for them, as one of the modern poets has expressed, “Stone walls did not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage,” for at midnight, in the midst of all the darkness, “they sang praises unto God and the prisoners heard

them." What a strange sound it must have been in that old jail, where ordinarily only curses had been heard! But suddenly there came a great earthquake; the foundations of the prison began to shake and the doors were thrown open and "everyone's bands were loosed." In the midst of all this confusion the jailer sprang into their presence, and was ready to kill himself, thinking the prisoners had escaped, when Paul exclaimed, "Do thyself no harm for we are all here."

There is just in this connection a clear distinction drawn between men of influence and men of power; ordinarily we say, what the Church needs to-day is men of influence, meaning by this, men of position; and so it does. But from this illustration I think we may agree, the greater demand is for men of power.

Paul and Silas had not influence enough to keep them out of jail, but they had a power sufficient to pray down the prison walls and throw wide open its doors. There is also in this whole incident given to us, a true and striking picture of what it means for one to be saved.

If I were an artist, I should like to draw upon a black board a great letter "C," then fill out from that one letter four words. These four words would present to us not only a picture of this Philippian jailer, but also of every one who really and truly comes to Christ.

CONVICTION.

The first word would be "Conviction." This we surely find in the jailer, for we are told "he came trembling." It is not possible for any one to be saved without first of all experiencing real conviction; however, it ought to be suggested that in different individuals it may manifest itself in different ways.

Sometimes it is evidenced in great need. One would display his ignorance if he were to assert that Nicodemus, for example, was the chief of sinners, for he was a ruler of his people, an honored member of the Sanhedrim, a most circumspect man in every way; but in his heart there was a great sense of a need which his position had never satisfied, and this compelled him, I imagine, to seek out the Great Teacher.

If therefore, to-day, there is this feeling in your heart that the world does not satisfy, that the pleasures of sin prove a mockery, and if with all there is a sense of need you have not yet had satisfied, this may be real conviction. Come to Jesus with that need. He alone can help you.

Not infrequently it may assume the form of complete unworthiness, such as the poor publican had when he said, "God be merciful to me, a sinner;" but the article there in the Greek was a definite one, and what he really said was this, "God be merciful to me, *the* sinner;" as if he were the only one in the world. This is a most hopeful condition.

But as a rule it is the consciousness that we have sinned, and are therefore under condemnation; and in the unregenerate state it is the fearfulness that the penalty of the broken law may fall upon us; and yet I am quite clear in my own mind that there may be a deeper conviction of one's sins after one's regeneration than before.

Stanley tells us that he found men in Africa who never knew that they were black until they looked upon a white man. So many a man can never know what sin is until he sees it in the presence of Jesus Christ. But whatever the form of conviction, it must surely be experienced be-

fore the light will dawn. Come to Jesus just as you are, for He can satisfy your longings by filling you with Himself and He is able to blot out all your transgressions and forgive all your sins.

CONTRITION.

The second word starting with the letter "C" would be "Contrition." This the Philippian jailer had, for he "fell down before them." It is certainly true that one cannot come to God without first of all he be possessed of a broken and contrite heart. Why should this not be true? We have sinned against God and there must be contrition for it if we are to be forgiven. God may be ever so willing to forgive, still He does not do it without contrition.

In the state prison of Iowa, there is a young man held as a convict against whom the charge of arson stands, and also the attempt to kill. Very recently the party whose building was fired circulated a petition that the young man should be pardoned. The man whose life was attempted followed his example and succeeded in securing the names of the judge by whom he was sentenced, the attorney who prosecuted him and the entire jury which found him guilty. This petition was carried to the governor. In the face of it, strong as it was, he said, "No, the man cannot be pardoned; for," said he, "his crime was not committed against the individual but against the commonwealth of Iowa, and he must serve his sentence." And it ought to be remembered by the sinner that these words are true, "against Thee and Thee only have I sinned." So there must be contrition, or there cannot be salvation; and yet what a marvelous thing it is that if one be ever so great a sinner the moment this spirit is manifest, God blots out all his transgressions.

It is stated that in St. Petersburg a father's heart was well-nigh broken because of the prodigality of his son who was addicted to the habit of gambling, and with that came the accompanying vices. At last the old father conceived the idea that what the boy needed was better surroundings, and so he set out to secure them. What a mistake this is, and how many have made it! That is not what you need.

The other day a woman was seated in Central Park, New York, with her little child playing about her, when suddenly she was startled by the shrieking of the little one. She had been frightened by the barking of a dog and sprang into her mother's arms, who sought to comfort her by saying: "The dog has ceased his barking, why are you afraid?" The child only sobbed out, "Oh but, Mamma, the bark is still in him." And this is true of men in sin. The bark is still in them, and what they need is not new surroundings, but a new nature. This comes only from above and can be received only by faith.

So this father of whom I speak, secured his son's appointment in the army, but in this position he went from bad to worse, until he had reached the end of it all; and completely discouraged he was casting up his accounts and when the overwhelming figure was known, in great desperation he wrote at the bottom of the column these words, "Who is to pay all this?"

The emperor of Russia, as was his habit, going through the barracks to inspect the soldiers passed this young man, who with his head in his arms, had fallen asleep. The emperor glancing at the figures before him on the table, read the question, and then bending over

wrote one word, "Nicholas." And the story goes, that one name meant the cancelling of all the indebtedness and the man was free.

I do not know that this story is true, but I do know that if you enumerate all of your sins from the earliest recollection to the present moment, and beneath the sum of them all write this question, "Who is to pay all this?", there will be one name written in answer to it,

"Sweetest name on mortal tongue,
Sweetest note in seraph song,
Sweetest carol ever sung,
Jesus, blessed Jesus."

CONVERSION.

The third word starting from the letter "C" would be "Conversion," and this we find in the Philippian jailer for we are told "he washed their stripes." This was surely a great change in the man.

At first he exultingly fastened their feet in the stocks; now I can imagine him tearfully stooping down with cooling touch to ease their pain. There must be conversion if we are ever to be saved.

I am not speaking of the new birth,—that is God's part of it, but I am emphasizing the thing man must do if he is ever to see the light.

In one way it is, "Right, about face!" Or it is following the example of the blind men who "put themselves in the way of Jesus," or it is the obedience of the lepers who, as they went, were cleansed. Indeed, to sum it all up, it is for the unsaved man to have "the willing mind." We are told, "if we be willing and obedient, we shall eat of the fruit of the land."

God never saved a man until first of all he was willing to be saved; so whether one kneels at the altar, or bows in prayer in his own home, or stands in the crowded audience, or signs the inquirer's card, the end of *all* these things must be the submission of the will to God: and then He does His own work, and we are born again, born from above.

CONFESSION.

The fourth and last word to be completed from the letter "C" is Confession," and this is clearly found in the experience of the jailer for we are told "he was baptized." What a mistake it is for a man to believe in his heart and fail to confess with his lips! Such a position is never satisfactory, and never brings real joy. It is not being obedient, to say the least.

If your physician should write a prescription for you in your sickness and you should have it filled in a peculiar way, putting in two parts and leaving out two parts, he would have the right to find fault with you, and tell you that you would never get well until you took the *whole* prescription. And it is true with the Great Physician in our sin sickness. He has written the prescription that assures us of life—it is composed of two parts.

First. Believe in your heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Second. Confess with your lips that you have appropriated Him, not as a Savior but as *your* Savior, for if one desires to be fully saved, he **MUST** commit himself. It is not walking with the army that constitutes one a soldier; it is not the wearing of a garment of a soldier that makes him such, for this may be hired or stolen, but it is the definite enlistment, and this comes to one who would be

a soldier of Jesus Christ when he definitely and clearly confesses Him. This is his enlistment.

“What must I do to be saved?” This seems to be the unsaved man’s first query. Philosophy has never answered this question yet. Infidelity has tried it, and made it a mockery. God’s answer is clear and simple. The Bible says: “By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.” “Not of works, lest any man should boast.” It is very easy to receive a gift; the first step in salvation is not to give something but rather to receive.

Man would naturally say, if you would be a son of God, try to walk as a son and you will eventually become such. But God makes it very clear that there can be no real life until there is a step taken first of all by faith; then he reveals himself. The things of God are spiritually discerned, and God is a revelation and not an explanation.

To make it very clear, the best answer is the one given, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

THE NAMES OF JESUS CHRIST.

There is something very significant in the way the names of Jesus Christ are used. For example, when He is called *Lord*, it is to emphasize His kingly office, or His reigning power and what can the meaning be but this, when we are told to believe on Him as Lord? We must reach the place where we are willing to let Him reign in our life. Can you submit to this? He will never make a failure of it.

Jesus is his earthly name, and the Bible says; “Thou

shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins." It must be necessary then for one to get a conception of him as he hangs upon the cross, and certainly we know he was there for just one purpose, namely, "That he might die in our stead."

Major Whittle tells the story of a company of bushwhackers arrested in Missouri during the days of the war. They were sentenced to be shot, when a young boy touched the commanding officer on the arm and said: "Won't you allow me to take the place of the man standing yonder? He has a family and will be greatly missed; no one will miss me; may I take his place?" When the officer had given his consent, the young boy stepped forward, drew the man out of line and stood in his place. When the command was given to fire, the boy fell dead. His grave is still to be found in the little Missouri town, and on the stone that marks it is cut these words: "Sacred to the memory of Willie Lear. He took my place."

This is true of Jesus Christ; He died that we might live, but we must accept Him.

He is also called *Christ*, but this is His resurrection name, and as Christ He stands this moment at the right hand of God, making intercession for us. Can you accept Him there?

It does seem to me that this makes the whole Christian life very plain. He is my Lord because He rules me; He is Jesus because He saved me; and He is Christ because whenever the mistakes of life overtake me, He stands at God's right hand to make explanation and intercession. Do you thus receive him?

THE WORD OF GOD.

It is also to be remembered that in the case of the

Philippian jailer, light came in all its clearness when "they spake unto him the word of the Lord."

I have very little confidence in that man who is not founded upon God's word for the assurance of his salvation. I have all the hope imaginable for that one who will receive it with meekness. I do not mean that he should be able at once to explain it, I only ask that by faith he receive it.

His word is sometimes spoken of under the figure of the hammer, and as such it can break our stubborn wills. It is sometimes said to be the light, and as such it will penetrate the darkness. It is frequently called the water, it always cleanses by displacement. I am persuaded that if we only persuade men to receive the word of God, that it would bring joy unspeakable and a peace which the world cannot give, neither take away.

One could not live in the promise and declaration of John's third chapter, sixteenth verse, without rejoicing in hope.

Say it over and over to yourself this way, and thus make it your own verse: "God so loved 'me' that He gave His only begotten Son that 'I' believing in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

I would not have you forget in this interesting story of the jailer that he was baptized. Baptism is inseparably connected with believing, and is as certainly a command of God's as that we believe.

We may differ as to the mode but too much emphasis cannot be placed upon the command itself. It is of course true that one may be saved without it, as for example, the thief on the cross; as for him, it was impossible, but I would be afraid to run the risk when Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be

saved, and he that believeth not, shall be damned."

At last when we stand before Him, we could not but say that we had neglected to do as He commanded. It is the experience of Christians everywhere, that this one of the sacraments brings upon the believer a marvelous blessing and leads him out into an experience which can never be described in words.

REJOICED.

It is not to be forgotten that when all these steps had been taken by the Philippian jailer, he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house. That word is certainly true that "in His presence is fullness of joy, and at His right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

And why should it not be so?

One of my friends, a Scotchman, told me that some time ago he was going through 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 very comfortable chair which occupied a very prominent place in the room, but just as he made the attempt, an old Scotch woman sprang to the chair and lifting her hand exclaimed, "Nay, nay, man, don't sit there," and she pointed to the scarlet cord fastened around the chair which he had not noticed before, and said she, "One day Her majesty the queen, a sudden storm coming upon her, left her carriage and came into this house." And with a look of great reverence, she exclaimed, "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 John, and he can keep it in his family;" for she said, "Is it not wonderful Her majesty, the queen, has used it?"

But I have a greater cause for rejoicing, Jesus Christ, the King of kings, has counted it a joy to take up His abode in my heart. He has cast around about me the scarlet cord, which makes me as His own.

It is a great thing for me to say that He is mine, but it is greater far for me to declare that I am His, and with the Philippian jailer therefore I rejoice with exceeding great joy.

THE OLD TESTAMENT PRODIGAL.

BY

JOHN MCNEILL.

MY text is in the 119th Psalm, the 59th and 60th verses. "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments." That is what I call the Old Testament story of the Prodigal Son. All that you have in the New Testament set forth with circumstance and detail is condensed into this brief epitome from the man who wrote the Psalms.

"I thought on my ways." In the New Testament it is set forth at length; here it is implied rather than expressed; but there and here what you have is the history of a man who once lived at home, but he wandered away into shame and folly, and when he came to himself he went back again to all blessedness for this world and the next. This would have done splendidly as a headstone to set over the grave of the returned prodigal of Christ's story when he died; for Christ has told us about the young man so vividly that we have long ceased to look at him as a mere lay figure in a story; he has become real to us; and I often think this young fellow after he came home stayed home and did well and perhaps by and bye he got the whole estate into his hands. He outlived his father and his elder brother, and at last filled with honors he lay down and died, "and devout

men carried him to his burial, and made great lamentation over him." Now, when you think of him dead and buried, and if they put up headstones there as we do here, can you imagine anything more fitting to inscribe upon the tombstone of the departed prodigal than just this text, "Here lies one who thought on his ways, and turned his feet unto God's testimonies, and made haste and delayed not to keep His commandments?"

This is the record of an experience. The Lord grant that we may find, as we go through it, that we are occupying ourselves with our own experience; and if it has not been so with ourselves until now, may we begin the experience recorded here at once.

SPIRITUAL DIARIES.

To change the illustration, this text is an entry in the spiritual diary of the man who wrote the Psalms, one of those little auto-biographical touches that make the Psalms so true and give them their perennial interest. They so often, like all true poetry, come down to our level, and we say: "Dear me! I might have said that myself." Like Columbus and the egg, it is quite easy if you know how.

"I thought on my own ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies; I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments." I might have said that myself. I hope I can say it myself now that David and the Holy Ghost behind him have started me. Do you keep a diary? Whether you do or not, God does. Has God had good occasion to write in that impartial record of thy life that He is keeping such an entry as this, "On such and such day,"—possibly only God knows, for as a man

may be born and not able to tell either the place or the hour, but the fact of his existence is conclusive that it happened somehow, sometime, so a man may be born again and not know the time, nor the place; but does God know? That is the point. Has the fact happened of your spiritual birth, your conversion, your return to God? Has He had good occasion to enter in the record that He keeps, some such entry as this, that such and such a day you, John Brown, thought on your ways, turned your feet, made haste and no delay to return to God in Christ for pardon and life eternal? It is time the record was in, for in the case of the best of us, naturally speaking, there are dark and shameful entries enough to make that record bitter reading in the day when the judgment shall be set and the books opened, and the dead judged out of the things that are written in the book. Ah, that red letter entry will redeem the record, and it is time it was there.

I AM NOT A PRODIGAL.

But I can imagine somebody saying, "Ah, this does not reach me; the preacher is evidently going to give a discourse based upon the prodigal son," and you say that you are not a prodigal. My friend, you *have* wandered away. You are either on the out-going journey from God, into ever deepening darkness or on the ingoing journey back to God and holiness and heaven. And the wandering from God is not *to do* on the part of any of us, the wandering is done already. The great question is, have we started on the home-going? We go astray from the womb; we could not go earlier, but we go then. We are born wrong. "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." Some of us go blundering on through the mud and mire of drunkenness, swearing, licentiousness, and open sinning; that is our way to the far country. Some of us go along the macadamized road of self-righteousness, and church-going, and sermon-hearing: that is our way to the same outerdarkness. On which path are you? Ponder the path of thy feet. "Thus saith the Lord hosts, Consider thy ways."

THINKING FOR ONE'S SELF.

Now, when we come to this tremendously astonishing experience for every soul that ever was born, there are two or three things in it, and I want you to notice them. First of all, notice in this experience of the Psalmist, so succinctly but graphically described, here is a man first of all who thinks for himself. "I thought." Would that I had a voice like a trumpet to ring it in the ears of all the world that the beginning of all blessedness lies in this little root. As mighty oaks come out of little acorns, so the mighty and glorious tree of everlasting life grows out of this little seedlet, personal thinking. It is because salvation—in the large meaning of that biblical expression—begins down there, that the kingdom of God goes on so slowly. It is because there is no platoon work, no mass work, no priestly work, no getting into heaven in batches and squadrons and regiments, no jugglery and witchcraft, that you are not saved. It is because we must begin, every soul of us, down here that so few find everlasting life. Religion is not magic; it is a daylight business; it is open and honest, and done in

the daylight of a clear understanding. Bring your best brains with you when you come to hear God's word.

While the stream of our sermon is flowing, the mill-wheel of your thinking is going; but when the stream is shut off, when the sermon stops, how long does the wheel, the mill-wheel of your personal independent thought about the things of God and thine own eternal destiny, how long does it keep working?

You cannot get anybody to do your thinking for you. It is not—"I thought on the sermon"—but—"I thought on my ways." No one can know the inmost thoughts of your heart. Your own soul is the issue at stake, and the thinking that will save it must be done by that soul's powers themselves.

My text is not so easy if you take it right. I do not doubt that people think that is a kind of cheap, almost flimsy utterance of Scripture. Is it? It is widening and deepening. There is room in it for the head and shoulders, the heart, and hands and feet of an immortal man, and God help you to put yourself right in. It needs a saved man to widen out the 59th and 60th verses of the 119th Psalm to their true and largest proportion. Ah, yes; the beginning lies in personal thinking. "I thought." I know quite well that in the affairs of this world many of us make it our boast, "I think for myself." You are not led by the nose by anybody. You would not trust me to go round the corner a message for you, and it is making your fortune. You are picking up a fortune from under the feet of careless, happy-go-lucky, easy-going mortals, simply because you think for yourself, and you do things for yourself, and you set your own eyes on the problem, and you tackle it

with your own teeth and your own fingers. But the tremendous charge I have against some wise men and women is, that in the things of their eternity the devil himself might pity them, they are so absolutely destitute of serious personal thinking. Yes, I repeat it: the devil might pity them, so near, so near, so little and they would be right; and then such worlds away, for they never began to think for themselves about their own soul. You must do your own thinking, and turn your own soul, and go back to God on your own feet. We go astray one by one, and we go back each man apart, each woman apart.

THINKING ABOUT ONE'S SELF.

Now, the next thing about this wonderful experience is, he not only thought *for* himself, but, secondly, he thought *about* himself. "For," he said, "I thought on my ways." A man who thought *for* himself *about* himself. When one begins to set himself to do that, there is no more interesting subject for meditation to me than me. I am interested in you, I am interested in my friend; but I am selfish enough to admit that John is a great subject of interest to McNeill, and we have often had little chats together, and I wish we had more time to have more, and my danger is that I am neglecting my own ways for looking after yours. "I thought on my ways."

Now, there is somebody here to-night who is losing the benefit of this address, because even while I am talking the devil is beating you by this trick. While I am talking to you, you are looking across this building, either actually or mentally, at somebody who is here, and the moment you meet outside you will say, "I am glad

you were here, that was for you." You will say to them, "I hope you listened to him; didn't you see me looking at you? You do not get talked to like that every day." So you see the devil wins again, it is his trump card; many a time you are hoping that other person is here and hoping they are thinking on their ways. Now, be a little selfish, it is your own ways first. There is not a soul among us whose ways do not need mending and ending, not one of us who could not be somewhat improved. Four-square fronting to Thee, oh God! and four-square with our back to death and hell. Or, if you are not looking at somebody, you are losing the benefit of this because your mind is turning wistfully back to your own house or the house of a friend who is not here, and you will rush away off to them and you will say when you see them, "Oh, I am so sorry you were not there; it just would have fitted you to a T." That is it again. Now, before you rush to your friend, I wish you would put your own ways right. Do you think, my decent friend, you are right yourself? Are you? May be your friend is bad and he knows that himself very likely; he wants to know how to be put right, and he wants you to tell him; you have never told him yet. That is the dry rot of practical religion.

"I thought on my ways." Oh, speak to your own heart. You do not need a hundred of the best books to do this kind of thinking, you do not need a library, or benefit of clergy at all, but sit down with thine own conscience, thine own record; sit down and put thine own soul in a corner; talk to thy heart, say to thyself, "My soul, I must speak with thee, listen." Say to yourself, "John, answer me,—where dost thou think a man

possessed of thy light shall land himself in the end? Soul, thou has been tricking me; soul, thou hast been dodging, thou hast been playing fast and loose with eternal verities, but I will have thee now." That is how to talk to yourself. God help you man, preach to thyself a sermon that no mortal minister ever can preach. Let memory bring out of past years what memory contains of thine own life; talk to thyself until thy face grows white with fear upon thy bed. Do not lose your soul because I or some other poor minister cannot work miracles and preach a soul-awakening sermon and say the tremendously personal rousing things that only God and your own heart know. Talk to yourself and you will be converted before night, unless you are a fool.

THREE CHANNELS OF PERSONAL THINKING.

When a man begins to think about his ways, there are three channels into which he may turn the current of his personal independent thinking. First, *who am I?* The Bible and my own conscience give the only and the sure answer to the question, what is man? Philosophy and science cannot tell. Between the covers of the Bible I can learn that I am an immortal soul, a living, thinking, spiritual being, surrounded by the material for awhile, but rising above it. God breathed into our nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being. Born never, never to go out of existence.

Secondly, *where am I?* On the most uncertain footing you can imagine. Here today, and gone tomorrow. "Man dieth and passeth away, man giveth up his spirit, and where is he?" A little while ago a wave out of the past eternity cast us up like driftwood on the shores of

time, and a little while hence a wave from the eternity that is coming will carry us into the future. We cannot be certain of twenty-four hours ahead. Such is the life of man. God grant that we may shape ourselves for the great eternity. Said an ancient, "Turn to God the day before you die." "But, said his disciples," "we do not know the day of our death." "Therefore," he replied, "turn to God today."

Thirdly, *where am I going?* The Bible tells us we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Think of it! Every individual soul must appear in the blinding blaze of light that streams from the judgment seat of Christ. That is where we are going first, then the eternal doom! Heaven or hell. We shall see Him, and He shall say, "Come, ye blessed," or "Depart ye cursed." God grant that we may not fear to meet Jesus.

A PRACTICAL THINKER.

Further, I want you to notice another point. This is a man who not only thought *upon* himself and *about* himself, but, in the third place, he was a *practical thinker*. He said, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet." We look at God's words as if they were nothing, and take and roll them under our tongue until they get smooth and thin.

"The coin grows smooth in traffic current passed,
Till Cæsar's image is effaced at last."

He was a practical thinker, for he said, "I turned my feet." This sermon will go the way of so many you have heard unless some—and I will neither call you a saint, nor a sinner, nor a backslider, I will just call you brother man and sister woman—will say, "Soul, will

you turn now? "I thought on my ways, *and turned my feet.*" The young prodigal might have sat and bemoaned himself with the grunting swine until he had died. He not only bemoaned himself and called himself a fool and formed good resolutions, but he arose on the same two feet that led him away, trudged back again to his father, and became a humbler youth; and that is the point.

What is the great difficulty in conversion? I will tell you in a word. It is simply because it is going back. It is a humbling thing to admit that you need turning, and that the evangelical preachers were right and you were a conceited fool. Now, that is humbling. Why is it that with some of you dear, decent people who are turned, shall I say forty years of age? and have a good character, and credit, and reputation, especially of a church-going and chapel-going kind,—why is it that the likelihood of your genuine conversion to God (you are not converted yet, and you know it) becomes less and less every year? I will tell you why; it is because it would be so humbling. Why, you have dared to speak about experimental vital religion; you have dared to say something like this: "Ah, I don't believe in these people who go about saying that they are saved." Now I know people can do that foolishly, but it is not all folly, and the thing's right at bottom, and don't you see if you get converted it will come out, it cannot be hidden; it will tell in a thousand ways before next Sunday. You will tell it yourself, and then we will all understand; and that is what the devil is whispering in some man's ear while I am at the other; and you are just inclined to go my way, but the devil whispers, "Now, it will go abroad,

and we will all understand that when you dared to criticise converted people, you are as much worth listening to as a blind man who would talk about painting, or a deaf man who would talk about music." You're gabbling about things high as heaven above you, and deep as hell beneath your shallow soul. But bitter and all though the experience may be, God help you to go through it. It is a bitter pill to be converted ; but just like the young fellow going home, mind you, he had a big wrestle with himself beside the grunting swine ; and many a poor prodigal does not come back, and it is pride that keeps him in the gutter. "I will not give in, I will not go home to my father ; I may get naked, and battered, and ragged, but go back, never !" And he dies in the swine tub. See that ye be not like him. If ye get bitter pills from your doctor, he will very likely give you the advice with them, "Never chew your pills, don't take time to think about them." "I thought on my ways and turned."

I wish I could make it plainer, but that you see I cannot. The feet, those outgoing energies, those powers, or symbols of the powers, by which I carry myself beyond myself to actions and customs and places ; those powers that the world and the devil and the flesh use, are precisely the powers by which I go back to God. On the same feet the poor prodigal went back, bare, bleeding, torn, tanned, limping, but he went back ; and I see him that night after the feast when he sat down before he went to bed and looked at himself and saw what a wreck he was, but he said, "Bless God, I am home ; bless God, I am back, saved, Hallelujah ! Home ! Home ! All that black and scorching path is behind me, and heaven and peace

and a welcome all round me." My friend, turn your feet ; that is the thing. God speed you to do it. As old Richard Baxter said, " It is turn or burn."

A TURNING POINT.

There are two things, there is a turning point, and there is a turning time. What is the turning point in your outward bound life? I will tell you. Every summer in London we took our Sunday School children out to the country, and when we had the little creatures there out on the grand field, they ran races with us and themselves. We drew the little ones up in line, and then I went away down the field, and I cried back to the intending runners and said, "Now, I am the turning post ; you run out to me and you turn round me and back in again as fast as you can to the goal." Now, I didn't see any little runners that afternoon going about like geese, saying "Where is the turning point? where are we to turn?" They could not mistake me. What is the turning point in every hell-bound life? It is a man, and such a man is Jesus Christ, standing between us and the hell we want to avoid and deserve to be in, saying to us "Don't go down there : it is an awful road ; turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" "As I live,"—and that is an oath, and an oath from God—"As I live," saith God, "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, I would rather that he turned unto me and lived." "Live?" you say, "If I turn to God, He will kill me; if I turn to God and become religious, it is death." No, it is not. "Turn unto me and *live*,"—LIVE. That is the turning point—Jesus Christ—there before your mind, as visible to your understanding as I am to your face, and

far more powerful. Don't you almost feel the pat of His hand against your breast as He tries to arrest you and say, "Turn, stop at Me, and go back with Me to My Father and your Father, My heaven and your home?" Decide for Christ, stop at Christ.

"In evil long I took delight
Unawed by guilt or fear,
Till a new object met my sight
And stopped my wild career;
I saw One hanging on the cross
In agonies and blood,
Who fixed His dying eye on me
As near that cross I stood."

Ah, that is the sight to arrest you! Until you have seen Christ on the cross, you will go to the devil merrily, you will take your own way to him, but that is the trend of it. You may say, "It is not," but that is where it ends; but when your eyes open to see Him, past Him you cannot go. May it be done now. Stop and turn at the living Christ, who once died, and now lives to convert you and save you.

A TURNING TIME.

He said, "I made haste and delayed not." There is a turning point, and it is Christ; and there is a turning time, and it is *now*,—quicker than now if I could express it. "I made haste and delayed not." He said it twice; he is so anxious to bring out the necessity of speedy decision, firmness, a stand taken—"I made haste and delayed not." Sharpness and promptitude. Young fellow, look here! Suppose this was an address upon success in life, what divisions would I have taken but **just** the divisions that I have taken here? If you want

to be a success in life, think for yourself, about your own business. Be practical and prompt. When you have surveyed the field, make the risk. In all legitimate dealing there is a point where the risk has to be run. So with eternity, be prompt,—*now*. “I made haste and delayed not.”

INSTANTANEOUS CONVERSION.

Somebody may object and say, “But, preacher, that is too sudden; that is instantaneous conversion, and you know, preacher, I have often spoken against instantaneous conversion.” But I know you have often spoken about things you know nothing about; that is your trouble. Instantaneous conversion! My friend, your objection is futile. When you fell into the lake last summer, I think you wanted instantaneous salvation from drowning, didn't you?—and I rather think you were in earnest about it. Another of your utterances is, you object to earnestness in religion; but that day, you cried out earnestly to be saved from drowning. It wasn't a very artistic performance, but there was a fine whole-souled earnestness about it; and if you had the same concern about your soul you would be heard in heaven, and God's right arm would save you. Instantaneous conversion! It is what we want from earthly dangers. You do not want a committee to go and stand by the edge of the lake and discuss the situation, and appoint a sub-committee with a chairman to make an interim report; you do not want anybody to go and say, “You fool you, how did you get in there?” You want somebody to go and pull you out first, and afterwards discuss the folly or otherwise of getting in. And that is what I am doing

now. Suppose I said, "Yes, you are right, you are such a cantankerous, twisted old sinner, you are so utterly crooked that God cannot put you straight in less than four-and-twenty hours of stretching on the tenter-hooks of remorse and agony for your sin." Oh, how quickly you would reply to me and say, "Preacher, that is no salvation at all. Before four-and-twenty hours I may be dead and doomed. Can't I be saved now?" And it is infinitely mean, to give it no other name, to object to the only cure.

One spring, I was in Plymouth in the south of England. Standing there where you can look away out to Eddystone Lighthouse, I saw a thousand men gathered on the parade ground. By one voice of command, these thousand men, every man of whom wore his head above his shoulder, every man had his own arms and limbs and intellectual and moral powers and faculties, a thousand men were going in one direction, when at the voice of one man a thousand men stopped. You say, "Many men, many minds." Ah, but not in the army. You will be shot in the army for your independent criticism. "Many men, one mind," if you are wise. A thousand men stopped. At another voice of command, a thousand men turned right round in an opposite direction, and at another pealing cry, quicker than I am taking time to tell it, a thousand individuals, intelligent men, walking in a direction completely opposite to that they had taken sixty seconds before. Shall man over man have such power, and shall not God have power to arrest, to turn from darkness into light, the creatures who lie in His hand like clay on the potter's wheel? We are only clay, but God pity us, we are rebellious clay. Oh, while

God is appealing, yield to the appeal of omnipotence. Let God arrest thee, and thou art arrested and turned.

DECIDE NOW.

Don't you hear the footsteps of Death come hurrying up behind you? "In such an hour as ye think not," Death will spring upon you, and how will it be with you then? What if you get the experience of Paton, the missionary to the Hebrides? Suppose you had been his wife, and there engrossed in your work and in your husband's work, full of life, full of hope, and suddenly from behind a savage buried a tomahawk in your back and with another stroke nearly severed your head from the body? Death, come it soon or late, tomahawks us suddenly like that. Make haste: let there be no delay in turning to God. Decide for Christ now! "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Turn, turn, why will you die?

THE GREAT ARBITRATION CASE.

BY

C. H. SPURGEON.

“Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both.”—Job ix: 33.

What Job desired to have, the Lord has provided for us in the person of His own dear Son, Jesus Christ. We cannot say with Job that there is no daysman who can lay His hand upon both, because there is now “one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.” In Him let us rejoice, if indeed we have an interest in Him; and if we have not yet received Him, may almighty grace bring us even now to accept Him as our Advocate and Friend.

There is an old quarrel between the thrice Holy God and His sinful subjects, the sons of Adam. Man has sinned; he has broken God’s law in every part of it, and has wantonly cast off from him the allegiance which is due to his Maker and his King. There is a suit against man, which was formally instituted at Sinai and must be pleaded in Court before the Judge of quick and dead. God is the great plaintiff against his sinful creatures, who are the defendants. If that suit be carried into Court, it must go against the sinner. There is no hope whatever that at the last tremendous day any sinner will be able to stand in judgment if he shall leave the matter of his debts and obligations towards his God unsettled

until that dreadful hour. Sinner, it would be well for thee to "agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way," for if thou be once delivered up to the great Judge of all the earth, there is not the slightest hope that thy suit can be decided otherwise than to thine eternal ruin. "Weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth," will be the doom adjudged thee forever if thy case as before the living God shall ever come to be tried at the fiery throne of absolute justice. But the infinite grace of God proposes an arbitration, and I trust you are not anxious to have your suit carried into court, but are willing that the appointed Daysman should stand betwixt you and God and lay his hand upon both and propose and carry out a plan of reconciliation. There is hope for thee, thou bankrupt sinner, that thou mayest yet be at peace with God. There is a way by which thy debts may yet be paid; that way is a blessed arbitration in which Jesus Christ shall stand as the daysman.

Let me begin *by describing the essentials of an arbitrator, or daysman*; then let me take you into the arbitrator's court and show you *His proceeding*; and then for a little time, let us dwell upon *the happy success of our great Daysman*.

THE ESSENTIALS OF AN ARBITRATOR OR DAYSMAN.

The first essential is, that *both parties should be agreed to accept him*. Let me come to thee, thou sinner, against whom God has laid His suit, and put the matter to thee. God has accepted Christ Jesus to be His umpire in His dispute. He appointed Him to the office, and chose Him for it before He laid the foundations of the world. He is God's fellow, equal with the Most High, and can put His

hand upon the Eternal Father without fear, because He is dearly beloved of that Father's heart. He is "very God of very God," and is in no respect inferior to "God over all, blessed for ever." But He is also a man like thyself, sinner. He once suffered, hungered, thirsted, and knew the meaning of poverty and pain. Nay, He went farther, He was tempted as thou hast been, and farther still, He suffered the pangs of death, as thou poor mortal man wilt one day have to do. Now, what thinkest thou? God has accepted Him; canst thou agree with God in this matter, and agree to take Christ to be thy daysman too? Does foolish enmity possess thee, or does grace reign and lead thee to accept Emmanuel, God with us, as umpire in this great dispute? Let me say to thee that thou wilt never find another so near akin to thee, so tender, so sympathetic, with such bowels of compassion towards thee. Love streamed from His eyes in life, and poured from His wounds in death. He is "the express image" of Jehovah's person, and you know that Jehovah's name is "Love." "God is love," and Christ is love. Sinner, has divine grace brought thee to thy senses? Wilt thou accept Christ now? Art thou willing that He should take this case into His hands and arbitrate between thee and God? For if God accepteth Him, and thou accept Him too, then He has one of the first qualifications for being a Daysman.

But, in the next place, *both parties must be fully agreed to leave the case entirely in the arbitrator's hands.* If the arbitrator does not possess the power of settling the case, then pleading before him is only making an opportunity for wrangling, without any chance of coming to a peaceful settlement. Now God has committed "all power" into

the hands of his Son. Jesus Christ is the plenipotentiary of God, and has been invested with full ambassadorial powers. He comes commissioned by his Father, and He can say in all that He does towards sinners, that His Father's heart is with Him. If the case be settled by him, the Father is agreed.

Now, sinner, does grace move thy heart to do the same? Wilt thou agree to put thy case into the hands of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man? Wilt thou abide by His decision? Wilt thou have it settled according to His judgment, and shall the verdict which He gives stand absolute and fast with thee? If so, then Christ has another essential of an arbitrator; but if not, remember, though He may make peace for others, He will never make peace for thee; for this know, that until the grace of God has made thee willing to trust the case in Jesus' hands, there can be no peace for thee, and thou art wilfully remaining God's enemy by refusing to accept His dear Son.

Further, let us say, that to make a good arbitrator, or umpire, *it is essential that he be a fit person.* If the case were between a king and a beggar, it would not seem exactly right that another king should be the arbitrator, or another beggar; but if there could be found a person who combined the two, who was both prince and beggar, then such a man could be selected by both. Our Lord Jesus Christ precisely meets the case. There is a very great disparity between the plaintiff and the defendant, for how great is the gulf which exists between the eternal God and the poor fallen man! How is this to be bridged? Why, by none except by one who is God and who at the same time can become man. Now the only being who can do this is Jesus Christ. He can put His hand on thee, stooping down to all thine infirmity and thy sorrow, and

He can put his other hand upon the Eternal Majesty, and claim to be co-equal with God and co-eternal with the Father. Dost thou not see, then, His fitness? Surely it were the path of wisdom, sinner, to accept Him at once as the arbitrator in the case. See how well He understands it! I should not do to be an arbitrator in legal cases, because, though I should be anxious to do justice, yet I should know nothing of the law of the case. But Christ knows your case, and the law concerning it, because he has lived among men, and has passed through and suffered the penalties of justice. There cannot surely be a better skilled or more judicious daysman than our blessed Redeemer.

Yet there is one more essential of an umpire, and that is, that *he should be a person desirous to bring the case to a happy settlement.* If you appoint a quarrelsome arbitrator, he may delight to "set dogs by the ears"; but if you elect one who is anxious for the good of both and wishes to make both friends, then he is just the very man, though, to be sure, he would be a man of a thousand, very precious when found, but very hard to discover. Oh, that all law-suits could be decided by such men! In the great case which is pending between God and the sinner, the Lord Jesus Christ has a sincere anxiety both for his Father's glory and for the sinner's welfare, and that there should be peace between the two contending parties. It is the life and aim of Jesus Christ to make peace. He delighteth not in the death of sinners, and He knows no joy greater than that of receiving prodigals to His bosom, and of bringing lost sheep back again to the fold. You cannot tell how high the Savior's bosom swells with an intense desire to make to Himself a great name as a peace-maker.

Never had warrior such ambition to make war and to win victories therein, as Christ has to end war, and to win thereby the bloodless triumphs of peace. From the heights of heaven He came leaping like a young roe down to the plains of earth. From earth He leaped into the depths of the grave; then up again at a bound He sprang to earth, and up again to heaven; and still He rested not, but presseth on in His mighty work to ingather sinners. and to reconcile them unto God; making Himself a propitiation for their sins.

Thou seest then, sinner, how the case is. God has evidently chosen the most fitting arbitrator. That arbitrator is willing to undertake the case, and thou mayest well repose all confidence in Him. But if thou shalt live and die without accepting Him as thine arbitrator, then, the case going against thee, thou wilt have none to blame but thyself. When the everlasting damages shall be assessed against thee in thy soul and body forever, thou shalt have to curse only thine own folly for having been the cause of thy ruin. May I ask you to speak candidly? Has the Holy Ghost so turned the natural bent and current of your will, that you have chosen Him because He has first chosen you? Do you feel that Christ this day is standing before God for you? He is God's anointed; is He your elected? God's choice pitches Him upon you, does your choice agree therewith? Remember, where there is no will towards Christ, Christ as yet exercises no saving power. Christ saves no sinner who lives and dies unwilling. He makes unwilling sinners willing before He speaks a word of comfort to them. It is the mark of our election as His people, that we are made willing in the day of God's power. Lay your hope where God has laid

your help, namely, on Christ, mighty to save. You cannot have an arbitrator except both sides be agreed. Dost thou say—"Ay, ay, with all my soul I choose Him"? Then let us proceed.

Now I shall want to take you into the Court where the trial is going on, and show you the legal proceedings before the great daysman.

"The man, Christ Jesus," who is God over all, blessed forever," opens His Court by laying down the principles upon which He intends to deliver judgment, and those principles I will now try to explain and expound. They are two-fold—first, *strict justice*; and secondly, *fervent love*.

STRICT JUSTICE.

The Arbitrator has determined that let the case go as it may *there shall be full justice done*, justice to the very extreme, whether it be for or against the defendant. He intends to take the law in its sternest and severest aspect, and to judge according to its strictest letter. He will not be guilty of partiality on either side. If the law says that the sinner shall die, the Arbitrator declares that He will judge that the sinner shall die; and if, on the other hand the defendant can plead and prove that he is innocent, He intends to adjudge to him the award of innocence, namely *eternal life*. If the sinner can prove that he has fairly won it, he shall have his due. Either way, whether it be in favor of the plaintiff or the defendant, the condition of judgment is to be strict justice.

LOVE.

But the arbitrator also says that he will judge according to the second rule, that of *fervent love*. He loves His

Father, and therefore He will decide on nothing that may attain His honor or disgrace His Crown. He so loves God, the Eternal One, that He will suffer heaven and earth to pass away sooner than there shall be one blot upon the character of the most High. On the other hand He so loves the poor defendant, man, that He will be willing to do anything rather than inflict penalty upon him unless justice shall absolutely require it. He loves man with so large a love that nothing will delight Him more than to decide in his favor, and He will be but too glad if He can be the means of happily establishing peace between the two. How these principles are to meet will be seen by and by. At present He lays them down very positively. "He that ruleth among men must be just." An arbitrator must be just; or else he is not fit to hold the scales in any suit. On the other hand, He must be tender; for His name (as God) is love, and His nature (as man) is gentleness and mercy. Both parties should distinctly consent to these principles. How can they do otherwise? Do they not commend themselves to all of you? Let justice and love unite if they can.

THE PLAINTIFF'S CASE.

Having thus laid down the principles of judgment, the Arbitrator next calls upon the Plaintiff to state His case. Let us listen while the Great Creator speaks. May God give me grace now reverently to state it in His name, as one poor sinner stating God's case against us all. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not

know. My people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters; they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward." The Eternal God charges us, and (let me confess at once) most justly and most truly charges us, with having broken all His Commandments—some of them in act, some of them in word, all of them in heart and thought and imagination. He charges upon us that against light and knowledge we have chosen the evil, and forsaken the good; that knowing what we were doing we have turned aside from His most righteous law and have gone astray like lost sheep, following the imaginations and devices of our own hearts. The great Plaintiff claims that inasmuch as we are His creatures we ought to have obeyed Him, that inasmuch as we owe our very lives to His daily care we ought to have rendered Him service instead of disobedience, and to have been His loyal subjects, instead of turning traitors to His throne. All this, calmly and dispassionately, according to the great Book of the Lord, is laid to our charge before the Daysman. No exaggeration of sin is brought against us. It is simply declared of us that "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint;" that there is none that doeth good, no, not one; that we have all gone out of the way, and altogether become unprofitable. This is God's case. He says, "I made this man; curiously was he wrought in the lowest parts of the earth; and all his members bear traces of My singular handiwork. I made him for My honor, and he has not honored Me. I created him for My service, and he has not served Me. Twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years I have kept the breath in his

nostrils; the bread he has eaten has been the daily portion of My bounty; his garments are the livery of My charity; and all this while he has neither thought of Me, his Creator and Preserver, nor done anything in My service. He has served his family, his wife and children, but his Maker he has despised. He has served his country, his neighbors, the city in which he dwells; but I who made him, I have had nothing from him. He has been an unprofitable servant unto me."

I think I may put the Plaintiff's case into your hands. Which of you would keep a horse, and that horse should yield you no obedience? What excuse is it that though I might not use him he would carry another? Nay, the case is worse than this. Not only has man done nothing, but worse than nothing. Which of you would keep a dog which, instead of fawning upon you, would bark at you, fly at you, and tear you in his rage? Some of us have done this to God; we have perhaps cursed Him to His face; we have broken His sabbaths, laughed at His gospel, and persecuted His saints. You would have said of such a dog, let it die. Wherefore should I harbor in my house a dog that treats me thus? Yet, hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth; God has borne with your ill manners, and He still cries "forbear." He puts the lifted thunder back into the arsenal of His dread artillery. I wish I could state the case as I ought. My lips are but clay; and these words should be like fire in the sinner's soul. When I meditated upon this subject alone, I felt much sympathy with God, that He should have been so ill treated; and whereas some men speak of the flames of hell as too great a punishment for sin, it seems ten thousand marvels that we should not have been thrust down there long ago.

THE DEFENDANT'S CASE.

The Plaintiff's case having thus been stated *the defendant is called upon by the Daysman for his*, and I think I hear him as he begins. First of all, the trembling sinner pleads—“*I confess to the indictment, but I say I could not help it. I have sinned, it is true, but my nature was such that I could not well do otherwise; I must lay all the blame of it to my own heart; my heart was deceitful and my nature was evil.*”

The Daysman at once rules that this is no excuse what ever, but an aggravation: for inasmuch as it is conceded that the man's heart itself is enmity against God, this in an admission of yet greater malice and blacker rebellion. It was only alleged against the offender in the first place that he had outwardly offended; but he acknowledges that he does it inwardly, and confesses that his very heart is traitorous against God, and is fully set upon working the King's damage and dishonor. It is determined, therefore, by the Daysman that this excuse will not stand and He gives a case in point:—a thief is brought up for stealing, and he pleads that his heart was thievish, that he felt a constant inclination to steal, and that therefore he could not help running off with any goods within his reach. The judge very properly answers, “Then I shall give you twice as much penalty as any other man who only fell into the fault by surprise, for according to your own confession, you are a thief through and through. What you have said is not an excuse, but an aggravation.”

Then the defendant pleads in the next place that albeit he acknowledges the facts alleged against him, yet *he is no worse than other offenders*, and that there are many in the world who have sinned more grievously than he has

done. He says he has been envious, and angry, and worldly, and covetous, and has forgotten God; but then he never was an adulterer, or a thief, or a drunkard, or a blasphemer, and he pleads that his lesser crimes may well be winked at. But the great Daysman at once turns to the Statute Book, and says that as he is about to give his decision by law that plea is not at all tenable, for the law book has it—"Cursed is every man that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." The offence of one sinner doth not excuse the offence of another; and the arbitrator declares that he cannot mix up other cases with the case now in hand; that the present offender has on his own confession broken the law, and that as the law book stands, that is the only question to be decided, for "the soul that sinneth it shall die," and if the defendant has no better plea to offer, judgment must go against him.

The sinner urges further, that though he has offended, and offended very greatly and grievously, yet *he has done a great many good things*. It is true he did not love God, but he always went to church. It is true he did not pray, but still he belonged to a singing class. It is quite correct that he did not love his neighbor as himself, but he always like to relieve the poor. But the Daysman, looking the sinner full in the face, tells him that this plea also is bad, for the alleged commission of some acts of loyalty will not make compensation for avowed acts of treason. "Those things," saith he, "ye ought to have done, but not to have left the others undone"; and he tells the sinner, with all kindness and gentleness, that straining at a gnat does not exonerate him for having swallowed a camel; and that having tithed mint, and

anise, and cummin, is no justification for having devoured a widow's house. To have forgotten God is in itself a great enormity; to have lived without serving him is a crime of omission so great, that whatever the sinner may have done on the *contra*, stands for nothing at all, since he has even then in that case done only what he ought to have done.

You see at once the justice of this decision. If any of you were to say to your grocer, or tailor, when they send in their bills, "Well, now, you ought not to ask for payment of that account, because I did pay you another bill—you ought not to ask me to pay for that suit of clothes, because I did pay you for another suit." I think the answer would be, "But in paying for what you had before, you only did what you ought to do; but I still have a demand upon you for this." So all the good deeds you have ever done are only debts discharged which were most fully due, (supposing them to be good deeds, which is very questionable), and they leave the great debt still untouched.

The defendant has no end of pleas, for the sinner has a thousand excuses; and finding that nothing else will do, he begins to appeal to the mercy of the plaintiff, and says *that for the future he will do better*. He confesses that he is in debt, but he will run up no more bills at that shop. He acknowledges that he has offended, but he vows he will not do so again. He is quite sure that the future shall be as free from fault as angels are from sin. Though it is true that he just now said his heart was bad, still he feels inclined to think that it is not so very bad after all; he is conceited enough to think that he can in the future keep himself from committing sin; thereby,

you see, admitting the worthlessness of his former plea on which he relied so much. "Now," he says, "if for life I become a teetotaler, then surely I may be excused for having been a drunkard. Suppose now that I am always honest and steady, and never again say one ill word, will not that exonerate me from all my wrong-doings, and for having blasphemed God?" But the Daysman rules, still with kindness and gentleness, that the greatest imaginable virtue in the future will be no recompense for the sin of the past; for he finds in the law no promise whatever made to that effect: but the statute runs in these words, "He will by no means spare the guilty;" "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

PLEADS GUILTY.

What is the poor defendant to do now? He is fairly beaten this time. He falls down on his knees, and with many tears and lamentations cries, "I see how the case stands; *I have nothing to plead, but I appeal to the mercy of the plaintiff.* I confess that I have broken His commandments; I acknowledge that I deserve His wrath; but I have heard He is merciful, and I plead for free and full forgiveness."

And now comes another scene. The plaintiff seeing the sinner on his knees, with his eyes full of tears, makes this reply, "I am willing at all times to deal kindly and according to loving kindness with all my creatures; but will the arbitrator for a moment suggest that I should damage and ruin my own perfections of truth and holiness; that I should belie my own word; that I should imperil my own throne; that I should make the purity of

immaculate justice to be suspected, and should bring down the glory of my unsullied holiness, because this creature has offended me, and now craves for mercy? I cannot, I will not spare the guilty; *he has offended, and he must die!* 'As I live; I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but would rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live.' Still, this 'would rather' must not be supreme. I am gracious and would spare the sinner, but I am just, and must not unsay my own words. I swore with an oath, 'The soul that sinneth shall die.' I have laid it down as a matter of firm decree, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' This sinner is righteously cursed, and he must inevitably die; and yet I love him. And yet, how can I put thee among the children? Would it not be a worse calamity that I should be unjust than that earth should lose its inhabitants? Better all men perish, than that the universe should lose the justice of God as its stay and shield."

THE VERDICT.

The arbitrator bows and says, "Even so; justice demands that the offender should die, and I would not have thee unjust."

What more does the arbitrator say? He sits still, and the case is in suspense. There stands the just and holy God, willing to forgive if it can be done without injury to the immutable principles of right. There sits the arbitrator, looking with eyes of love upon the poor, weeping, trembling sinner, and anxious to devise a plan to save him, but conscious that that plan must not infringe upon divine justice; for it were a worse cruelty

to injure divine perfections than it were to destroy the whole human race. The arbitrator, therefore, after pausing awhile, puts it thus: "I am anxious that these two should be brought together. I love them both. I cannot, on the one hand, recommend that my Father should stain his honor; I cannot, on the other hand, endure that this sinner should be cast eternally into hell. I will decide the case, and it shall be thus: *I will pay my Father's justice all it craves. I pledge myself that in the fulness of time I will suffer in my own proper person all that the weeping, trembling sinner ought to have suffered. My Father, wilt thou stand to this?*" The eternal God accepts the awful sacrifice! What say you, sinner, what say you? Why, methinks you cannot have two opinions. If you are sane—and may God make you sane—you will melt with wonder. You will say, "I could not have thought this! I never called in a Daysman with an expectation of this! *I have sinned, and he declares that he will suffer; I am guilty, and he says that he will be punished for me!*"

CHRIST DIED TO SAVE THE DEFENDANT.

Yes, sinner, and he did more than say it, for when the fulness of time came—you know the story. The officers of justice served him with the writ, and he was taken from his knees in the garden of Gethsemane, away to the court, and there he was tried and condemned; and you know how his back was scourged till the white bones stood like islands of ivory in the midst of a crimson sea of gore; you know how his head was crowned with thorns, and his cheeks were given to those who plucked off the hair! Can you not see him hounded through the

streets of Jerusalem, with the spittle of the brutal soldiery still upon his unwashed face, and his wounds all unstanch'd and bleeding? Can you not see him as they hurl him down and fasten him to the accursed tree?—then they lift the cross and dash it down into its socket in the earth, dislocating every bone, tearing every nerve and sinew, filling his soul as full of agony as this earth is full of sin, or the depths of the ocean filled with its floods? You do not know, however, what He suffered within. Hell held carnival within His heart. Every arrow of the infernal pit was discharged at Him, and heaven itself forsook Him, the thunderbolts of vengeance fell upon Him, and His Father hid His face from Him, because “He who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him,” and He cried in His agony, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” And so He suffered on, and on, and on, till “It is finished” from His dying lips closed the scene.

Here, then, is the arbitration. Christ Himself suffers, and now I have to put the query, “Hast thou accepted Christ?” O dear friend, if thou hast, I know that God the Holy Ghost has made thee accept Him. But if thou hast not, what shall I call thee? I will not upbraid thee, but my heart would weep over thee. How canst thou be so mad as to forego a compromise so blessed, an arbitration so divine! Oh! kiss the feet of the Daysman; love Him all thy life, that He has decided the case so blessedly.

I would to God that you would now look to the Savior; that you would come with weeping and tears to Him, and say,

“ ‘Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly.’

Take my case, and arbitrate for me; I accept thy atonement; I trust in thy precious blood. Only receive me and I will rejoice in thee for ever with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” May the Lord bless you evermore.
Amen.

AS THEY WENT.

BY

B. FAY MILLS.

As Jesus went to Jerusalem, He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee, and as He entered into a certain village, there met Him ten lepers, who stood afar off, and lifted up their voices, and said: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." When He saw them He said unto them, "Go show yourselves unto the priests." The priests were the health officers, and these lepers had no right to go to the priests until they knew they were well, and they knew they were not well. But "it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed."

Jesus taught His disciples in three ways; sometimes by direct instruction, sometimes by the relating of a parable, and sometimes by making use of an illustration, frequently taken from some present object or event. In connection with the practical teaching of the healing of the lepers. He made use of all three of these methods. The disciples had said to Jesus, "Increase our faith," and in response He had said to them, "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might have said to this sycamore tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you." And then He told them the parable about the man having a servant, plowing or feeding cattle, and said: "Which one of you would say to him by and by, when

he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? but would not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." This was the answer that He gave to them when they said: "Increase our faith." It meant practically, "Do the next thing that you ought to do, in a humble spirit;" and then there came this practical and better illustration of the doctrine, in the cleansing of the ten lepers.

I want to make the method of God so plain and simple that no one shall be able to rise up at the judgment day and say that he was in this meeting and did not learn how he might inherit eternal life. Nay, I do not have to make it simple. I want to make it as God has made it. I want to tell it as God has told it. I want to strip it of all that men have put around it that has disguised its form—the marvelous simplicity of the way by which men may lay hold of eternal life.

THREE THINGS DUE TO GOD.

I believe that God has a right to expect of heathen and of Christian alike three things. No matter whether a man is born in a gutter or in a palace, in the depths of Africa or in the most Christian city on earth, God has a right to expect of him, first, an honest effort to forsake sin; second, a sincere desire to know the truth in order to do it; third, an open confession of his adhesion unto right-

eousness. These three things God has a right to expect from every person that ever had a mind and a conscience, and the doing of these three things will lead anybody upon earth into the eternal light and life of God. It is just as simple as that. As they go, they will be cleansed. Let me analyze this a little.

First, an honest effort to forsake sin, that does not mean sin that you do not know, but it means everything that you do know that is sinful ; and that you will adopt the principle that as you get more light that shows you more uncleanness in the heart, you will also give that up.

Second, the honest desire to know the truth in order to do it. I believe that one of the most cursed ambitions that ever stirred a human mind is a selfish desire for knowledge. To wish simply to know may be a devilish thing ; but to know in order to do, that is a godly thing—a passion for knowledge for the sake of character, to live up to all the light that you have, that you may get more light by doing what you ought to do, to take the step you see before you with what light you have and and when you see another step to take that, and then the next, and then the next.

And then, the open confession of this intention—is not that also reasonable and necessary? “No man liveth unto himself.” We touch the lives around us. The solitary are set in families, and people are framed in one great network of society—nay, one great organism of society ; so that if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it, and if one member be healthful, it shall help to impart health to all the rest, your neighbor, your wife, your child, your business associate, the people that know you and look upon you, have a right to know that,

as for you, you mean to do right as far as it shall be shown unto you.

I never saw any man who did these three things without coming to a knowledge of sin, to a knowledge of God, to a knowledge of God's salvation, to peace and light and hope and likeness unto Jesus Christ.

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL.

There are two ways to investigate a machine, there are two ways to learn about anything; the one way is theoretical, and the other is practical. Some time ago I was in a great carpet factory, and the proprietor, Mr. B., was showing us through the establishment. We went into a room that was a sort of inventor's room, and he said: "Here's a machine that I have just invented for making a new kind of carpet." There it was, towering up perhaps ten feet above the floor, and as large around as three or four men might reach with their hands touching, and with, I should say, a thousand needles, and a very great number of intricate parts. Mr. B. described it, and said, "This is this, and that is that, and the other is the other thing." I tried to look wise for a while, but finally broke down and said, "You might as well talk Choctaw as to tell me all that. I will take your word that it makes carpet, but I am afraid that I have not a mechanical head, and I am sure that I could not understand how that machine can make carpet." He said, "If you will stay here twenty-four hours I will guarantee that you will understand it as well as I do." I said, "You do not know the person that you have undertaken to teach. I am sure there is nothing on earth that could show me how that machine can make carpet, if I should stand here for the next twenty-four years." "Come

here," he said, and he took me into another room, and there he had one of the machines in motion, and I saw it make the carpet. Then I knew that it did it, just as well as if I could have uttered all those mysterious words, and understood all about every portion of that machine.

Now there are two ways to know the salvation of Christ. One of them would be just as impossible for you to understand as it would have been for me to understand the explanation given me concerning that machine. To know all about God would take an infinite mind, that could reach into all space and all time, and understand all history and all prophecy and all mystery. In order to know all about God you would have to be God himself. You would have to have more time and a greater brain and a longer development and culture than any man in the world. It is a thinkable thing that a man should do that, but it is not a practicable thing.

But there is another way to know God. Set the machine in motion; see what it will do; commence to obey; act as though the word of God meant what it said when it says that "to those who obey Him, He is the author of Eternal life." Commence to do His will and see if you will not know of the doctrine. As you go, you will be cleansed.

KNOWLEDGE OF SIN, AND SORROW FOR IT.

I believe that such an effort as this will lead to four things:—In the first place *it will lead to a knowledge of sin, and to sorrow for it.* If Scripture is profitable for reproof and correction, I believe that practice is even more so, and that any man will be convicted of sin who endeavors to do the will of God. I believe that godly sor-

row worketh repentance that is not to be repented of; and that godly sorrow comes to us in proportion as we are godly. I have had more pain to-day for one hasty word that escaped my lips unawares, than I had on account of all the sins in my life while I was an unconverted man. I believe that the nearer we get to God, the more sensitive to sin do we become, until the least sin will pain us, as the least speck will pain the eye if it falls upon it. When Paul was about enlisting in God's service, or shortly afterward, he said that he was not worthy to be called an apostle. Then he said he was less than the least of all saints. And at the time that he said he was ready to be offered, he also said he was the chief of sinners. Now I do not believe that he was growing more wicked all the time, but I think he was realizing more and more what sin meant, and was becoming more sensitive to the touch of sin. You might be down in a dark cellar to-night, with all sorts of loathsome things about you, the atmosphere filled with impurities, and some hideous, slimy reptile might come within half an inch of your hand or even your face, and you might not mind it because you did not see what was about you. But as the light came in and you began to realize these things, you would shrink away from this crawling reptile, and you would try to stamp out of existence that loathsome thing; and as the light grew brighter and brighter, at last the very air around you would be seen to be filled with that which was poisonous and repulsive. It is so with a man who sets himself to do the will of God, as God shows it to him. Sin seems exceedingly sinful, and more and more sinful as he goes on with his earnest effort to do the will of God.

I knew of a man who was known as "the man who

had never wept." No one had ever seen tears upon his face, one night he was deeply convicted of sin in a meeting, and finally, with great trembling, he took hold of the seat in front of him and pulled himself up to a partially erect posture, and cried "Can a man be saved who has never wept?" And even as he said it he let go of the seat and fell back into the pew, and burst into tears. Oh, I believe that tears would come to cheeks unused to them if only some would be willing to do the will of God.

I knew of a man in the army who was said to be the wickedest man in the regiment. One night he came into the regimental prayer-meeting and stood up and said very calmly, "Comrades, I am going to lead a godly life." The soldiers were surprised, because they thought that a wicked man would have to manifest deeper concern about sin in order to get rid of it. He tried it for one day, and came into the prayer-meeting the next night. This time he had concern enough: he could hardly speak. He said, "Comrades, I did not do right when I told you last night that I was going to lead a godly life. I don't know that God can forgive me. I have received two letters that tell me of the death of two persons. One of them was a young man who has just died of delirium tremens at my home in New England; and the other is a young woman that has died in a place of shame in Washington. I led them both astray! O, my God! Can there be mercy for a wretch like me?" God did save that man, but he was never heard to pray until the day of his death that he did not say, "Oh God, help me to do good enough to counterbalance the evil of my past life." Oh, friends, you would have concern enough if only you would commence with what light you have openly to do the will of God.

SOLUTION OF DOUBTS.

There is another thing that would come to you, and that is *the solving of every doubt*. I believe there is no infidel walking in the mist and labyrinth of doubt, who would not see a clear road that would shine with light up to the portals of the City of God, if only he would be willing openly to do what God showed him that He wanted him to do. I believe there is no poor wretch sitting now in some loathsome place, bound hand and foot with the chains of some selfish or sensual or avaricious vice, but would find the chains broken, and would rise up a free man, if only he was willing to do the will of God.

There was a man in a New England city, who was an infidel. He had forty-five young men, I think that was the number, 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 that 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 meeting, not because you have ceased to be an infidel, but because you think that 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 the 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 places of evil

repute. 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 the deacons 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." He never went to talk with the minister about his soul. His doubts all disappeared that night; every difficulty that had been in his way was removed. He stood up in the next meeting where he had an opportunity, and made a confession of Jesus Christ. He gathered his young men into the Sunday-school, and became the teacher of a large Bible class. As he went, he was cleansed.

When Lady Henry Somerset was seeking God, she heard a voice say, "My child, if you will act as if I were, you will know that I am." And she was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision, and she came into God's light.

I know at least a hundred other instances like these, and I will tell of one more. This was an infidel German Professor, in the University of Berlin, who came to London on a visit, and was spending a part of his time with

the Rev. Dr. R., the Rector of one of the English Churches. Dr. R. did not speak to him on religious topics until he had been there a week and was preparing to leave. One day, after the professor had attended a service in the Church, and they were together in the vestry, the pastor spoke to him about his spiritual welfare. The professor said, "I do not believe certain things about the Christian religion. I do not believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. I do not believe in the inspiration of the Bible, or in miracles. I think there may be a God in fact, I am inclined to think there is a God; but I do not think there is any way by which any one can get acquainted with Him." The pastor said, "Professor, would you like to know that there is a God?" He replied, "Yes, I should, but I do not think God has revealed Himself to men." The pastor said, "Professor, do you think that if God were kindly disposed toward His creatures, and if there were a way in which He could reveal Himself to men, He would do it?" The Professor said, "Yes, I think if he were kindly disposed, and were able to do it, that He would. But I do not think that He can." "Do you think He is kindly disposed toward His creatures?" "I would have to believe that, or He would crush us out of existence or fill us with continual misery." "Professor, if God should reveal Himself to you, would you be willing to meet the consequences and do what He told you to do, if He would show you His will?" "Yes, if God could do it, and would do it, I would do what He showed me. But I do not think that He can." "Did you ever ask Him?" "No, I have never felt that that would be consistent." "Professor, will you kneel with me here, reverently, and after I have prayed, will you say what you can honestly say out of

your heart concerning your desire that God should reveal Himself to you?" "Yes, I will." They knelt down, and the minister prayed, and the professor said, "O God, if you can hear what I say to you now, and if You can reveal yourself to me, I pledge myself that I will do what You show me You want me to do." They stayed on their knees half an hour, and then suddenly, without any warning; the professor sprang to his feet and said, "I believe in Jesus Christ! I see it all, and it is glorious, it is glorious!" He went back to Germany and became as a center of blazing light, illuminating the region round about. As he went, he was cleansed.

REMOVAL OF STUMBLING-BLOCKS.

Then, in the third place, this would lead to *the removal of every stumbling-block*. "Great peace have they that love thy law," said the Psalmist, "and they shall have no stumbling-block." Take two things at which men stumble. For instance, the excuse that hypocrites in the Church are keeping them out of it. I do not believe it is true that any hypocrite is keeping any man who honestly wants to know God out of the Church of Christ. But whether that be so or not, you can get over that difficulty; commence to lead a godly life and you will have all that you can do to take care of yourself, and you will not be concerned about the hypocrites in the Church, except be help them to become pure and righteous. There is no hypocrite in my way all the distance from the place where I stand up to the time when I shall stand before God in the glory of His eternal Kingdom. There is not a hypocrite in the way of any one who wills to do the will of God, and wants to be like the Son of God, who was mani-

fested upon earth. The hypocrites are all going the other way.

There are some people who say honestly that they are afraid they will not hold out. They say, "Suppose I should try it, what guarantee have I that I will succeed?" If you were in Mr. Moody's home, and asked him about a certain clock on the wall in the dining-room, he would probably tell you a story. This clock was given to him by a lady in London, who came to one of Mr. Moody's meetings and was very angry at some things he said. She came back the next night, however, and was angrier still; she came back the next night, and her anger began to vanish. The night after that she was also there, and became deeply convicted of sin. The next night she was in the enquiry meeting, and she came night after night until one night she said to Mr. Moody, "I realize that I am a sinner; I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; but I believe that I cannot be a Christian. Whether it is my sin, or what it is, I do not know. But I do not believe that if I commenced to be a Christian I could ever hold out." Mr. Moody tried every way he could to get her to decide to try. But he failed, until he thought of that old story about the pendulum. On the first day of January, the pendulum began to count up what it had to do. It had to tick so many ticks in a minute, and there were so many minutes in an hour, and so many hours in a day, and so many days in a year, and it would likely have to keep on ticking for so many years. When it found out the millions of times it would have to tick it said, "It's of no use; I will stop right now." Then this thought occurred to the pendulum, "It is only one tick at a time." So it began to tick, and it ticked the next tick, and the next, and the next, and it

is ticking yet. This lady said to Mr. Moody, "I will tick the first tick now," and she is ticking yet. She gave that clock to Mr. Moody—she is now one of the most earnest Christians in the city of London—and asked him if any should refer to it, to tell them the story, that it is only a tick at a time. Blessed be God, it is as simple as that! "As they went, they were cleansed."

ASSURANCE.

Now there is one thing more. Such an earnest effort will lead *to knowledge, to assurance, to confidence, to peace and joy.* Here are two young men, John and James. John is a fine boy; he is very industrious and very studious, and very happy. James is a miserable contemptible loafer, and he thinks, "I wonder if I cannot be as happy as John. I am miserable all the time; but there is John, he works twice as hard as I do, and he is happy all the time. I will see if I cannot be happy. I will imitate John." He notices that John gets up at six o'clock in the morning and chops a lot of kindling for his mother, and then brings in the water, and helps her in other ways, and spends some time in study, and then goes off to school and applies himself to his lessons and recites them well. So the next morning James gets up at six o'clock; it is pretty hard. He rubs his eyes, and after he gets dressed he goes down and splits the wood, that is harder yet. Then he goes off to school and tries to learn his lessons, but he finally goes to sleep, and the teacher wakes him up in a way that is not pleasant. He says, "It's no use, I am different from John. I cannot do this sort of a thing. I cannot be happy, no matter how I try." Suppose he tried it differently, suppose he said, "I am a miserable

contemptible loafer. 'There is my good industrious brother, and I am going to be good.' Suppose he undertakes to do right, not because he wants to be happy, but because he wants to be good. He will find pretty soon that the same flow of satisfaction that John has, will break out over him, and as he goes he will be filled with peace. It is so in the service of God. Do not try to be happy while you are spiritually sick. Get well. Do not try to see how happy you can be while the disease stays about you, but get rid of the disease and know the joy of a strong, well man or woman in Jesus Christ. As you go, you will be cleansed.

A man in this country who has won a multitude of souls to Christ, when he first confessed Christ, was in utter darkness, and he stayed there for three weeks. Yet all that time he was endeavoring to do the will of God, and was openly confessing Him. The pastor invited those who wanted to join the Church, to meet the committee, and when the committee met, this man appeared before them and said, "Gentlemen, it is as black as night; it is dark in me, and dark all around me. But I have set myself to do the will of God." They said to him, "Suppose it stays dark, what are you going to do?" He replied, "I am going to do the best I can in serving Christ." They said to him, "Come into the Church." And the very second that he was baptized, as he came from the water, the light of God broke in upon his soul. I believe he would have died in the darkness unless he had been willing to obey this command of Christ. As he went, he was cleansed.

I remember one afternoon in Newark, N. J., I was preaching in a church which was completely filled. As

the sermon commenced, a lady came in with a drunken man whom she had found on the street. She brought him down the aisle, looking this way and that to find a seat, but there was no place where they could sit down until they came to the platform. There were some steps right in front of the pulpit, and they sat down there. During the sermon I saw that the man was weeping, and the very second I said, "Is there anyone here who wants to be free from sin?" he rose up and said, "I do! I do!" After the meeting was over, my associate, Mr. Greenwood, took him into another room and kneeled down with him; and the man said, "Lord, I do give myself to Thee. O God, if you ever saved anybody, save me." He came out into the other room and said to me, "Mr. Mills, I have done the best I can. I have given myself to God. I am the weakest and most sinful man on earth, but I do believe God is going to save me." I said, "Hallelujah! I believe it too." I told the people about it in the sermon the next afternoon as an illustration, and I said, "I do not see that man here to-day, but I believe God has saved him." As I said it, a man raised up his hand in the audience, and then I saw that it was this same man. No wonder that I did not know him. Christ was manifest in his face where he had not been the day before. I said, "Stand up, my brother," and he stood up, and a beautiful blush came over his face. He looked like a nobleman, and I said, "Do you want to say a word?" and he said, "Yesterday I was a wreck, and to-day I am a man." As he went, he was cleansed.

Now for the final application. First of all, to Christians. If you are not right in your experience, you are wrong in your life. If the Bible is a dull dead book to you, if you do not know what it means to have God's

peace, if you have not strength in temptation, if you have not power to win men to Christ, you are wrong in your life. If you fulfilled the conditions you would be cleansed, and if you are not cleansed, it is because you have not obeyed the plain voice of God. O my brother, my sister, will you commence to obey God now? Give Him the last thing. As you do, you will be cleansed.

To you, my brother, who have said that the christian way was mysterious, let me say that it is the only simple thing in the world. You have said you could not understand it. You can understand it better than you can understand how you breathe. It is the only thing that you can understand. If you will do the will of God, Jesus says you will know of the doctrine, and he will bring you into everlasting life. In the name of God, whom you and I shall meet at the day of separation, I throw down this challenge and ask you to test it. Will you say here, clearly and openly, that you are willing to do the will of God? As you go, you will be cleansed.

Some one asked Coleridge if he could prove the truth of christianity, and he said, "Yes, try it." "Taste and see that the Lord is good." As you go, you will be cleansed.

A young woman left her home to go and see her pastor to ask him to point her to Christ. She was concerned about her sins and salvation. As she stepped on the street car she met three of her most intimate friends. Something said to her, "Do not tell them where you are going," and something else said, "Tell them, and ask them to go with you." Finally she went over and sat by them, and they asked her where she was going. She said, "Girls, I have made up mind to be a christian, and I am going to see our minister and ask him if he will show me how. I wish you would go with me." They

declined to go, and she went alone. She came to the minister's house, and rang the bell. He came to the door himself, and she stood there hesitating a minute, and then she said, "Doctor, I started to come to see you to ask you to lead me to Christ, but now that I have come I want to tell you that I have found Christ." As she went, she was cleansed.

Now, reader, are you willing to say that you will make an honest effort to do the will of God? Are you willing to say that so far as you receive the light you will act up to the light?

NAAMAN, THE SYRIAN.

BY

JOHN MCNEILL.

“Now, Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honorable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria; he was also a mighty man in valor, but he was a leper. And the Syrians had gone out by companies and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman’s wife. And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy. And one went in and told his lord, saying: Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel. And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment. And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman, my servant, to thee that thou mayest recover him of the leprosy. And it came to pass, when the king had read the letter, that he rent his clothes and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? Wherefore consider, I pray you, how he seeketh a quarrel against me? And it was so, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent

his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.

“So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean. But Naaman was wroth and went away and said, Behold, I thought he will surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Parpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage. And his servants came near and spake unto him and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee to do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean? Then went he down and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.”

LEPROSY, A TYPE OF SIN.

Leprosy is a type of sin. How much teaching there is in the type, you and I scarcely know. When I preached once on “the cleansing of one of the New Testament lepers,” I said I thought the sight of a leper would greatly tend to quicken and give practical meaning in our minds to all Bible teaching about the exceeding sinfulness of sin. I have since seen a returned missionary who described to me what leprosy really is and the awful

effect which the first acquaintance with it has upon one's eyes and heart and understanding. The bulk of people have not seen it; but let us understand that leprosy is one of the Bible's representatives of the intense malignity and defilement of the mortal malady that has attacked you and me, namely, *Sin*. Naaman, then, was a typical man, a man afflicted and covered with this typical disease; and we have to follow the turnings and windings of the narrative, in order to see how this typical sinner fares when he comes into contact with the Lord God Almighty, the only God of grace and salvation for a leprous sinner.

THE DEPTH OF OUR NEED.

Notice how the Bible puts this doctrine of the *depth of our need* as represented in the disease of leprosy. Many people are stumbled at it. The vision of a leper is a sermon to every one who sees him, as to what sin is in its insidious, but mortal and (but for one cure) incurable ravages upon the inner man, the soul within us. I am stating the doctrine roughly, harshly. I may so put it as to state it, as you think, in a somewhat unbalanced way. Do not blame the Bible. The Bible is wonderfully considerate. As it states the case of Naaman, so it is willing to state the case of every one. It puts it, but see how softly it puts it: "Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria"—it admits that he was a captain—"was a great man"—the Bible admits that he was great—"and honorable"—the Bible admits that—"because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria"—quite a special man. "He was also a mighty man in valor;"—a good general: perhaps the only general.

The Bible admits that; but making all admissions, and taking in everything by the way, it does say, and it dares to say, and it insists upon saying—“*but he was a leper.*” As it is put there, so I would like to put it here. You are amiable. I grant that you are amiable. You are not a drunkard, or a harlot, or a debauchee. I am willing to admit it; but at the bottom, the last analysis of all that you are, yields this, that you are a sinner: you are a leper. That is the last analysis. Taken into God’s scales, tested in His crucibles, weighed in His balances, here is the end, *but he was a leper.*” Amiable, but an amiable sinner; refined, a refined sinner; wealthy, a wealthy sinner; a peer of the realm, a sinner as regards your spiritual condition.

The Bible makes all allowances. It is not rude; it takes everything into consideration, but it will not speak false words. It will not say “peace” when there is no peace. It will not give you a clean bill and allow you to come into port when you ought to be riding quarantine because there is infectious disease on board. The Bible will be honest with you and while it makes all admissions, on certain grounds as to what differentiates you from other people who are dishonorable and dishonest and have broken vows outwardly it goes straight into the conscience and says, “After all, you are a sinner, you are smitten with an incurable disease which knows no remedy save one, the knowledge and experience of which come not from earth but straight and miraculously from heaven.”

THE MEANS OF GRACE.

“And the Syrians had gone out by companies and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little

maid." Now, does it not look as if this were a round-about road to the well? After all this about Naaman—and who he was—and what was wrong with him, we are off to the Syrians.

What about them, and what about this little maid who waited on Naaman's wife? Ah, out of little events great events come. Large doors turn upon small hinges; and such a thing as this wonderful story of God's gracious dealing with poor Naaman turns upon that seemingly trivial incident that a marauding, thieving band of Syrians, when they crossed the borders and went into Israel, and took away captive this little maid. They "builded better than they knew." I can imagine that the band of Syrians came back, and all their booty was a little maid. Oh, how their companions laughed at them! It seemed to have been a poor excursion, a great deal of toil and trouble and effort for very little, when they came back with only this little girl. "Who hath despised the day of small things?" No wise man. Fools do it every day. Do not despise little folk. Do not despise small things. Do not despise the day of little things. What a great work this little maid did! She has found for herself a conspicuous place in the picture-gallery of God's Word. She shall be exhibited to all eternity. Were there not kings and queens and mighty men that burnt and blazed and paraded for a little, and then went down to dusty death? Their name and their memorial have perished with them. But that little lass, a stranger in a strange land, away there in Syria, lives for ever in the imperishable record of the Word of God.

“She waited on Naaman’s wife. And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy. And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel.” What a simple testimony she bore, but what a splendid preacher she was! She had all the qualifications of a first-rate, successful preacher. She had a message, and she spoke it simply, directly, and with great assurance. She spoke what she knew. There was a ring of sincerity and conviction in what she said, and it told on her mistress. God grant that my words may tell on some body now!

THE SIMPLE GOSPEL.

Now, the same thing is working in and through the Gospel yet. On the surface it seems to be a weak, foolish, despised and despicable thing—the word of a witless lassie against all the misery and blighting power of leprosy. But God has chosen the weak things, the base things, things that are despised to do His work, to bring to naught things that are, to save souls, to give to Him eternal fame and honor.

Do we know this Gospel? Do we know the prophet that is in Israel—no longer Elisha, but the Lord Jesus Christ, the Prophet of prophets, the King and Lord and Head of them all, the Incarnation and Embodiment of all healing power and spiritual virtue? Then, if we know Him, let us not only know Him in our hearts, but let us simply and sincerely testify for Him, and He will spread our testimony on the wings of the wind, and make it tell as He did with this little girl. “One went in and told his

lord." The king of Syria writes to the king of Israel. Crowns sometimes drop upon very unworthy heads. Both of these kings cut very sorry figures, do they not? The king of Syria was going to do it all, and he said, "Go to, go, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel. And Naaman departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment." How this poor girl's little simple gospel is being spoiled! Did she say a single word about kings, or about talents of silver, or about changes of raiment? Then see how they have corrupted the simplicity of her simple testimony.

What did they make of it? He brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, "Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent my servant, Naaman, to thee that thou mayst recover him of the leprosy. And when the king of Israel had read the letter, he rent his clothes and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?"

There are some things that kings and councillors and parliaments cannot do. This is one of them; they are utterly at their wits' end, and God will not give this glory but in one way, and this blessing but along a particular line. One thing does come out of it clearly, and that is the emphasizing of the point with which I began. Leprosy evidently was regarded as incurable. "Consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me. Am I God, to kill and to make alive?" Oh, that we had the same notion to-day about sin! Oh, that men and women were revived to a simple and intense conviction of this: "Sin is incurable: there is no remedy

except the heavenly, the supernatural!" Where is the wise man's wisdom? Where is all the power of kings and lords and princes and councillors to save a sinner? It is reduced to utter contempt.

THE POWER OF GOD.

"And it was so, when Elisha, the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel." Does not that look a little like boasting at first? "Let him come to me." Yes, it is boasting, but it is boasting of the right kind. When a man boasts in God, "the humble hear thereof, and are glad." The meek hear of a testimony like this, and instead of being offended at it, and calling it vainglory, they glory in it; for Elisha is here lifting up, not himself, but the God who gave him all the power that he had. Let us challenge the world's need and the world's problem. Let us call upon men and women to come and look our way, and give us a trial. You ran here and ran there, and ran the other where to get rid of your leprosy. Now, have you got soul peace, and power, and strength? Then, if not, will you come at length to us? In myself I am poor and weak and vile and nothing; but I dare to say, that I preach a gospel which could change every sinner as mightily as was Naaman before Elisha had done with him. Oh, that God would revive us preachers in a simple faith in the message we have to deliver! After all, things are at a very sad pass. There is awful trouble in the land, an awful problem, and we cannot solve it.

The power of the state, and the power of the world's wisdom, and the power of the world's deepest sympathy seem to make no more impression on it than the king's advice and the king's sympathy made upon the sickness of his beloved general. But yet there is balm in Gilead, and the problem is not so insoluble as we think, and the distress is not so dire: for there is one voice rising sharp and clear above the Babel voices of a thousand counsellors, who are darkening counsel by words without knowledge. And this is the voice—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house!" It is a message straight from Jesus Christ who died and rose again.

"So Naaman came with his horses"—they were not lepers, but he fetched them—"and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha." Now, Elisha, you are on your trial. You were never in such a perilous place before, after all that has been said about Israel and Israel's God. How men criticise the gospel! Will they at length open their eyes? Will they at last cease from criticising, cease from pulling themselves up all their inches and strutting and spreading, and accept the Gospel as helpless lepers as they should do. As God is my witness, I do believe that if you have not been washed in the blood of Christ, Naaman for loathsomeness is but a poor picture of your condition in the sight of God.

No, Elisha was not on his trial, nor God; but Naaman was on trial, and he did not come through it very well at first. Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee and thou shalt be clean." But Naaman was wroth and went away, and you remember what he said,

“Behold, I thought he would surely come to me.” *To me.* “Granted that I am a leper, but I am not an ordinary leper. I am a general, a prince. I am here with these jingling horses and chariots; may he deal thus with me?”

Have you never witnessed this rage? Is it not in your veins at this moment? After all, the worst kind of a gospel-hearer is that one who comes and goes, and comes and goes, and you never find him either sad, or glad, or mad—never. There they are, like a ditch without fall or flood—like the Mediterranean, without ebb or flow—at the one fall-less and floodless, contemptible level. I like to see men mad. When a man like Naaman is being led along a line like this—when he is taken so far away out of his own orbit, or so far off the beaten track, so completely away from what he expects, when the Lord’s message through Elisha falls upon him at an angle of incidence so unexpected—I can quite understand him. I cannot suppose that the Lord was angry; and I do not suppose that Elisha was angry. They thoroughly understood it. They knew exactly what the effect would be.

When men are wakened up from a deep sleep, and wakened up in a hurry because there is something urgent and imminent, they often wake up cross—they often wake up angry. I suppose that if I were to come to you to-morrow morning, with all your amiability and your sweetness and your gentleness, and seized you by the hand, and put my hand on your shoulder and shook you rudely and woke you up, when you arose you would not have all your “Polite Letter Writer” phrases just ready at the time. You would be likely to be a little indignant, and

you would be likely to think that I was very inconsiderate. But if in the midst of all your ruffledness and all your anger I showed you that I had a just cause for what I had done, and that there was a fire, and that the fire was not in the next street or even in the next house, but was in your own house, I think when you got to know *that*, you would thank me, and you would say that if I had been polite, and had stood upon ceremony, I should not have been your friend. So with the gospel preachers, so with Elisha. Poor Naaman was far gone, and what he needed was quick medicine; what he needed was something which went straight to the point. I grant there was seeming rudeness in the wording; I grant there was imperiousness, for when God speaks you must allow him to be imperious and imperial—never forget that. The gospel does beseech, but in it all and through it all the gospel is a command, and you disobey it at peril of eternal damnation. Believe, repent, go work, and go as quickly as you can, that is the gospel—a command; and it is to your interest, Oh sinner, that the gospel is on the surface seemingly rude and inconsiderate and unjust.

THE LEPROSY OF PRIDE.

Naaman was wroth and said, "I thought." That is what is wrong with most of us. Why are you not a happy Christian? I will tell you in a word. You are troubled with just the same disease as Naaman. Leprosy was his trouble outwardly, and the leprosy of pride was his trouble inwardly. He needed to be humbled before he could be healed. Now, your pride is very likely intellectual pride, intellectual vanity, intellectual conceit,

You juggle with the names of Huxley and Spencer and Darwin, and you want to impress and overawe the poor preacher with a sense of your opinion, and you say, "When I go to hear a sermon, I think and I wish and I like;" and when you do not get what you like, the preacher gets your ugliest verdict. Now, my dear friend, come away from that, if you please. You are a poor, helpless, hopeless, condemned sinner; until you receive the gospel in childlike simplicity, you cannot be saved; you are neither fit to live nor fit to die, and you have both to do, so do come down off your horse of pride and headiness and high-mindedness and self-conceit. Forget your wisdom and forget your knowledge, and remember that in all past ages, and even in this nineteenth century, thanks to God, wise men and learned who have forgotten more about literature and science and philosophy than you ever learnt, have with all their knowledge, contrived to be as simple, genuine, evangelical believers in the blood of the Lamb as any that ever lived. You "thought." Thank you for nothing. What did you think? Let us hear it. Well, here it is: "I thought that he would surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and recover me of the leprosy." That is, "I thought that he was a trickster and a juggler, and that he would come and say, 'Hey! Presto! Pass!' and the thing would be done." Yes, is not that about the length and breadth and depth and height, my friend, of your notions of what genuine religion is? The thoughts of people in Naaman's condition—oh, they are worth little! Naaman spoke out his thought, and there it is. When salvation comes to us, it comes when we get rid of our own thought, or we

hold in our own thought, whatever it may be, and we choke it down, and we allow God to speak; for God's thoughts are what we need to know; and God says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are My ways your ways, for as the heaven is high above the earth, so are My thoughts higher than your thoughts, and My ways than your ways." Oh, hush, be still, and know that God is here—that God is speaking, and that you ought to bow the head and keep silence and believe!

"Are not Abana and Pharpar—?" Oh, yes! With what contempt men sometimes speak of the gospel until they have tried it.

THE OLD GOSPEL.

Naaman dear, if Abana and Pharpar were waters that would have cleansed you, why did you not go to them? Why did you come here at all? Have not some of us spoken in the same rude and contemptuous way about what we call old, narrow-minded, bigoted, Puritanical doctrines, until we have tried them? But when the day came when our sins were fastening upon us, and the sorrows of death compassed us, and the gates of hell got hold upon us and we found trouble and sorrow, then we changed our tune. When we were heart-whole and well, we could speak contemptuously about the old gospel and call it a "doctrine of the shambles"—this salvation by blood; but when we stand naked and shivering, and ready to perish, then this old gospel of the cross, the gospel of salvation through the doing and dying of another, is to us like a peal of heaven's own music. Do not talk against the gospel, my friend. You are only

showing your want of heart or the depth of your ignorance.

“And his servants came near and spoke and said, If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather when he said, Wash and be clean! Then went he down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan,” verbatim et literatim according to the saying of the man of God. He had to humble himself to obey the gospel and you and I must do the same. We do not give up intellectuality and the powers of the mind. We simply crucify their pride, that is all.

BLESSING COMES BY OBEDIENCE.

“And his flesh came unto him like the flesh of a little child and he was clean.” This is the gospel. Will you try it? Will you do, my friend, what you never did before? Will you humble yourself simply to believe? The gospel will never prove its power in anybody as long as he criticises and questions. The gospel is for believing; the gospel is for receiving. “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man who trusteth in Him.” At last Naaman is a sadder and a wiser man. He is kindly spoken to by his servant. Naaman had his good points about him. But after all, you see, there was the leprosy. There was no arguing against that. There was this sentence of death eating into him. So with you, man, you are dying while you are criticising; hell opens its mouth to receive you while you are quibbling and wanting another gospel to suit you. Do not forget that. It does not become beggars to be choosers; and you are an absolute beggar at heaven’s gate—an absolute

dependent upon God's bounty; and when it is offered to you, it ill becomes you to adopt the sneer or the angry tone which you do adopt. Let us cease from all such superfluity of naughtiness, and in simplicity, like the poor, dying lepers that we are, let us receive salvation through Jesus Christ, through His atonement.

That dark, muddy Jordan was not a nice stream. It was really a very poor river from an artistic point of view; but it was in Israel, it was an Israelitish river; and away to it Naaman must go, great man and all as he was. And he went. He swallowed down his pride. He very likely said to himself, "Well, that servant of mine is true; he is right; I am a leper, and of course I am dying, and after all, I may as well try it. It would be a pity to come all this distance, with all these jingling horses and chariots, and go home, and admit that I had come on a fool's errand: and maybe there is something in it." And he went down. He "stooped to conquer", and he conquered by stooping; he gave in to God, and he won. For a time he seemed to be no better, only much wetter. But, dipping seven times, when he came up the seventh time he had left his leprosy in the last plunge. The flesh came to him as with that leper in the New Testament to whom Christ said, "Be thou made clean"; and immediately he was made whole. As the poet says:

"And his dry palms grew moist,
And the blood coursed with delicious coolness through his veins,
And on his brow the dewy softness of an infant stole.
His leprosy was cleansed and he fell down
At Jesus' feet, and worshipped him."

This is the gospel for lepers, Old Testament and

New. Come near to the cleansing fountain, and in absolute abject simplicity plunge into it.

“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Emanuel’s veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.”

I trust I have read a book or two. I hope I know a little about philosophy. I trust I know a little about science. I went for eight winters to a college and a divinity hall, and I was lectured and taught by the most cultured and eminent men of the day. But if to-morrow I am upon my death-bed, and if you want to come and give me a parting word, come, and I will tell you before you come what you may say. Do not mention this nineteenth century; do not mention these new gospels, which are no gospels. If you have no word, and if you have no text, that old hymn that I have quoted will do, and especially the verse that I am going to quote now:

“The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day:
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away.”

Ah, my lad, you may despise this old gospel, but your mother died rejoicing in it. So did your father. And if you are ever to see them and meet with them, if you are ever to sit down with the truly refined people, you must be washed in the blood of the Lamb. May the Lord, the Spirit, graciously plead His own cause, and may all of us come to the simplicity of faith in Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification!

OBEDIENCE.

BY

D. L. MOODY.

“And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”—Heb. v: 9.

MY subject is one that you will not like very well, but I found out a long time ago that the medicine we don't like is the best medicine for us. If there is anything that throws a coldness over a meeting, it is to talk about obedience. You can talk about love and heaven and other things, and people get so warmed that they shout; but when you talk about obedience, there is a sort of coldness over the meeting. Like a man I heard of during the time of slavery. He was preaching with great power, (he was a slave), and his master heard of it and said, “I understand you are preaching, and they tell me you are preaching with great power.” “Yes,” said the slave. “Well, now,” said the master, “I will give you all the time you want, and you prepare a sermon on the commandments and preach on the commandments, and bear down on stealing, for there is a great deal of stealing on the plantation.” The man's countenance fell at once. He said he wouldn't like to do that; there wasn't the warmth in it there was in some things. And I have always noticed when you come right down to such matters, people don't like to be told about them, because it comes a little too near home.

Once I heard about a young minister who took the place of an old pastor, and he began to bear down pretty hard upon the sins of the people. A man came to him afterwards and said, "Look here, young man, if you expect to hold this pulpit you have got to stop that kind of preaching, for the people won't stand it." There are a good many people that are delighted when you talk about the sins of the patriarchs, and the sins of other Bible characters, but when you touch upon the sins of to-day, that is another thing. They say, "I don't like his style." No, nor his matter either, and perhaps you won't like this subject of obedience.

We are told that without faith it is impossible to please God, and you will find that it is impossible to please God without obedience. Your faith doesn't amount to much without obedience. "And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." Eternal salvation unto all them that *obey* Him; not all them that feel Him, talk to Him, that say, "Lord, Lord," but them that obey Him. Eternal salvation means eternal safety.

ALL BUT THE HEART OF MAN OBEYS GOD.

Did you ever notice all but the heart of man obeys God? If you look right through history, you will find that this is true. In the beginning God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. "Let the waters bring forth," and the water brought forth abundantly. And one of the proofs that Jesus Christ is God is that He spoke to nature, and nature obeyed Him. At one time He spoke to the sea, and the sea recognized and obeyed Him. He spoke to the fig tree, and instantly it withered and died. It obeyed literally and at once. He spoke to

devils, and the devils fled. He spoke to the grave, and the grave obeyed Him and gave back its dead. But when He speaks to man, man will not obey Him; that is why man is out of harmony with God, and it will never be different until men learn to obey God. God wants obedience and He will have it, or else there will be no harmony. In the first epistle of John, we read, "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. He says in another place that if we keep His sayings we shall never die. The world is like a floating island and as surely as we anchor to it, we will be carried away by it.

NEAR TO GOD.

Now, if you want to get near God, just obey Him; that is the quickest way to get near Him. He takes those into the nearest communion with Himself who obey Him. Once while Jesus talked to the people, behold, His mother and His brethren stood without, desiring to speak unto Him. Then one said unto Him, "Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee." But He answered and said unto him that told Him, "Who is My mother? and who are My brethren?" And He stretched His hand toward His disciples and said, "Behold My mother and My brethren! for whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother." There is no friendship without obedience. The truest sign that we love God is that we obey Him. "I do love God," a little girl said to her father one day, when he was speaking to her about loving God. "Perhaps you think you do, dear," said the father. "But I do." "Suppose you should come to me and say, 'Papa, I love you,' and then

run off and disobey me, could I believe you?" The child said "No." "Well, continued the father, "how can I believe that you love God when I see you every day doing things that He forbids?" "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

It isn't a matter of feeling or picking out things we like to do, but it is doing what He commands us to do. Now notice, Adam lost everything by disobedience, and the second Adam gained everything by obedience. "For as by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous."

TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE.

Let me call your attention to another portion of Scripture. "And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." God doesn't want sacrifice, if there is disobedience. If we are living in disobedience to God, that is no sacrifice, it is sacrilege. If Adam and Eve had obeyed God, there would have been no need of sacrifices of any kind. Many men want to bring Him a sacrifice, instead of obeying Him. What does your work of charity amount to, if you are not obedient? Do you think that you can gain heaven by sacrificing your money or your time? "To obey is better than sacrifice."

Suppose a father sends his boy to school and he plays truant. He says, "I don't want to go to school," and he goes off and fishes all day. He knows his father is very fond of trout. He says, "I know I have been disobedient, but I can sell these trout for fifty cents, and I will just take them home to my father. It will be a great

sacrifice, but it will please my father. Do you think that will please him? Not by a good deal. He wants obedience, and until his son obeys, his sacrifice is an abomination. The sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to God and man. Don't let any man deceive himself and think he is going to please God by giving something to Him when he is living in disobedience.

Men say to me, "You talk against that gambler but he is very good to the poor," and they think he is going to merit heaven because he is good to the poor. "God will have to remember him." My dear friend, as long as he is living a disobedient life, he cannot do a thing to please God. That boy cannot please his father until he is willing to obey and do the very thing he was told to do. It is much easier to bring a lamb or bullock to the altar than it is to bring ourselves. Do you know it? I remember hearing a story about an Indian who wanted to come to the Lord. He brought his blanket, but the Lord wouldn't have it. He brought his gun, his dog, his bow and arrow, but the Lord wouldn't have them; but at last he brought himself and the Lord took him. The Lord wanted himself. What the Lord wants is not what you have got, but yourself, and you cannot do a thing to please God until you surrender yourself to Him.

Take the two Sauls. They lived about 1000 years apart. One started out well and ended poorly, and the other started out poorly and ended well. The first Saul got a kingdom and a crown; he had a lovely family, (no father ever had a better son than Saul had in Jonathan); he had the friendship of Samuel, the best prophet there was on the face of the earth; and yet he lost the friendship of Samuel, lost his crown, his kingdom and his life,

all through an act of disobedience. God took the crown from his brow and put another man in his place. Why? Because he disobeyed. All his kingly dignity and power could not excuse him. Now take the Saul of the New Testament. When God called him he wasn't disobedient to the heavenly vision, and he was given a heavenly kingdom. One act of obedience, one act of disobedience. The act of obedience gained all, and the act of disobedience lost everything. And so you will find right through the Scriptures this is taking place constantly. I believe the wretchedness and misery and woe in our American cities to-day comes from disobedience to God. If they won't obey God as a nation, let us begin individually. Let us make up our minds that we will do it, cost us what it will, and you will have peace and joy.

A BLESSING OR A CURSE.

In the book of Deuteronomy, we read, "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; a blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you this day; and a curse if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside out of the way I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known." Isn't that enforced? A man who serves God, isn't the blessing of God resting upon him? There is great reward in keeping God's laws and statutes, but a great curse upon them that disobey God. A lawyer once gave a client instructions what to do, but the latter did not follow them and lost his case. When he complained to his lawyer, "Well," said he, "you did not do what I told you." Look at the wives and mothers that have gone right against the law of God

and married ungodly men and drunkards. See what hells they are living in to-day ! Just one act of disobedience. They are suffering tortures day by day, dying by inches. The whole country is more or less cursed by this disobedience. A mother told me up in Minnesota that she had a little child who took a book and threw it out of the window. She told him to go and pick it up. The little boy said, "I won't." She said, "What?" He said again, "I won't." She said, "You will. You go and pick up that book." He said he couldn't do it. She took him out and she held him right to it. Dinner time came and he hadn't picked up the book. She took him to dinner, and after it was over she took him out again. They sat there until tea-time. When tea-time came she took him in and gave him his supper, and then took him out and kept him there until bed-time. The next morning she went out again and kept him there until dinner-time. He found he was in for a life job, and he picked the book up. She said she never had any trouble with the child afterwards. Mothers, if you don't make your boy obey when he is young, he will break your heart.

You say, "Cannot God make a man obey?" I suppose He could but He does not work on those lines. He isn't going to force you against your will. He is going to draw you by the cords of love, but if you are not going to obey Him, then you are going to suffer. God made man neither obedient nor disobedient ; and man must choose for himself. As Dr. Parker says, "A child can treat God with sulkiness and silence. The tiniest knee can stiffen and refuse to bow before Him.,,

"Strive to enter in at the strait gate." "I will not."

"Look unto me and be ye saved." "I will not."

“Come unto me, and I will give you rest.” “I will not.”

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God.” “I will not.”

“Repent.” “I will not.”

“Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?” “I will not.”

“Follow me.” “I will not.”

“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.” “I will not.”

“Give me thine heart.” “I will not.”

“Go work in my vineyard.” “I will not.”

“Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” “I will not.”

“Lay up for yourself treasures in heaven.” “I will not.”

So we might go through the Bible, and we would find that rebellious man refuses to obey His commandments, and follows the devices and desires of his own heart. God made man for His glory, but he joined the devil and became a rebel.

Now this is the question to be settled. The battle is fought on that one word of the will; the door hangs on that one hinge of the will. Will you obey? That is the question! Will you obey the voice of God and do as He commands you? No man can obey for you any more than he can eat and drink for you. You must eat and drink for yourself, and you must obey God for yourself.

God requires literal, prompt, cheerful obedience. Nothing less will do. If you changed the doctor's prescription only a little, you might turn it into rank poison. A Sunday School teacher once asked her class, “How is the will of God done in heaven?” One child answered, “Cheerfully.” Another, “By everybody.” A third, “All the time.” But the best answer was, “It is done *without asking any questions.*”

DISOBEDIENCE BRINGS PUNISHMENT.

Men don't seem to think that there is any thing in disobedience that needs to be punished. They shoot a soldier in the army for disobedience.

“Their's not to reason why,
Their's not to make reply,
Their's but to do or die.”

It is said that an officer of engineers once told the Duke of Wellington it was impossible to carry out some orders he had given. “Sir,” replied the duke, “I did not ask your opinion. I gave you my orders and I expect them to be obeyed.” God never gave a command that we cannot obey. Perhaps we don't know the reason—but God knows it.

Will not the farmer be punished if he disobeys the laws of nature? and does not the same hold as regards spiritual laws? The only way to reap happiness in the life to come is to obey God's commandments in the life that now is.

People say, “Well, don't you think it very unreasonable in God to punish Adam because he transgressed once?” Some years ago a superintendent telegraphed to a man not to turn the bridge over a certain river until a special train passed. He waited and waited and the man stood firm, until finally someone overpersuaded him and he opened the bridge. He thought he would have time to let the boats pass and swing the bridge back before the train came. But he hadn't got it more than opened before he heard the coming of the quick train. He hadn't time to get the bridge back, and there was a tremendous accident and lives were lost. The man went

out of his mind and was sent to a madhouse, and his cry for years, until death released him, was: "If I only had! if I only had!" If he only had what? If he had only obeyed, those lives would not have been lost. In England, not long ago, a switchman just turned the switch at the wrong time, and twenty men were hurled into eternity, and a good many were maimed and hurt for life. He only just disobeyed once.

SIMPLE OBEDIENCE.

There is a story told about Girard, one of the first millionaires this country ever had. A green Irishman came over to this country, and he had been walking round the streets of Philadelphia for a long time, unable to get anything to do. One day he went into Girard's office and asked him if he couldn't give him something to do to keep soul and body together. Girard said, "Yes; do you see that pile of bricks down there?" "Yes." "Well, pile it up at the other end of the yard." The Irishman went to work. Night came on and he had the work all done, and he went into the office, touched his hat, got his pay, and asked if Girard had any work for him the next morning. Girard told him he had. The next morning he came along. Girard said, "You go and carry that pile of bricks back to where you found it." The Irishman went at the work without a word. Night came on, he got his pay and wanted to know if there would be work for him the next morning. Girard kept him marching up and down there for a number of days, until he found he was just the man he wanted. One day he said, "You go down and bid that sugar off." When the auctioneer put the sugar up, here was a green Irish-

man bidding. The people laughed and made sport of him, and finally it was knocked off to him. The auctioneer said in a gruff tone, "Who is going to pay for this sugar?" "Girard, sir." "You Girard's agent?" Mighty man then! Girard had found a man he could trust; God wants to find a man He can trust to obey Him.

BLESSED BY OBEDIENCE.

Do you know every man who was blessed while Christ was on earth, was blessed in the act of obedience? Ten lepers came to Him, and He said, "Go and show yourselves to the priest." They might have said, "What good is that going to do us? It was the priest that sent us away from our families." But they said nothing; and it came to pass, that, as they went, they were healed. Do you want to get rid of the leprosy of sin? Obey God. You say you don't feel like it. Did you always feel like going to school when you were a boy? Supposing a man only went to business when he felt like it; he would fail in a few weeks. Jesus said to another man, "Go to the Pool of Siloam and wash," and as he washed, he received his sight. He was blessed in the act of obedience. The prophet said to Naaman, "Go and dip seven times in Jordan," and while he was dipping he was healed. Simple obedience. You don't need to go to any theological seminary to find out how to obey, need you? Old Matthew Henry used to say, "If you live by the Gospel precepts, you may live on the Gospel promises." To know the truth and not to obey it is unprofitable. It said over fifty times of Moses that he did "as the Lord commanded him," That was why Moses had the confidence of God.

ETERNAL SALVATION.

If you want eternal salvation you can have it now. The terms are right here. What are they? Obedience.

“This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son, Jesus Christ.”

“He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is *condemned already* because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God.” If you disobey, you shut the only door of hope. You may make a profession of Christianity, you may join the church, you may know the doctrine, but unless you hearken unto God’s commandments, it will all be of no avail.

Will you obey? You have got to settle this thing in your mind. Just make up your mind that you are going to obey. Nothing very mysterious about it. You needn’t go to any old musty library to read up on obedience, need you? If God tells you to repent, then repent. This will be the grandest day you have ever seen if you make up your mind to obey Him. Will you do it?

Reader, decide now. In olden times, when a Roman ambassador came to a king who was not allied to the Empire, he said, “Will you have peace with Rome or not?” If the king asked for time to think it over, the ambassador used, with his rod, to draw a ring around the man, and say, “You must decide before you step out of that circle; for if you do not say ‘peace’ before you cross the line, Rome will crush you with her armies.” Do not trespass any longer on God’s mercy. “Choose you this day whom ye will serve.”

This life will not last for ever. The trumpet will one day sound and call you forth from your narrow bed.

The graves will be opened and you will be summoned forth to meet your God. The proud heart that scoffs at religion down here will be compelled to listen to the judgment sentence of God. The ears that will not obey the sound of the church-going bell will be compelled to obey the sound of the last trumpet. The eyes that behold evil here shall one day gaze upon the spotless throne of God. Do not for ever disobey. May God help you to submit without delay your proud will in loving, childlike obedience to Himself.



THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL.

BY

REV. T. DEWITT TALMAGE.

“According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.”—I Tim. i: 11.

THE greatest novelty of our time is the Gospel. It is so old that it is new. As potters and artists are now attempting to fashion pitchers and cups and curious ware like those of nineteen hundred years ago, recently brought up from buried Pompeii, and such cups and pitchers and curious ware are universally admired, so anyone who can unshovel the real Gospel from the mountains of stuff under which it has been buried, will be able to present something that will attract the gaze, and admiration, and adoption of all the people. Amazing substitutes have been presented for what my text calls, “The Glorious Gospel.” There are many people in this and all other large assemblages who have no more idea of what the Gospel really is than they have of what is contained in the fourteenth chapter of “Zend-Avesta,” the Bible of the Hindoo. There is no philosophy about it. It is a plain, matter of Bible statement, and of childlike faith. The ablest theological professor is a Christian mother, who, out of her own experience, can tell the four-year-old how beautiful Christ was on earth, and how beautiful He now is in heaven, and how dearly He loves

little folks, and then she kneels down and puts one arm around the boy, and with her somewhat faded cheek against the roseate cheek of the little one, consecrates him for time and eternity to Him who said, "Suffer little children to come unto me."

There sits the dear old theologian with his table piled up with all the great books on Inspiration, and Exegesis, and Apologetics for the Almighty, and his little grand child coming up to him for a good-night kiss, he accidentally knocks off the biggest book from the table and it falls on the head of the child, of whom Christ himself said, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise." Ah, my friends, the Bible wants no apologetics. The Throne of the Last Judgment wants no apologetics. Eternity wants no apologetics. Scientists may tell us that natural light is the "propagation of undulations in an elastic medium, and thus set in vibratory motion by the action of luminous bodies;" but no one knows what Gospel Light is until his own blind eyes by the touch of the Divine Spirit have opened to see the noon-day of pardon and peace. Scientists may tell us that natural sound is "the effect of an impression made on the organs of hearing by an impulse of the air, caused by a collision of bodies, or by other means;" but those only know what the Gospel sound is, who have heard the voice of Christ directly, saying, "Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace."

REGENERATION, NOT REFORM,

Some think they can, by law and exposure of crime save the world, and from Portland, Maine, across to San Francisco, and back again to New Orleans and Savannah,

many have gone into the detective business. Worldly reform, by all means; but unless it be also Gospel reform, it will be dead failure. In New York, its chief work has been to give us a change of bosses. We had a Democratic boss, and now it is to be a Republican boss, but the quarrel is, who shall be the Republican? Politics will save the cities the same day that Satan evangelizes perdition.

No reform will be effectual that does not begin with the heart. "I will put a new Spirit within you: and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh; that they may walk in my statutes and keep my ordinances and do them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God."

Another class of people cover up the Gospel with the theory that it makes no final difference what you believe, or how you act—you are bound for heaven, anyhow. There they sit, side by side, in heaven: Garfield and Guiteau who shot him; Lincoln, and John Wilkes Booth who assassinated him; Washington, and Thomas Paine who slandered him; Nana Sahib, and the missionaries whom he clubbed to death at Cawnpore; Herod, and the children whom he massacred; Paul, and Nero who beheaded him. As a result of the promulgation of such a mongrel and conglomerate heaven, there are millions of people in Christendom who expect to go straight to heaven from their seraglios, and their inebriation, and their suicides, when among the loudest thunders that break over the basaltic island to which St. John was expatriated, was the one in which God announced that "the abominable, and the murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have

their place in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Had the glorious Gospel been given full opportunity, I think before this the world would have had no need of pulpit, or sermon, or prayer, or church, but thanksgiving and hosannas would have resounded in the temple to which the mountains would have been pillars, and the blue skies the dome, and the rivers the baptistery, and all nations the worshippers in the auditorium of the outspread world. But so far from that, as I remarked in the opening sentence of this sermon, the greatest novelty of our time is the Gospel. When the glorious Gospel of the blessed God as spoken of in my text gets full swing, it will have a momentum and a power mightier than that of the Atlantic Ocean, when under the force of the September equinox it strikes the Highlands of the Navesink.

GLORIOUS GOOD NEWS.

The meaning of the word "Gospel" is "good news," and my text says it is glorious good news, and we must tell it in our churches, and over our dry-goods' counters, and in our factories, and over our threshing machines, and behind our ploughs, and on our ships' decks, and in our parlors, our nurseries, and kitchens, as though it were glorious good news, and not with a dismal drawl in our voice, and a dismal look on our faces, as though religion were a rheumatic twinge, or a dyspeptic pang, or a malarial chill, or an attack of nervous prostration. With nine "blesseds" or "happys," Christ began his sermon on the Mount: "Blessed the poor; blessed the mourner; blessed the meek; blessed the hungry; blessed

the merciful; blessed the pure; blessed the peace-makers; blessed the persecuted; blessed the reviled;” blessed, blessed, blessed! happy, happy, happy! Glorious good news for the young as through Christ they may have their coming years ennobled, and for a life-time all the angels of God their coadjutors and all the armies of heaven their allies! Glorious good news for the middle-aged as through Christ they may have their perplexities disentangled, and their courage rallied, and their victory over all obstacles and hindrances made forever sure! Glorious good news for the aged as they may have the sympathy of Him of whom St. John wrote: “His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow,” and the defence of the everlasting arms! Glorious good news for the dying as they may have ministering spirits to escort them, and opening gates to receive them, and a sweep of eternal glories to encircle them, and the welcome of a loving God to embosom them!

Oh, my text is right when it speaks of the glorious Gospel. It is an invitation from the most radiant Being that ever trod the earth, or ascended the heavens, to you and me to come and be made happy, and then take after that a Royal Castle for everlasting residence, the angels of God our cup-bearers. “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.” “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a

place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself: that where I am, there ye may be also."

THE PRICE OF FORGIVENESS.

The price paid for all of this on the cliff of limestone, about seven minutes' walk from the wall of Jerusalem, where with an Agony that with one hand tore down the rocks, and with the other drew a midnight blackness over the heavens, our Lord set us forever free. Making no apology for any one of the million sins of our life, but confessing all of them, we can point to that cliff of limestone and say, "There was paid our indebtedness, and God never collects a bill twice." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "Being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."

Glad am I that all the Christian poets have exerted their pen in extolling the matchless One of this Gospel. Isaac Watts, how do you feel concerning Him? And he writes, "I am not ashamed to own my Lord." Newton, what do you think of this Gospel? And he writes, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound!" Cowper, what do you think of Him? And the answer comes, "There is a fountain filled with blood." Charles Wesley, what do you think of Him? And he answers, "Jesus, lover of my soul." Horatius Bonar, what do you think of Him? And he responds, "I lay my sins on Jesus." Ray Palmer, what do you think of Him? And he writes, "My faith looks up to Thee." Fannie Crosby, what do you think of Him? And she writes, "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine." But I take higher testimony: Solomon,

what do you think of Him? And the answer is, "Lily of the valley." Ezekiel, what do you think of Him? And the answer is, "Plant of renown." David, what do you think of Him? And the answer is, "My Shepherd." St. John, what do you think of Him? And the answer is, "Bright and morning star." St. Paul, what do you think of Him? And the answer comes, "Christ is all in all." Do you think as well of Him, O man, O woman of the blood-bought immortal spirit? Yes, Paul was right when he styled it "The Glorious Gospel." And then, as a druggist, while you are waiting for him to make up the doctor's prescription, puts into a bottle so many grains of this, and so many grains of that, and so many drops of this, and so many drops of that, and the intermixture taken, though sour or bitter, restores to health; so Christ, the Divine Physician, prepares this trouble of our lifetime, and that disappointment, and this persecution, and that hardship, and that tear, and we must take the intermixture, yet though it be a bitter draught, under the Divine prescription it administers to our restoration and spiritual health, "all things working together for good." Glorious Gospel!

And then the Royal Castle into which we step out of this life, without so much as soiling our foot with the upturned earth of the grave! "They shall reign forever and ever." Does not that mean that you are if saved to be kings and queens, and do not kings and queens have castles? But the One that you are offered was, for thirty-three years, an abandoned castle, though now gloriously inhabited. There is an abandoned royal castle at Amber, India. One hundred and seventy years ago a king moved out of it, never to return. But the castle

still stands, an indescribable grandeur, and you go through brazen doorway after brazen doorway, and carved room after carved room, and under embellished ceiling after embellished ceiling, and through halls, precious-stoned, into wider halls, precious-stoned, and on that hill are pavilions, deeply dyed, and tasselled, and arched, the fire of colored gardens cooled by the snow of white architecture; birds in arabesque so natural to life that while you cannot hear their voices you imagine you see the flutter of their wings while you are passing; walls, pictured with triumphal procession; rooms that were called "Alcove of Light," and "Hall of Victory;" marble, white and black, like a mixture of morn and night; alabaster, and mother-of-pearl and lacquer-work. Standing before it, the eye climbs from step to latticed balcony, and from latticed balcony to oriel, and from oriel to arch, and from arch to roof, and then descends on ladders of all colors, and by stairs of perfect lines to tropical gardens of pomegranite, and pineapple. Seven stories of resplendent architecture! But the Royal Castle provided for you, if you will only take it on the prescribed terms, is grander than all that, and though an abandoned castle while Christ was here achieving your redemption, is again occupied by the "Chief among ten thousand," and some of your own kindred who have gone up, and waiting for you are leaning from the balcony. The windows of that castle look off on the King's gardens where immortals walk linked in eternal friendship; and the banquetting hall of that castle has princes, and princesses at the table; and the wine is "the new wine of the kingdom," and the supper is the marriage supper of the Lamb; and there are fountains into which no tear ever fell, and there

is music that trembles with no grief, and the light that falls upon that scene is never beclouded, and there is the kiss of those re-joined after long separation. More nerve will we have there than now, or we would swoon away under the raptures. Stronger vision will we have there than now, or our eyesight would be blinded by the brilliance. Stronger ears will we have there than now, or under the roll of that minstrelsy, and the clapping of that acclamation, and the boom of that hallelujah we would be deafened. Glorious Gospel! You thought religion was a strait-jacket, that it put you on the limits, that thereafter you must go cowed down. No, no, no! It is to be castellated.

By the cleansing power of the shed blood of Golgotha, set your faces toward the shining pinnacles. Oh, it does not matter much what becomes of us here—for at the longest our stay is short—if we can only land there. You see there are so many I do want to meet there. Joshua, my favorite prophet; and John among the evangelists; and Paul among the apostles, and Wycliffe among the martyrs, and Bourdaloue among the preachers, and Dante among the poets, and Havelock among the heroes, and our loved ones whom we have so much missed since they left us, so many darlings of the heart, their absence sometimes almost unbearable; and, mentioned in this sentence last of all, because I want the thought climacteric, our blessed Lord without whom we could never reach the old castle at all. He took our place. He purchased our ransom. He wept our woes. He suffered our stripes. He died our death. He assured our resurrection. Blessed be his glorious name forever! Surging to

his ear be all the anthems! Facing him be all the thrones!

Oh, I want to see it, and I will see it—the day of his coronation. On a throne already; methinks the day will come when in some great hall of eternity all the nations of earth whom He has conquered by His grace will assemble again to crown Him. Wide and high and immense and upholstered as with the sunrises and sunsets of a thousand years, great audience room of heaven. Like the leaves of an Adirondack forest the ransomed multitudes, and Christ standing on a high place surrounded by worshippers and subjects. They shall come out of the farthest past led on by the Prophets. They shall come out of the early Gospel days led on by the Apostles. They shall come out of the centuries still ahead of us, led on by champions of the truth, heroes and heroines yet to be born.

And then from that vastest audience ever assembled in all the universe there will go up the shout, "Crown Him! Crown Him! Crown Him!" and the Father, who long ago promised this, his only begotten Son, "I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession," shall set the crown upon the forehead yet scarred with Crucifixion bramble, and all the hosts of heaven, down on the levels, and up in the galleries will drop on their knees crying, "Hail, King of earth! King of heaven! King of saints! King of seraphs! Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and to thy dominions there shall be no end! Amen and Amen! Amen and Amen!"

ETERNITY.

I ask you, where will you spend eternity? Oh, prepare for it. Leave it not until the last hour. Leave it not until you get sick. You may never be sick. Leave it not until you get more time. You may never get more time. Leave it not until you get old. You may never get old. Leave it not until to-morrow. This night thy soul may be required of thee. And, suppose, in that moment, you should say, "Wait until I kneel down and say my prayers." Death would respond, "No time now to say your prayers." "Wait until I get my friends together and bid them good-bye." Death would say, "You cannot stop to bid them good-bye." "But I cannot go into eternity with all these sins about me. Give me time to repent." Death would say, "Too late to repent! Thy soul is required of thee this hour, this minute, this second!"

Oh, by the Cross of Christ, repent! Bow your head this moment and say, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" In Christ, you are safe. Out of Him you perish.

THE END.



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