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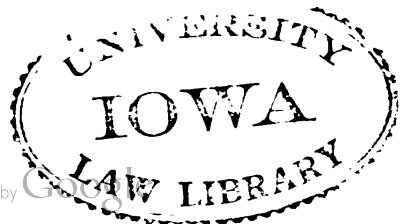
**Baltimore, Maryland, November 9 to 14**

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**1912**

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## THE ANNUAL SERMON.

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Sunday Morning, November 10.

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"Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted."—Galatians vi:1.

This is an appeal, not to the court, but to the church. It asks, not that the law shall be suspended, but that the gospel shall be applied. A man is found guilty of a serious offense. Whether the State, in that age of lax morality could take cognizance of it, we are not told. It was no doubt such a trespass as would be condemned by the ethical standard of our time, and put the man in the criminal class. He has failed, he has fallen; he is reckoned with transgressors. The world at large has no interest in such delinquents, except to get them out of the way. It cares for the successful, for those upon whom fortune smiles; and who, though they may do wrong, are shrewd enough to escape detection. Christ, however, sympathized with the unsuccessful man, and made it his chief business to help the one who had failed. He instituted His church to save sinners, to bring back the prodigal, to lift up the fallen, to restore the erring. That church is composed of those who have been rescued from the power of the evil one, and who are banded together, not to puff up the prosperous, but to support the weak, to furnish the sympathy and strength of brotherhood for those who are morally infirm. This is an indispensable part of the church's ministry that is often overlooked; and in writing to the Galatians the apostle found it necessary to remind them of their special obligation to the fallen, and it is all summed up in this one great thought,

"THE RESTORATION OF A BROTHER."

Regarding this brother, we need to consider the plight in which he is found. "Overtaken in any trespass" does not so

much emphasize the idea of his being found out, as of his having been overcome.

We have here the idea of trespasses that pursue their victim, and capture him from the rear. There are inherited weaknesses through which evil works, and which serve as a drag upon the aspiring soul. An infirm constitution makes poverty at times unavoidable, and poverty goads them on to desperation and trespass. Evil surroundings, the poison of the slums, the foul air of the saloon, not only weaken the moral fibre, but furnish lines of attack which the allied forces of evil are quick to use. The criminal classes are born and bred and misled by a vicious environment, which is not always of their choosing, but which pursues them; and even when reform and a clean life is desired makes it hard, if not impossible. In more respectable quarters, card-playing, gambling, pursue many a young man who is tempted to use money which does not belong to him; and the end is trespass, crime. He did not mean to do it, he was overcome. The use of liquor, intemperance, follows a man up, until in an unguarded imbecile moment he commits a felony. A high standard of living, the demands of fashion, pleasure, luxury, may so enmesh the unwary as to secure their moral down-fall. The man is overtaken by a trespass, consequently his case is different from the habitual transgressor, the hardened criminal, who has become an enemy to society, and a menace to all that is good. Even such a one may have been pushed on his downward career, and may be rescued and restored to the community by proper discipline and opportunity. But the apostle has in mind one who is like the boy brought before the juvenile court. He yielded to an unusual and sudden temptation, such as can be prevented. He is like a man I happen to know—of good family, of fine education, of high standing in the community, overtaken by embezzlement, and sentenced to four years in the penitentiary. Or like the farmer of whom I heard last week in Garrett County—well-to-do, but of intemperate habits; and in a drunken quarrel he killed his neighbor. He thus became a law-breaker, a criminal; with whom the State and the church as well have to deal.

But the great truth which is forced upon us by the apostle, no matter how loath we are to accept it, is this: The one who has been overtaken by a trespass, and convicted of it, no matter how great a problem his future may occasion, is still a man, a member of the society in which we live; and in this particular case, belonging to the brotherhood; so that the church has to deal with him, in the name of Christ, the prisoner's friend, who labored for the restoration of social outcasts and died on the cross between two thieves; who to bear the sin of many, and overtake the man who has gotten very low, was numbered with the transgressors.

The responsibility of the brethren, the spiritual leaders of a community, is brought out by Paul in a striking way with its appropriate teaching for all time.

As much as to say, "Those of you who belong to the Christian brotherhood, here is a man you know. He is a member of your society, he lives in your community, his trespass has not exiled him from your city. He is still with you, and if he is ever to be saved, restored, however much he may do for himself, however much the State may do on his behalf, he must depend upon you who know him. Through you alone he can become re-established in decent citizenship, and becoming manner of life." Christian people may concede this responsibility, but claim that it is discharged through the State and institutions supported by good citizens. It is true that we expect our courts to deal justly with the accused; and our jails, reformatories and prisons to give a criminal the punishment that is his due, and at the same time reform him, so that he will not repeat his offense. But do we make sure that all this is being done as we would were our own brother the one overtaken in a trespass? Suppose you had lived in Galatia, and it was your brother who was found out, what would you have wished in the way of his restoration? Or suppose that a member of your family was up before the criminal court, or sent to jail, or committed to the reformatory, or sentenced to a term in the penitentiary. Would you not undertake to know how he is treated there, and that the system is just what it should be, from a humane and Christ-like

point of view? And yet, there are thousands of brothers and sisters caught up by our penal system who will never have done for them what ought to be done, until a Christ-like society takes a direct and personal interest, as being responsible under God for their welfare.

That we are responsible is emphasized, not only by the relation that we sustain to our brother, but by the relation that we sustain to his trespass. When that man in Galatia had become a member of the Christian society, it became the business of that society to shield him from evil, to save him from all pernicious influences, and give him a pure, safe, social life. Evidently this had not been done, and the brethren were to atone for their negligence by giving the man a better chance. Take a modern example. Intemperance, as we have already noted, is a direct cause, or at least a contributing cause, of a very large percentage of crime. Intemperance however, is not a necessary evil, as is shown from the fact that its manufacture and sale have been prohibited in certain lands; just as it has been possible to prohibit the use of opium in a country like China. When our own country wishes to take precautions against drunkenness and lawlessness, as on election day, it requires all saloons to be closed. On the other hand, by legalizing the traffic, young men are surrounded by influences of the most pernicious character. Society tolerates these, and then, when the young man (for most criminals are under twenty years of age) in a drunken delirium does something wrong, immediately he is branded as a criminal, and his return to respectability is almost a forlorn hope. Let me refer to another cause of crime. Paul tells us that "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil." In various ways society waters this root, and makes it productive of crime. There grows from it the speculative impulse, the gambling habit, the get-rich-quick venture. Society tolerates all this, even to the noxious limit of the race-track, with its vicious support of thugs, thieves and sharpers. Then, when a young man is tempted by the gambling devices which the community sets up or permits (and that on the plea that it is a necessary evil that cannot be rooted up, and needs only to be watched) and is led on to use

his employer's money in the excitement of speculation, the very society which made all this possible scorns him as a criminal, and makes him forever an unfit member of the order which produced him. We may well adopt the confession of Joseph's brethren, after they had sold him into bondage, "we are verily guilty concerning our brother."

In addition to the complicity of the brotherhood in a weakling's trespass, there is the summons of Christ's spirit to get the prodigal back home. We are considering just now through the "World In Baltimore" the mission of the church to the heathen, many of whom, judged by our ethical standards, would be classed as criminals—the Chinese, who crush the feet of little children and make them cripples for life; the Hindoo who forces his daughter to a life of shame; the African with his plural wives; the fierce islanders of the Pacific, with their thirst for human blood—and we send them our preachers and teachers and physicians, because we call them our brothers, and believe that Christ our Savior meant that they should have a better life and a stronger hope through us. And in all this we do well. But the command which sends us to the ends of the earth requires us to begin at Jerusalem, to make provision as the first Christians did, for any brother in need, and to deal as Peter and John did at the gate of the temple with the lame man (a defective and annoying member of society) and restore him. Has not the Church of the Crucified a primary and inescapable responsibility for the more than fifteen thousand prisoners with whom our State of Maryland has to deal each year?

It is to the ministry of restoration that we are summoned. Let us not overlook that word, restore. Our duty is not spelled out in letters of isolation—solitary confinement or segregation—the colonization of crime—but in restoration.

If that means anything, it is this, to put a man back again into society (not necessarily into the same place which he once forfeited, that may be impossible, at any rate for some time) but to re-establish him in the community and in the church as a reliable and useful citizen. The man to whom I referred up in Garrett County instead of being sent to prison, was paroled

under the requirement that he should lead a temperate life for a term of years, and support the family of the man he had killed. He did this, and in time became a respectable member of the community, restored. However hopeless the average man may be as to the future of the criminal, those who know him, and have a chance to see the possibilities of good in him, do not despair. When one reads Harold Begbie's "Twice Born Men," or Philip Roberts' "Dry Dock of a Thousand Wrecks," he is filled with that sublime optimism which the Savior had, when He said to the moral delinquents of His day, "Go and sin no more."

To secure this restoration of the erring the State has a tremendous task, and specialists are needed to study the problem and apply improved methods. But more than this, there is needed on the part of church members, that they who are spiritual, who claim to have the attitude of Christ, should recognize their responsibility for moulding public opinion; for creating by the gospel of justice and mercy a popular conviction as to the causes of crime and their prevention; as to the maintenance of penal institutions under such management and discipline, and as to the treatment of discharged prisoners, as will make all the measures adopted by the State for the suppression of crime and for the restoration of the criminal the best and most humane and Christian that have ever been tried. This will we as Christians stand for, if we realize what we owe to the grace of God that has kept us from falling, that, as John Bunyan put it, when in Bedford jail he heard the footsteps of the man being led to the place of execution, "But for the grace of God, there goes John Bunyan," and if we realize what we owe to that man, our brother in prison who in Christ's name is to be cared for in the spirit of gentleness and humility.

Ye who are spiritual, in the vanguard of civilization, do you ever think of those whom you yourselves have crowded back to the rear of the procession, where they are especially exposed to the evils that follow humanity's trail? Or is it with you, "Every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost." Ye have not so learned Christ. You who are spiritual, have you

caught the spirit of the Messiah, who was anointed to proclaim liberty to the captives. the opening of the prison to them that are bound, and provide a garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, citizen's dress for prison stripes? The spirit of Christian gentleness will send the spiritual with their Bibles, their prayers, and their friendships to the man overtaken in a trespass. Do you not know some one, perhaps an acquaintance of your youth, who has fallen on evil days, and is under sentence? Have you ever written to him? Have you gone to him to express your sympathy or confidence in him and your hope that he would be restored again to a place of honor and usefulness in the community? We are all here prisoners and freemen in a world of struggle, bound to help one another, and the relation of service is summed up in the words which Paul applies to the whole situation, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."