



T. DeWITT

TALMAGE



GREAT
PULPIT
MASTERS

VOLUME VII



T. DeWITT
TALMAGE

INTRODUCTION BY
DANIEL A. POLING



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INTRODUCTION



T. DEWITT TALMAGE BELONGS WITH THE *Pulpit Masters*, AND his sermons have earned their place on the top shelf of the *Pulpit Americana*.

Years ago in Amoy, China, in the home of a remarkable woman, the niece of Dr. Talmage, a missionary of the Reformed Church in America, I picked up a volume of the Talmage sermons. Miss Talmage said to me: "I read it with my Bible. The Word lives in everything he said and wrote."

In this volume of sermons the Word "lives." Here was a man who faithfully, even sensationally, preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He was the spectacular pulpit orator of his time. His popularity was equal to that of Henry Ward Beecher, with whom he was contemporary in Brooklyn, New York. More nearly than any other preacher of his century, he had the method and material of a popular columnist, and toward the end of his career his sermons were published in 3500 newspapers and journals in America and abroad. During the last thirty years of his life he was editor at one time or another of *Christian Work*, *Advance*, and *Frank Leslie's Sunday Magazine*. With the distinguished converted Jew Louis Klopsch as publisher, he was the founding editor of *Christian Herald*. He continued as editor of this widely circulated Protestant religious journal from 1877 until his death in 1902. Every week *Christian Herald* carried one of Dr. Talmage's unique sermons. There were additional articles from his pen that chronicled his world travels, and the early issues were filled with Talmage pictures. One that I remember from my boyhood posed him standing in

INTRODUCTION

the Jordan river where on the traditional site of the baptism of Jesus he was now baptizing!

Born, reared, and educated in the ancient Dutch Church, and graduated from its theological seminary at New Brunswick, Dr. Talmage, in 1869, became pastor of the Central Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn, New York. He concluded his active ministry as associate pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Washington, D. C. Three times fire destroyed his Brooklyn churches. But it is said of him that "neither the eloquence of Beecher nor the fury of the elements could successfully challenge his pulpit authority."

The sermons included in this volume will identify Dr. Talmage as an evangelist. He preached to a decision. He could have been the cultured Billy Sunday of his time, though his scholarly attainment would not have detracted from the spectacular and sensational that always identified not only his preaching, but his extracurricular activities. When he went slumming through Manhattan his story broke on the front page. His critics then were as critics today. They found fault with his methods, but they could not deny his mastery, nor could they successfully indict his crystal-clear loyalty to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

He preached and wrote against sin, but with tender regard and constant yearning for the sinner. He exalted Jesus Christ. Now, in this volume, though the printed page can never release him fully, T. DeWitt Talmage speaks again with passionate eloquence for Christ and the Church.

Daniel A. Poling

New York City



T. DeWITT
TALMAGE



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Just as sometimes a child is so sick that it cannot any longer lie in the cradle, and the mother has to take it up, so sometimes God's children are so troubled that they cannot lie easy anywhere but in God's lap. . . .—TALMAGE.

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I. CHRIST LOOKING FOR THE SINNER



The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.—LUKE 19:10.

WHEN KOSSUTH VISITED THE UNITED STATES, ABOUT TWENTY years ago, so great was the enthusiasm for Hungary that I remember very well the trees around the Battery in New York were crowded with people who had climbed there to see the distinguished stranger as he passed. I shall never forget that scene. Indeed, if one be well poised, he cannot have a better place to see a passing crowd than a treetop. Well, Christ was coming to Jericho, and there was a small man, whose head did not come up to the shoulders of other people, who despaired of seeing the distinguished stranger while standing on the dead level; so he climbs up a sycamore tree—broad-branched, stretching its arms clear across the highway—and sits there while Jesus advances. Christ, coming up with a great multitude, casts His eye up, and sees this man on a branch of the sycamore, and says: "Come down," and after the man has come down, He says to him, among other things: "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Our sympathies are always aroused when we see anything that is lost. Even a dog that has wandered away from its master we feel sorry for. Or of a bird that has escaped from its owner we say: "Poor thing." Going down the street near nightfall, in the

teeth of a sharp northeast wind, you feel very pitiful for one who has got to be out. As you go along you hear the affrighted cry of a child. You stop. You say: "What is the matter?" You go up and find that little one has lost its way from home. In its excitement it cannot even tell its name or its residence. The group of people gathered around are all touched, all sympathetic and helpful. A plain body comes up, and with her plaid she wraps the child and says: "I'll take care of the poor bairn." While in the same street, but a little way off, the crier goes through the city, ringing a bell, and uttering in a voice that sounds dolefully through all the alleys and byways of the city: "A lost child! Three years of age, blue eyes, light hair. Lost child!" Did you ever hear any such pathos as that ringing through the darkness?

You are on shipboard. You see against the sky a vessel. It comes nearer. You hoist a flag. It makes no response. You say: "What is the matter with that vessel?" You put the sea-glass to your eye, and you find there is no one in the rigging—no one on the deck. "Ah," you say: "I guess that must be an abandoned ship." It comes on, falling over into the trough of the ocean. It floats every whither, tossed by the wild sea, and the crew say to the passengers, and the captain says to his mate: "It is a lost ship."

You are going down the street, and you see a man that you know very well. You once associated with him. You are astonished when you see him. "Why," you say, "he is all covered with the marks of sin. He must be in the very last stages of wickedness." And then you think of his blasted home, and say: "God pity his wife and child! God pity him!" *A lost man!*

Under the gaslight, you see a painted thing flaunting down the street—once the joy of a village home—her laughter ringing horror through the souls of the pure, and rousing up the merriment of those already ruined like herself. She has forgotten the home of her youth and the covenant of God. *A lost woman!*

But, my friends, we are all lost. "All we, like sheep, have

gone astray"; and the bellmen of heaven come out hunting up and down to find those who have missed their way, ringing through all the streets of the city, and all the valleys and mountains of the earth, the old Gospel bell. "The son of man has come to seek and to save that which is lost."

I am glad that it is the Son of man who has come to seek us. It is not one armed with thunderbolts, riding down the sky in ponderous chariot to crush us, but the Son of man: His nature just like our nature, with one exception; His infancy rocked in the cradle of a mother's arms; His boyhood spent in Nazareth, amid a boy's temptations. Afterward, with blistered hand, learning a trade. Afterward, preaching, not with priest's gown, but in citizen's apparel; talking as brother talks with brother. Oh, He was the Son of man! He walked like a man; He slept like a man; He ate like a man; He drank like a man; He wept like a man; He suffered like a man; He *was* a man! He knew what sin and temptation are by personal contact, for he lived in a most abandoned village; and He moved around amid fishing villages known in all ages for their vice; and in after years He preached in Jerusalem, a city which, though it had a temple, was worse than New York. And when Christ comes, He comes not to a new world to make a discovery, but to an old world where He once lived, to a race whose nerves, and muscles, and bones, and flesh were just like those which He inhabited. As cold chills us, so it chilled Him; as fire warms us, so it warmed Him; as betrayal exasperates us, so it exasperated Him. I warrant you, that in that hostile and rough society He received many a kick, and bruise, and cuff that have never been recorded. I am glad to know that He comes in the fresh memory of His sorrows on earth, and of those thrilling night scenes and day scenes of His earthly citizenship, "to seek and to save that which was lost."

In the first place, I remark that we are lost to holiness. Are you not all willing to take the Bible announcements that our nature is utterly ruined? Sin has broken in at every part of our castle. One would think that we got enough of it from our par-

ents, whether they were pious or not; but we have taken the capital of sin with which our fathers and mothers started us, and we have by accumulation, as by infernal compound interest, made it enough to swamp us forever. The heart a battleground, across which armed battalions sweep right and left. The ivory palace of the soul polluted with the filthy feet of all uncleanness. The Lord Jesus Christ comes to bring us back to holiness. He comes not to destroy us, but to take the consequence of our guilt. He breaks through lacerating thorns, and He dies to offer us cleanliness. Here is a man who, a few weeks ago, said: "All is right with me. I am not willing to confess I am a sinner." Now, the spirit comes to his soul, and he feels himself to be so great a sinner that there is no mercy for him. When did he make the most accurate estimate? Now. "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." But says someone in the audience: "I have sinned so much I do not believe Christ will take me." Napoleon thought of going over into Italy. His friends laughed at him, and said: "You can never get over the Alps. If you know anything about the Alps, you know you can never get over there." Napoleon waved his hand, and said: "There shall be no Alps." Then the road was built through the Simplon Pass—the wonder of following ages. We stand and see the mountain of our guilt. The obstacles seem so great that it is impossible for us to find a way into the peace and life of the Gospel; but Christ comes, and He waves His wounded hand, and cries: "There shall be no obstacles! I will come over the mountain of thy sin and the hills of thine iniquity." Oh, ye who have sinned, instead of flying away from Christ, if you only knew who it is that comes to save you, you would fly no farther, but turn around; and while Christ seeks you, you would seek Christ, and this house would be a scene of a penitent sinner and a pardoning Saviour, throwing each other's arms around each other's necks; while heaven could afford to stop half an hour and hang over the battlements gazing. What is that flutter among the angels?

CHRIST LOOKING FOR THE SINNER

Who is that horseman rushing through the city with quick despatch? What is that announcement on the bulletins of heaven? I know what it is. Christ has *found* that which was lost.

Nor angels can their joy contain,
But kindle with new fire;
The sinner lost is found, they sing,
And strike the sounding lyre.

I remark, again, we are lost to happiness, and Christ comes to find us. A caliph said: "I have been fifty years a caliph, and I have had all honors, and all wealth; and yet, in the fifty years, I can count up only fourteen days of happiness." How many there are in this audience that cannot count fourteen days in all their life in which they had no vexations or annoyances. We all feel a capacity for happiness that has never been tested. There are interludes of bliss; but whose entire life has been a continuous satisfaction? Why is it that the most of the fine poems of the world are somehow descriptive of grief? It is because men know more about sorrow than they do about joy. John Milton succeeds when he writes "*Paradise Lost*," but fails when he comes to write "*Paradise Regained*." Dante's "*Inferno*" is a chime of horrors. Bryant's "*Thanatopsis*" is a poem of tears. Take the pathos out of the writings of Tennyson and Longfellow, and you have taken three-fourths their power. John Ruskin writes his most effective passages about the ruins of Venice. It is because men know more about sorrow than about joy that they are more effective in describing the former? The dog of bad news runs faster than the carrier pigeon flies with good tidings. There are flushes of satisfaction in the heart; but whose life has been a prolonged delight? The soul has four ranks of keys, and the world does not know how to play on such an elaborate instrument; but Religion comes, and with her right hand she touches the higher keys of the soul, and with her left hand the lower keys of the soul, and then sweeps them with the symphonies of heaven. Christ comes

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to find those who have been lost to happiness. He soothes them, He inspirits them, He lifts them, He opens the door of the lost Eden, and invites them to come in again to peace.

Oh, how many have been goaded, and stung, and plagued! Had it not been for risking your eternal interests, some of you would have put an end to the scene of earthly suffering with your own hand. A deep undertone of sadness rolls through the soul. You would be willing now to give up your money, and your social position, and all you have achieved, for one day of the peace which the good old slave expressed when he said, "In owning Christ I seem to own everything. The air is mine, for I can breathe it; the sunshine is mine, for I can sit in it; the earth is mine, for I can lie down in it." To have something of the complete satisfaction which belongs to the humblest of God's children, you would give almost anything. Oh, ye who are struck through with unrest, Christ comes to give you rest. If Christ comes to you, you will be independent of all worldly circumstances. It was so with the Christian man who suffered for His faith, and was thrust down into the coal-hole of the home of the Bishop of London. He said: "We have had fine times here, singing gladsome songs all night long. Oh, God, forgive me for being so unworthy of this glory." So said the martyr in that coal-hole. More joyful in the hour of suffering and martyrdom was Rose Allen. When the persecutor put a candle underneath her wrist, and held it there until the sinews snapped, she said: "If you see fit, you can burn my feet next, and then also my head." Christ once having taken you into His custody and guardianship, you can laugh at pain, and persecution, and trial. Great peace for all those whom Christ has found, and who have found Christ. Jesus comes into their sick-room. The nurse may have fallen asleep in the latter watches of the night, but Jesus watches with slumberless eyes, and He puts His gentle hand over the hot brow of the patient, and says: "You will not always be sick. I will not leave you. There is a land where the inhabitant never saith: 'I am sick.' Hush, troubled soul! Peace!"

CHRIST LOOKING FOR THE SINNER

This Jesus comes into the home of bereavement, and He says: "I took your lost darling. I come now to make up for his absence. I wanted him at the gate when you came through. The days of your separation will only add to the joys of reunion. Peace, I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Just as sometimes a child is so sick that it cannot lie any longer in the cradle, and the mother has to take it up, so sometimes the Lord's children are so troubled that they cannot lie easy anywhere but in God's lap, while He bends over them and sings this sweet song: "As one whom his mother comforteth. so will I comfort you."

The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose
I will not, I will not, desert to His foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never, forsake.

Again, I remark, we are lost to heaven, and Christ comes to take us there. I cannot imagine anything more distressful than, without having musical taste, to sit and listen to an oratorio for two hours and a half. Though it be the best of oratorios, if a man have no musical taste, it is a distress to him, while it is a joy to others. And I cannot imagine anything more distressful for a man who has no love for pictures than to be shut up in the Luxembourg gallery in Paris. Yes, I can think of one thing worse than that, and that will be for a man to enter heaven without any taste for it. I sometimes hear people talk as though all a man had to do was just to leave this world and go into heaven and sit down to its enjoyments. If a man cannot stand Christian society here for one day, how would he stand a million ages of it? I see an unregenerate soul entering heaven. It enters heaven, looks around, and sees God there, and angels there, and hears the cry: "Holy, Holy," and the unregenerate soul says: "This is no place for me," and he flies to the battlements, and he cries: "I can stand it here no longer," and he leaps off into outer darkness. In other words,

the worst hell for a man would be heaven if he has no qualifications—no preparations for it. But Christ comes to take the discord out of our soul and give it a heavenly attuning. He comes to take out of us that which makes us unlike heaven, and substitute that which assimilates us. Ten thousand times the gate of heaven has swung back and forth, but it never swings back and forth save as Christ opens it, and you will go in through Him or not at all. Christ wants you there. How do I know it? Suppose a man lost a diamond, and he looked for it eight or ten days, would you not conclude from the fact that he looked for it so long that he wanted the diamond? And when I find Christ seeking for your soul, seeking for it ever since it has been a soul, seeking for it by day and by night, seeking for it through heat and through cold, seeking for it with tears in His eyes and blood on His brow, and scourges on His back, and a world of agony in His heart, I know that it is because He wants to find you. Oh, He has prepared a glorious heaven for you! It is all ready. Not merely a throne, but steps by which to mount it. Not only a harp, but a song to play on it. Not only a bannered procession, but a victory which it is to celebrate. God wants no vacant chairs at that banquet. He does not want those who stand around Him in glory to wonder why you have not been solicited. He does not want the Book of life to thunder till your name is in it. What do I breathe? It is the fragrance of Him whose garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces. What do I hear? It is the footstep of Him who comes with worn sandal in the journey from Bethlehem to Nazareth, and from Nazareth to Jerusalem, and from Jerusalem to Golgotha, and from Golgotha to glory, and from glory here, seeking that which is lost. Oh, jostle Him not from thy door-step. Do not drive this Christ away, as though He were an unworthy beggar soliciting your alms. Hear His voice. Trust His sacrifices. Respond to His love. Take His heaven. Do you not know, oh, man, oh, woman, that you are the lost one spoken of in my text? "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." You may hide

CHRIST LOOKING FOR THE SINNER

away from Him; but there are some things which will find you, whether Christ by His grace finds you or not. Trouble will find you. Temptation will find you. Sickness will find you. Death will find you. The judgment will find you. Eternity will find you.

Soon you will be gone from all these scenes, and if a thousand men should come out with lanterns, and torches, and St. Bernard dogs used to hunting missing travelers, and search for your soul, you could not be found by them. The grave will have your body. Your heirs will have your estate. Eternity will have your soul. In the flash of a second, your last opportunity for heaven may go out. Postpone this question of the soul, and you are postponing getting into the last life-boat that will put out from the wreck for the beach ere the hulk lurch over and go down. God forbid that any of you should at the last have the dismay of the Scotch woman of whom I was reading a few days ago. One night, she could not sleep because of her soul's wandering from Christ. She got up and wrote in her diary: "One year from now I will attend to the matters of my soul." She retired, but she could not sleep. So she arose again, and wrote a better promise in her diary. "One month from now I will attend to the matters of my soul." She retired again but found no sleep, and arose again and wrote: "Next week I will attend to the matters of my soul." Then she slept soundly. The next day she went into scenes of gaiety. The following day she was sick, and the middle of the next week she died. Delirium lifted from her mind just long enough for her to say: "*I am a week too late. I am lost!*" Oh, to be a year too late, or a month too late, or an hour too late—aye, to be a second too late, is to be forever too late. May God Almighty, by His grace, keep us from the wild, awful, crushing catastrophe of a ruined soul!

All the glittering worlds of tonight are only the dust of His chariot wheels. . . —TALMAGE.

2. THE GREAT INTERVIEW

Prepare to meet thy God.—AMOS 4:12.

THE JEWS WERE INCORRIGIBLE. GOD HAD TRIED FOR THEIR CORRECTION captivity, famine, too much rain, too little rain, universal sickness, lightning, and war. No good result! He now tells them that greater judgments are to come, and breaks in upon them like a cavalry charge with the words: "Prepare to meet thy God."

We go out in the springtime and we meet God amid the apple blossoms. We go in August, and in the full leafage we meet God in the forest. We go out in the wintry blast, and we meet God in the snowbanks. The rainbow, the morning cloud, the Northern Lights, the jeweled midnight, only His different changes of apparel flung over His shoulders, or girdled about His loins, or set upon His brow as a garland. It is the same God that wraps Himself in the cyclone and walks the sea, or in the simoon and walks the desert, or stamps His foot in the South American earthquake, or smites with the red fist of the lightning. I can get no idea of what God is from the natural world. "God is love," smiles the sunshine. "God is wrath," cries the Caribbean whirlwind as it cracks off the masts of the ships. So that I turn away from the earth and I turn to the Bible, and I ask: "Who is He?" Eternal—a myriad of ages no more to Him than a heartbeat. Omnipotent—the universe dropping in one word from His tongue. Omniscient—His eye taking in immensity at a glance. Holy—thundering away the

least taint. Loving—inviting the whole world to His heart. A circle of attributes, sweeping around thrones, and coronations, and blandishments—glories that never fade and sorrows that never go out. All the glittering worlds of tonight only the dust of His chariot wheels. The pomp of heaven marching under His footstool. The only wise, the only pure, the only good, the only holy, the only great! *God! God!*

My text says that that Being we have to meet. There are some persons we never meet. Thousands of miles divide us. We never will meet them in house, or store, or street; but God, the text says, we *must* meet.

I remark first: we must meet God in the misfortunes of life.

Is there a man here come to mid-life that has never been buffeted? The path of life has sharp thorns, and deep plunges, and steep ascents, and overwhelming surprises. You must meet God in times of sickness. You will be going along, keeping up day after day, until, after a while, you will surrender. You will be flat down. Business stopped at a time when you cannot afford to have it stop. Sleeplessness. Almost interminable nights. Forebodings, watchings. Wondering when it is going to end. Scrutinizing the doctor's face to see what are the prospects of recovery or dissolution. An unnatural silence about the house because feet are slippered and the voices hushed. A glimpse of eternity through the turned lattice of the sick-room. Whom will you meet there? The doctor, the nurse, inquiring friends, you will meet there; but One other. By your hot pillow in that solemn silence, amid those great uncertainties, you will meet God! He will talk to you and ask you what you did in days of health, what are your preparations for eternity, and what would happen if now your pulse should stop and your lungs should cease their respiration? Oh, it is a solemn hour when an impenitent man—flat down, helpless, not able to lift a finger—has all the past rushing upon him. Flannels no longer able to keep the feet warm because they seem dipped in the cold stream that bounds this life; and over that pillow, God bending—an offended God, an unreconciled God, an omnipo-

tent God! I think the brightest of places I have ever seen have been the sick-rooms of God's dear children. They seemed ready for anything, and the Lord was there beautifully and gloriously to comfort them. But I have looked off upon a desert and seen sand and desolation. No flower. No leaf. No brook. I have seen dark midnights, when, riding along, my horse would have gone over the precipice but for the flash of the lightning that revealed it. And yet, I am to tell you that the darkest midnight I ever saw is the midnight desert of a sick-room in which an impenitent soul meets God.

Again I remark: we will have to meet God in *the bereavements of life*. We cannot escape them unless a man stands all alone—fatherless, motherless, brotherless, sisterless, childless. But there are lines of affection and influence reaching out all around, and our common sense tells that there must be last words, last looks, last pressures of the hand, arms folded in the final sleep, feet stopped at the end of the journey, faces, once cheerful and bright with emotion, white, and still, and pinched; shadows of sorrow over earth and sky; the chair, the table, the floor, the ceiling, everything about the house seeming to whisper, "Dead! Dead!" Oh, when the hour of bereavement comes to us, will we stand in such relation to God that we will get comfort? I have seen a man in such an hour grind his teeth, and clench his fist, and ask God in indignation what He meant by doing that. I have seen a Christian man kiss the rod and say: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." But it is not always so. I have seen a man stand over a dead body and defy God, and tell Him to come on and do His worst! I shall never forget a scene in a former parish. A husband had lost his life in a distant city. In the midnight the lifeless body was to arrive. Oh, what a home of grief. I tried to pray. My voice was drowned. The bereft would not listen. I told them Christ was a sympathizing Saviour. She did not believe it. I said: "God is a Father." She said: "No, He is a tyrant." Oh, may God forbid that I should ever come for the purposes of sympathy and con-

solation to a house of bereavement where the soul is rebellious against the Lord. There is not any comfort. Christian men cannot invent any comfort. There is no recipe of the Gospel adapted to the case where the man will not take the medicine and will not believe the promises. Amid the misfortunes and the up-turnings of life we must meet God.

Again, I remark: an interview of this kind will take place in our last hour. We do not want any Bible or argument to prove that we have to quit this scene after a while. There may be worldly alleviations in the last hour. A man may have accumulated property, or have a generous life insurance, and he may be able to say to those whom he is leaving behind: "Keep things just as they are. Send the boy to college as though I had lived. There will be dividends large enough to meet all expenses." That is very well for those whom you leave behind; but one moment after you have quitted life, where will *your* residence be? We may, by keeping clear of ministers and churches, keep God out of our thoughts; but now I will suppose that your last hour has come. Word goes over to the store that you will not be there tomorrow. Someone else will have to open and read the letters and answer them. Someone else will have to make purchases and fix the prices. You will not be there tomorrow, nor all this week, nor all this month, nor all this year, nor all this century. You will never be there again. I am supposing that your last hour has come. Leaving this life, suppose you have made no preparations. The ship is sinking and no life preserver. The darkness is coming on, and no torch. Everything going out of your grasp—bond and mortgages going—everything going, swimming away from the eye, swimming away from the ear, swimming away from the touch. That is one side—everything going. On the other side what is coming? No inheritance coming. No bright angels coming. No heaven coming. God there, meeting the unpardoned soul. The immortal soul is starting! Stand back now, and let it swing off! It flies! Away! Away! No open window to receive it. No out-

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spread arms of Jesus to welcome it. He dies without repentance, and goes to a world without hope.

I bless God that there are many who, in their last hours, have found joy and peace. So it was with Lady Huntingdon. As she went out of this life, she said: "I will go to my Father tonight." So it was with Alice Lucey. In her last moments she said: "My God, I come flying to Thee." So it was with John Pawson, as he closed his eyes in death, and said: "*Precious Jesus.*" So it was with John Bradford, who cried out: "If there is such a thing as going to heaven on horseback, this is it." But, alas, for some who, in that hour, have gone away broken down into darkness. So it was with the French athlete, able to wrestle down every gymnast, but in his last moment crying out: "Oh, death, if thou wert a man, how soon I would throw thee." So it was with Voltaire, who said he would give the doctor half his fortune if he could only have another six months of life. So it was with Altamont in his closing moments, when he looked up and said: "Oh, thou blasphemed, but most indulgent Lord God, hell itself is a refuge if it hide me from Thy frown."

I remark, again: we *must meet God in the great day*. Some say there will be no judgment day; but how do you explain things? Here is one of the best men in destitution; here is one of the worst of men in great affluence, faring sumptuously every day. Do you not think there is to be a time when these wrongs are to be righted, and these mysterious things are to be explained? I think so. Common sense teaches us there must be a judgment day. The Sultan of Turkey used to be weighed once a year. On the opposite side of the scales first was put silver, then gold, then jewels, and then the gold and the jewels were thrown among the people. My friends, the day comes when you and I must be weighed in scales of a different character—weighed not against the gold and the jewels of this world, but by the law of the eternal right and the eternal wrong.

Some astronomers tell us that this world is going to freeze to death. They say that the sun is losing at the rate of one degree of heat in 35,000 years, and after a while the stove of the sun will go out, and our world will roll around one great orb of ice. I do not believe it. I believe in the Bible notion that the earth, and all the things that are therein, shall be burned up. It will not be ice. It will be fire.

Painters have tried to sketch that day, but always fail. It is easy to sketch a city on fire, but not a universal conflagration. It is easy to sketch an earthquake that destroys a town, but not that which destroys the hemispheres. All the mountains falling. All the seas boiling. All the stars dropping. All the heavens rolling. All the earth vanishing. Angels flying. Graves bursting. Dead rising. Thrones hoisting. God coming. The Apostle Peter speaks of that day as "a great noise." The slide of an avalanche deafens the ear; but what will it be when the Himalayas, and Alps, and Mount Washington tumble into the dust? A thunderstorm reaches only five, ten, or fifteen miles; but what will it be when all around the earth the artillery of God shall be unlimbered, the whoop of the wind, the blare of the trumpets, the chorus of the saved, the groans of the banished, the cry of wild beasts frightened from their lair, not knowing which way to jump; the clangor and the vociferation, and the echo and re-echo of earth, and heaven, and hell—what will it be but the great noise the apostle spoke of?

I do not know in what place of the earth the congregation will assemble for that great assize. Three or four summers ago I thought I saw a place fit to be the great judgment hall of the last day. We had been riding through Tête Noire Pass, Switzerland, through rocky desolation, until, at last, we came upon a scene which I never expected to witness until I beheld the last day. I said to my companion: "This looks to me as if it might be the judgment hall for the last day." In this valley there is room for nations—a great amphitheatre. On these ledges of rocks, gallery upon gallery—first, second, third, fourth, tenth gallery of rocks—room for angels, cherubim, ser-

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aphim, archangel. That sunlighted cliff, the point from which the righteous shall rise. That midnight cavern, the place from which the wicked shall depart. While, amid all that surrounding upheaval of rock and forest, a vast boulder, cushioned with moss, rose higher and higher, until we were overwhelmed with the height and the majesty of the spectacle, and I thought that might be the throne on which the Judge is to sit. And then there came rolling through my mind the words of Bishop Heber:

The Lord shall come! the earth shall quake!
The mountains to their center shake!
And, withering from the vault of night,
The stars withdraw their feeble light.

While sinners in despair shall call,
"Rocks, hide us! mountains, on us fall!"
The saints ascending from the tomb,
Shall sing for joy, "The Lord has come!"

But I do not pretend to tell you where the judgment hall of the last day will be; but there will be a place of judgment where we will have to meet God and answer for this night—I for what I say, you for what you hear; answer for all the opportunities we have had or might have had; answer for all resistances of the Holy Ghost; answer for all sick-bed vows broken, all death-bed warnings slighted; all Sabbaths, and Bibles, and communion tables despised. For every year we will have to give answer; for every month, every hour, every moment of our life we will have to give answer; and it will be under the scrutiny of that God who has seen us, and watched us, and knows all about us. Will we be ready for such a scrutiny under the eye of the all-seeing God? If you are not, do not the words of my text come through your soul as though the ten thousand voices of death, and judgment, and eternity spoke at once, crying: "Prepare to meet thy God!"

You say that all this is true, but how are we to prepare? Two words will tell you: *Repent! Believe!* That is, give up your sin,

and be sorry for it. Take Christ for your Saviour. Hold on to Him. There have been a great many inventions by which we can travel in different directions; but there has been no new invention for getting to heaven. One road, one door, one salvation, and that is Jesus Christ, the Lord; and if you shall, this moment, by faith, take hold of Him, and say: "Oh, Lord Jesus, I have heard that Thou didst die for sinners; I am a sinner, and plead for Thy mercy"; if you can in earnestness and faith say that, then you are prepared to meet God in sickness, and trouble, and death, and in judgment, and through all eternity.

That must have been an exciting scene when Florence Nightingale came into the Crimean war, and with her own hand administered to ten thousand wounded men lying along the banks of the Bosphorus. It is said that when she came with the lint, and the bandages, and the cordials, the tears started down the cheeks of the men, and with the stumps of arms that had been amputated they waved, and huzza'd, and blessed her as she passed; and that the dying dream of many a soldier was filled with prayer for this angel of mercy in the form of Florence Nightingale. But, my friends, over thy sick and dying souls a fairer one bends. It is the Angel of the Covenant—Jesus—the life for all the dead.

CAN YOU NOT LOVE HIM?

A mother was telling her little child about Christ, and that He had no place to lay His head. The child said: "Oh, Mama, I wish I had been there. I would have given Him my pillow." Are you not ready to take this Christ and let Him put down His weary head on the pillow of thy warmest affections? If so, then come time or eternity, come health or sickness, come prosperity or adversity—all is well. No terror. No darkness. Great peace for those who put their trust in God; but until you have attended to that, hear the cannonade of my text: "Prepare to meet thy God!" Defy no longer the Lord that bought. Rush not upon the thick bosses of His buckler. "Consider this now,

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ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver."

A child of a friend of mine was dying, and he said that the little one, in the last hours, was very happy. He knelt down by her, and said: "My dear, shall I pray for you?" She replied: "Yes, yes." He said: "What shall I pray for?" "Well," she said, "you might pray that I might get my breath easier." And then the father took the child's hand and prayed, and when he was through the prayer, she said: "Papa, it seems as you hold one of my hands, Jesus holds the other." And I have thought that while I take one of your hands in earnest imploring for your eternal salvation, Jesus might take your other hand, and say: "Oh, weary, wandering, troubled, sinning soul, I will give thee rest."

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There are ten thousand witcheries, which, after a man has started for heaven, compel him to look back. . . .—TALMAGE.

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3. CROOKED PLOWING



No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.—LUKE 9:62.

CHRIST'S ILLUSTRATIONS WERE DRAWN FROM EVERY-DAY LIFE. We hardly ever find Him making any allusion to Grecian or Egyptian antiquities. You always immediately know what He means. We who speak in prayer-meetings, and Sabbath schools, and pulpits, might learn many a practical lesson from Him in that respect. It is often the case that the illustration is so elaborate and learned, that the audience find harder work in understanding the illustration than the subject which we propose to illustrate. But it was not so with Christ. His comparisons were as plain as that white is white and black is black; and the most illiterate man that ever heard Jesus talk knew immediately what He meant.

Well, Christ was gathering up His friends and associates. He wanted to test their earnestness by demanding instantaneous discipleship. He wanted them immediately to become His followers, or not at all. There was a man standing there who said that he really intended to become one of Christ's disciples, but he wanted to go home first and say good-by to his friends, and make arrangements before he undertook the Christian service. Christ would not consent to that. He knew very well that if that man went back his family would persuade him to stay, and he would never enter into the discipleship; and,

therefore, Christ expresses His dissent to the proposition of the man in the words of my text: "No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Many of us were brought up in the country, and we learned how to plow. It seems a very easy process to a man who has never tried, as he stands looking over the fence and sees the plow glide smoothly through the field. One would think all you have to do would be to take hold of the handles and put the point of the colter in the sod, and then tell the horses to start; but to send the plow through at equal depth of earth, and, without being stopped by stone or stump, make a clear, straight furrow from one end to the other, requires a good deal of care. Many a one has lost his patience in the process, and when he first began to plow, has been knocked flat by the plow handles. Here is a boy that attempts to plow, but instead of keeping his eye on the beam of the plow or on the horses pulling the plow, he is looking this way and that, sometimes looking back to the end of the field from which he started. The husbandman comes in the field and says: "My boy, you will never make a plowman in that way. You must keep your eye on your work, or I shall discharge you, and put someone else in your place. See here, what a crooked furrow you have been making." Now it is this illustration that Christ presents in order to show up the folly of that man who, once having started toward heaven, is turned this way and that, often looking back to the place from which he started. "No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

I stand before many who have been roused to religious consideration, and some of them passed on into the life of the Gospel, and we have nothing for them this morning but congratulation and good cheer. Others have not got so far as that. They heard it thunder, they were awakened from their lethargy, their prayerless lips began to move in petition. From being inattentive hearers, you could see they were affected with a very deep anxiety. They asked the question of the jailer.

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Tripped up by the misfortunes of life, they felt the need of something better than earthly solace. Under the uplifted battle-ax of disaster, they felt they must have a helmet. They were importunate for a while. Ministering spirits, who watched the state of the soul, were ready to strike exultation over their return. They had started. They had their hands on the plow. The barren soil of the heart began to upturn in preparation for a glorious harvest. But mid-furrow, the plow stopped. They looked back, and showed they were not fit for the kingdom of God. They halted, some of them never again to start—others to be persuaded by the Spirit of God to resume their duty.

I remark that many surrender their religious impressions because, like this man in the text, *they do not want to give up their friends and connections*. The probability is that the majority of your friends are unchristian. You do not want to turn your back upon them. You do not, by your action, want seemingly to condemn their behavior: and so the wife waits for the husband to come to Christ, and so the husband waits for the wife to come to Christ, and neither comes. One in life! One in death! One in the loss of the soul! And so there are children who do not come because parents do not come. They say: "If religion were really anything particular, father would attend to it. If religion were anything very important, I am sure my mother would attend to it. They stay out of the kingdom and I will stay." Ah, it was not so with the serving-maid in the house of Naaman the leper. Amid all the grand surroundings that were hostile to religion, she maintained her faith in God, and through her instrumentality her master was cured of leprosy. But I need not go to history to find instances where men have maintained the faith of the Gospel notwithstanding the most bitter hostilities. Go to that cabinet warehouse, go to that machine shop, go to that dry-goods store, and you will find men faithful to Christ, while all around are jeering and caricature. But there are some who cannot serve God alone. They resolve to start heavenward; but one good round of laughing scorn at the supper table ends all their religious impressions.

They want to get to heaven; but they cannot endure the domestic opposition, the social opposition. They put their hand to the plow and say: "Witness, ye men and angels, this day I take Christ, and start for heaven"; but tomorrow they look back. Down at the club-house one day, they say: "Where is Mr. So-and-so? I have not seen him here for four or five weeks." "Oh," says someone, "he is attending religious meetings." After a while, the new convert goes among those old associates, and when they see him coming, they say, "Oh, here comes our Christian. How solemn he looks. Mighty good he has got to be, hasn't he? Come, now, you're a Christian they tell me; just get down here and pray for us, and whistle one of your old church tunes. What! ashamed to do it? I thought you were a hypocrite. You like sin just as well as you ever did." Oh, to stand that bombardment, to be thrown out of old companionship, to be tabooed, and caricatured, and pointed at, is like cutting off the right arm, or plucking out the right eye, and you cannot stand it. Triumph over those influences—many have. Go down under them—many do.

Again, I remark that sometimes people surrender their religious impressions because *they want to take one more look at sin*. They resolved that they would give up sinful indulgences, but they have been hankering for them ever since, thirsty for them, and finally they conclude to go into them. So there is a man who, under the influence of the Spirit, resolved he would become a Christian, and as a preliminary step he ceases profanity. That was the temptation and the sin of his life. After a while, he says: "I don't know that it's worth while for me to be curbing my temper at all times—to be so particular about my speech. Some of the most distinguished men in the world have been profane. Benjamin Wade swears, Stephen A. Douglas used to swear, General Jackson swore at the battle of New Orleans, and if men like that swear, I can; and I am not responsible anyhow for what I do when I get provoked." And so the man who, resolving on heaven, quits his profanity, goes back to it. In other words, as the Bible describes

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it, "The dog returns to its vomit again, and the sow that is washed to her wallowing in the mire."

"But," says a man, "I will for Christ give up sharp practices in business. I once was fraudulent; I will cease to be fraudulent, even respectably fraudulent." But the time passes on, and one day he wakes up and says: "I find that men in my branch of business overreach. I don't know why I should be blamed if sometimes I should overreach. Besides that, it is impossible to be severely honest in this day, and a man must make a living. Religion may do very well for the church, but it don't work in the store." So the man goes back to his old sharp practices in business, forgetful of the Bible warning: "As a partridge sitteth on eggs and hatcheth them not, so riches got by fraud; a man shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at the end he shall be a fool." Oh, my friends, there are ten thousand witcheries, which, after a man has started for heaven, compel him to look back.

I remark, again: there are many who surrender their religious impressions because *they want ease from spiritual anxiety*. They have been talking about their immortal soul, they have been wondering about the day of judgment, they have been troubling themselves about a great many questions in regard to religion, and they do not find peace immediately, and they say: "Here, I'll give it all up. I will not be bothered any more," and so they get rest; but it is the rest of the drowning man who, after half-an-hour battling with the waves, says: "There's no use; I can't swim ashore; I'll drown," and he goes down. Oh, we do not hide the fact that to become a Christian demands the gathering up of all the energies of the soul. We do not deny the fact that there may be strong cryings out and tears, that there may be sleepless nights, that there may be loss of appetite until food becomes loathsome; but who are we that, having fought God for twenty or thirty years, we should become spiteful and rebellious because in one day or hour, or in one week or month, we do not find pardon? I have known men who, after forty or fifty years contending against God,

warring with all the concentrated passions and powers of their nature against the Lord Almighty, became indignant because at the first prayer they did not get the mercy. Alas! alas! if after a few tears and a few struggles we surrender our religious impressions, and in a matter about which we can afford to make no mistake, we look back.

I see there are many souls all surrounded by temptations that would keep them away from God and heaven—temptations to the right, temptations to the left, temptations behind them, temptations before them—and I tell you now that your only deliverance is in the strength of the Lord God Almighty, to trample them down and go on getting the victory through the Lord Jesus Christ. Alas! if you surrender and are cut to pieces by the bombardment from all sides your only way out is forward into the liberty and light of the Gospel. Alas, if now you look back!

I have to remark that the vast majority of those who once saw their duty, and started heavenward, but have looked back, never start again. There is nothing short of the thunders of the last day that will rouse them, and that will be too late. I think that out of every hundred cases there are not more than one or two that ever start heavenward again. I do not know that there is more than one out of a thousand. Having started and stopped, they stop forever, so far as religious impressions are concerned. Misfortunes come—no Divine alleviation for them. Sickness comes—no Divine physician for them. Death comes—no Divine warmth to take off the chill, or heavenly lamp to illumine the darkness. They die, crying: "No hope!" and plunging down into the bottomless depth, the winds whistle it: "No hope!" and destroyed spirits re-echo it: "No hope!" and everlasting ages hand it on to everlasting ages—but there is no hope. They started, they stopped, they looked back, and that ended their opportunities for salvation. But, as I have remarked, there are exceptions to the rule, and I preach to those exceptions. I want to tell those who have begun to seek

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after God but have surrendered their religious impressions, of a Saviour's compassion and the bleeding cross of a dying Jesus:

Sinful soul, what hast thou done?
Crucified the eternal Son.

Oh, how could you look back? Did you not know it was at fearful hazard, that the death angel might smite you, that the door might shut, that the spirit might fly away and leave you undone and desolate? Oh, what a mercy that God spared you; that when you looked back, God did not look back; that when you stopped praying, God did not stop beseeching; that the blood of the atonement, upon which you put your ungrateful foot, did not cry out in vengeance against your soul! I look upon you with amazement. I thrill with horror at the risk you ran. I feel as if today I must with unwonted earnestness lay hold of that soul, lest the mandate from the throne go forth: "Cut him down! why cumbereth he the ground?" Oh, God, spare him another hour. Hold back the decree. Knock once more at the iron gate of his soul. Fly, messenger of salvation and make quick work ere it be too late. But why should I, my brothers, plead with you about your duty when you know it better than I can tell you? Ministers of religion may get some novelty of expression and some originality of illustration; but, after all, we feel that we are announcing the same old truths that have been ringing through the Church of Christ for ages. Indeed, we dare preach no other doctrine, for the apostle says: "If any one, though he be an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel, let him be accursed." Yes, my friends, you know all this story. You will not in the last great day be able to plead ignorance. You know if you die out of Christ you die forever. You know that the days of your probation on earth are so uncertain that nothing can be more uncertain. You know that in proportion as the soul's opportunities for salvation have been numerous and elevated, its last account will be stupendous.

You know that beyond the margin of this life there is another life—a glorious heaven or an awful hell, and that toward one of those destinies you are speeding swifter than the lightning! You know all that. You know it so well that you can never say you did not know it. Could you blame God if He should cease importuning? Could you blame the Holy Ghost if He should be gone? Could you blame the Lord Jesus Christ if He should say: "I have done. I pleaded with that man. He has rejected me. Now I will reject him." What plea, what excuse could you make at the last day? Could you say: "I never had any chance"? Why, the open books of judgment would show you the record of Sabbaths—sermons—ten thousand religious advantages. Would you say: "I never was warned"? The story would be told on that day that you were often impressed with the uncertainty of life—men falling on either side of you, accidents crashing into eternity some you knew well, and whom you knew were not ready to go. Would you say on that day: "I could not convert myself"? God would reply: "I was ready at your call, by my omnipotent Spirit, to convert you." Ah, no, my brother, on that day, if you neglect what I tell you, you will be speechless. The voice of your conscience affirming the stern decrees of God will need no sentence from the throne—you will utter your own sentence. It will need no implement of torture—your conscience will be the inquisition. God will not push you off; you will jump off. No apology to make. No possible escape. Then and there you will see the awful mistake you made in this world—having put your hand to the Gospel plow, in an evil hour, tempted of the devil and allured by a sinful world, you looked back. If you should sell a thousand dollars' worth of goods and get for them a worthless note, if you should go into a speculation and your partner in the speculation should go off with all the funds, you would not be so thoroughly cheated as you have been ten thousand times cheated about your soul; and Satan, encouraged by the fact that he has robbed you successfully so often, attempts now to swindle you out of heaven. There are some of you to whom

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God has given very large faculties for usefulness. If you had come into the kingdom of God you might have made the Church of Christ rejoice long ago, and what vast usefulness you might have accomplished with the mental furniture which God gave you! And yet, I think that you are ready to admit that, so far as your own soul is concerned, and so far as the welfare of others is concerned, your life has been a failure, and the only question now is whether the few remaining years of your life shall go in the same direction. Oh, if at last, you have a deliberate going out of this world; if lying down to die, you know you are going to die, and you have an opportunity of looking back upon your life, I am afraid that your pillow will be very hard and thorny. That must be a mighty panacea which can soothe the anguish of a man looking back upon a wasted life. Amid the chief sorrows of that day to you will be the consideration that you once were almost disenthralled from sin, that once you did quite make up your mind to seek after God, and did really start heavenward, and put your hands to the plow—but lacking in persistence of purpose, and wrongly estimating the hazards you ran, and deceived by the fatal spirit of procrastination, you looked back.

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While Adoniram Judson, the Baptist, and John Wesley, the Methodist, and John Knox, the glorious old Scotch Presbyterian, are shaking hands in heaven, all churches on earth can afford to come into close communion. . . .—TALMAGE.

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4. THE PILE OF STONES SPEAKING



What mean ye by these stones?—JOSHUA 4:6.

YOU ARE WISER THAN MOST PEOPLE IF YOU HAVE NOT MIXED IN your mind the passage of the Red Sea and the passage of the Jordan. The scenery is different, and the lessons to be learned from them are different. The Jordan, like the Mississippi, has bluffs on the one side and flats on the other. Here and there a sycamore shadows it. Here and there a willow dips into it. In the months of April and May the snows of Mount Lebanon thaw and flow down into the valley, and then Jordan overflows its banks. Then it is wide, deep, raging, and impetuous. At this season of the year I hear the tramp of forty thousand armed men coming down to cross the river. You say, Why do they not go up nearer the rise of the river at the old camel ford? Ah! my friends, it is because it is not safe to go around when the Lord tells us to go ahead. The Israelites had been going around forty years, and they had had enough of it. I do not know how it is with you, my brethren, but I have always got into trouble when I went around, but always got into safety when I went ahead.

There spreads out the Jordan, a raging torrent, much of it snow water just come down from the mountain top; and I see some of the Israelites shivering at the idea of plunging in, and one soldier says to his comrade, "Joseph, can you swim?" And

another says: "If we get across this stream we will get there with wet clothes and with damaged armor, and the Canaanites will slash us to pieces with their swords before we get up the other bank." But it is no time to halt. The great host marches on. The priests carrying the ark go ahead, the people follow. I hear the tramp of the great multitude. The priests have now come within a stone's throw of the water. Yet still there is no abatement of the flood. Now they have come within four or five feet of the stream; but there is no abatement of the flood. Bad prospect! It seems as if these Israelites that crossed the desert are now going to be drowned in sight of Canaan. But "Forward!" is the cry. The command rings all along the line of the host: "Forward!" Now the priests have come within one step of the river. This time they lift their feet from the solid ground, and put them down into the raging stream. No sooner are their feet there than Jordan flies. On the right hand God piles up a great mountain of floods; on the left, the water flows off toward the sea. The great river, for hours, halts and rears. The back waters, not being able to flow over the passing Israelites, pile wave on wave, until perhaps a sea bird would find some difficulty in scaling the water cliff. Now the priests and all the people have gone over on dry land. The water on the left hand side by this time has reached the sea; and now that the miraculous passage has been made, stand back and see this stupendous pile of waters leap. God takes His hand from that wall of floods, and like a hundred cataracts they plunge and roar in thunderous triumph to the sea.

How are they to celebrate this passage? Shall it be with music? I suppose the trumpets and cymbals were all worn out before this. Shall it be with banners waving? Oh! no; they are all faded and torn. Joshua cries out: "I will tell you how to celebrate this: build a monument here to commemorate the event," and every priest puts a heavy stone on his shoulder, and marches out and drops that stone in the divinely appointed place. I see the pile growing in height, in breadth, in significance; and, in after years, men went by that spot and

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saw this monument, and cried out one to another, in fulfilment of the prophecy of the text: "What mean ye by these stones?"

Blessed be God, He did not leave our church—I mean this particular church—in the wilderness! We wandered about for a while, and some people said we had better take this route; and others, that route. Some said we had better go back, and some said there were sons of Anak in the way that would eat us up; and before the smoke had cleared away from the sky after our tabernacle had been consumed, people stood on the very site of the place and said: "This church will never again be built." Our enemies laughed among themselves and said: "Aha, aha!" Meanwhile, the rubbish was being cleared away, the foundation was being laid, and the pillars were being lifted; and, instead of the temporary structure in which we worshipped, we have this building, in which we hope the people of God will worship Him for hundreds and hundreds of years. We came down to the bank of the Jordan; we looked off upon the waters. Some of the sympathy that was expressed turned out to be snow melted on the top of Lebanon. Some said: "You had better not go in; you will get your feet wet." But we waded in, pastor and people, farther and farther, and, in some way, the Lord only knows how, we got through; and tonight I go all around about this great house, erected by your prayers, and sympathies, and sacrifices, and cry out in the words of my text: "What mean ye by these stones?"

It is an outrage to build a house like this, occupying so much room in a crowded thoroughfare, and with such vast toil and outlay, unless there be some tremendous reasons for doing it; and so, my friends, I pursue you with the question of my text, and I demand of these trustees, and of these elders, and of all who have assisted in the building of this structure: "What mean ye by these stones?"

In the first place, we mean that they shall be *an earthly residence for Christ*. Dear Jesus! He did not have much of a home when He was here. Who and where is that child crying? It is Jesus, born in an outhouse. Where is that hard breathing? It

is Jesus, asleep on a rock. Who is that in the back part of the fishing smack, with a sailor's rough overcoat thrown over Him? It is Jesus, the worn out voyager. Oh, Jesus, is it not time that Thou hadst a house? We give Thee this. Thou didst give it to us first, but we give it back to Thee. It is too good for us, but not half good enough for Thee. Oh, come in and take the best seat here. Walk up and down all these aisles. Speak through these organ pipes. Throw Thine arm over us in these arches. In the flaming of these chandeliers speak to us, saying: "I am the light of the world." Oh, King, make this Thine audience-chamber. Here proclaim righteousness and make treaties. We clap our hands, we uncover our heads, we lift our ensigns, we cry with multitudinous acclamation until the place rings and the heavens listen: "Oh, King, live forever!"

Is it not time that He who was born in a stranger's house and buried in a stranger's grave should have an earthly house? Come in, oh, Jesus, not the corpse of a buried Christ, but a radiant and triumphant Jesus, conqueror of earth, and heaven, and hell.

He lives, all glory to His name,
He lives, my Jesus, still the same.
Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives—
I know that my Redeemer lives.

Blessed be His glorious name forever!

Again, if you ask the question of the text: "What mean ye by these stones?" I reply that *we mean the communion of saints*. Do you know that there is not a single denomination of Christians in Brooklyn that has not contributed something toward the building of this house? And if ever, standing in this place, there shall be a man who shall try by anything he says to stir up bitterness between different denominations of Christians, may his tongue falter and his cheek blanch, and his heart stop! My friends, if there is any church on earth where there is a mingling of all denominations, it is our church. I just wish

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that John Calvin and Armenius, if they were not too busy, would come out on the battlements and see us. Sometimes in our prayer-meetings I have heard brethren make audible ejaculation, "Amen!" "Praise ye the Lord!" and we did not have to guess twice where they came from. When a man knocks at our church door, if he comes from a sect where they will not give him a certificate, we say: "Come in by confession of faith." While Adoniram Judson, the Baptist, and John Wesley, the Methodist, and John Knox, the glorious old Scotch Presbyterian, are shaking hands in heaven, all churches on earth can afford to come into close communication: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." Oh, my brethren, we have had enough of Big Bethel fights—the 14th New York Regiment fighting the 15th Massachusetts Regiment. Now let all those who are for Christ and stand on the same side go shoulder to shoulder and this church, instead of having a sprinkling of the Divine blessing, go clear under the wave in one glorious immersion in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Once I saw a little child in its dying hour put one arm around its father's neck, and the other arm around its mother's neck, and bring them close down to its dying lips, and give a last kiss. Oh, I said, those two persons will stand very near to each other always after such an interlocking. The dying Christ puts one arm around this denomination of Christians, and the other arm around that denomination of Christians, and He brings them down to His dying lips, while He gives them this parting kiss: "My peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you."

How swift the heavenly course they run,
Whose hearts, and faith, and hopes are one.

I heard a Baptist minister once say that he thought in the Millennium it would be all one great Baptist church; and I heard a Methodist minister say that he thought in the great Millennial day it would be all one great Methodist church;

and I have known a Presbyterian minister who thought that in the Millennial day it would be all one great Presbyterian church. Now I think they are all mistaken. I think the Millennial church will be a composite church; and just as you may take the best parts of five or six tunes, and under the skillful hands of a Handel, Mozart, or Beethoven, entwine them into one grand and overpowering symphony, so, I suppose, in the latter days of the world, God will take the best parts of all denominations of Christians, and weave them into one great ecclesiastical harmony, broad as the earth, and high as the heavens, and that will be the church of the future. Or, as mosaic is made up of jasper and agate and many precious stones cemented together—mosaic a thousand feet square in St. Mark's, or mosaic hoisted into colossal seraphim in St. Sophia—so I suppose God will make, after a while, one great blending of all creeds, and all faiths, and all Christian sentiments, the amethyst, and the jasper, and the chalcedony of all different experiences and belief, cemented side by side in the great mosaic of the ages; and while the nations look upon the columns and architraves of that stupendous church of the future, and cry out: "What mean ye by these stones?" there shall be innumerable voices to respond—"We mean the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

I remark again, *we mean by these stones the salvation of the people*. We did not build this church for mere worldly reforms, or for an educational institution, or as a platform on which to read essays and philosophical disquisitions; but a place for the tremendous work of soul-saving. Oh, I had rather be the means in this church of having one soul prepared for a joyful eternity than five thousand souls prepared for mere worldly success. All churches are in two classes, all communities in two classes, all the race in two classes—believers and unbelievers. Those going into light, these going into darkness. To augment the number of the one and subtract from the number of the other, we built this church; and toward that supreme and eternal idea we dedicate all our sermons, all our songs, all

our prayers, all our Sabbath hand-shakings. We want to throw defection into the enemies' ranks. We want to make them either surrender unconditionally to Christ, or else fly in rout, scattering the way with canteens, blankets, and knapsacks. We want to popularize Christ. We would like to tell the story of His love here until men would feel that they had rather die than live another hour without His sympathy, and love, and mercy. We want to rouse up an enthusiasm for Him greater than was felt for Nathaniel Lyon when he rode along the ranks—greater than was exhibited for Wellington when he came back from Waterloo—greater than was expressed for Napoleon when he stepped ashore from Elba. We really believe in this place Christ will enact the same scenes that were enacted by Him when He landed in the Orient; and there will be such an opening of blind eyes, and unstopping of deaf ears, and casting out unclean spirits—such silencing of bestormed Gennesarets as shall make this house memorable five hundred years after you and I are dead and forgotten. Oh, my friends, we want but one revival in this church, that beginning now and running on to the day when the chisel of time that brings down even St. Paul's and the Pyramids, shall bring this house into the dust. We want the host of newly converted souls who shall next Sabbath morning pass in review by this sacramental table—we want them only the first regiment of a great army that will take this place on their way to glory.

But since there are so many uncertainties ahead, perhaps we had better begin now the work of salvation. Oh, that this day of dedication might be the day of emancipation of all imprisoned souls. My friends, do not make the blunder of the ship carpenters in Noah's time who helped to build the ark, but did not get into it. God forbid that you who have been so generous in building this church should not get under its saving influence. "Come thou and all thy house into the ark." Do you think a man is safe out of Christ? Not one day, not one hour, not one minute, not one second. Three or four years ago, you remember, a train broke down a bridge on the way

to Albany, and after the catastrophe they were looking around among the timbers of the crushed bridge and the fallen train, and found the conductor. He was dying, and had only strength to say one thing, and that was: "Hoist the flag for the next train." So there came up to us voices from the eternal chasm of darkness, and sin, and death, telling us: "You cannot save me, but save those who came after me. Lift the warning. Blow the trumpet, give the alarm. Hoist the flag for the next train."

Oh, that tonight my Lord Jesus would sweep His arm around this great audience and take you all to His holy heart. You will never see so good a time for personal consecration as now. "What mean ye by these stones?" We mean your redemption from sin, and death, and hell by the power of an omnipotent Gospel. Lord God Almighty, with Thy presence now shake this house from foundation to capstone. Stretch out Thine arm. Here is the sacrifice. Lord God of Elijah, answer by fire.

Well, the Brooklyn Tabernacle is erected again. The Sabbath after the old Tabernacle was burned, in the Academy of Music, in December, 1872, I prophesied this building. I said it would be dedicated in 1873. I made a mistake of only two months. Would to God that had been the largest mistake I had ever made. But now that it is done, it more than pleases us. We came here tonight not to dedicate it. That was done this morning by an illustrious company of Christian ministers of every name; and that eloquent and thrilling sermon still rings through and through our soul, telling us that "the glory of the second house shall be greater than that of the first." God grant it!

Aged men, this is the last church you will ever dedicate. May the God who comforted Jacob the patriarch, and Paul the aged, make this house to you the gate of heaven; and when, in your old days, you put on your spectacles to read the hymn or the Scripture lesson, may you get preparation for that land where you shall no more see through a glass darkly. May the warm sunshine of heaven thaw the snow off your foreheads.

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Men in mid-life, do you know that this is the place where you are going to be rested, and have your sorrows appeased and your souls saved? Do you know that at this altar your sons and daughters will take upon themselves the vows of the Christian, and from this place you will carry out, some of you, your precious dead? Between this baptismal font and this communion table you will have some of the tenderest of life's experiences. God bless you, old, and young, and middle-aged. The money you have given to this church will be, I hope, the best financial investment you have ever made. Your worldly investments may depend on the whims of Wall Street, or the honesty of business associates; but the money you have given to the house of the Lord will yield you a larger percentage, and declare eternal dividends in the day when, instead of being the story of one burning church, it will be the tragedy of a world on fire!

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Do not starve on the doorstep of heaven, while within you hear the clash of the golden platters. . . .—TALMAGE.

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5. ON THE FENCE



How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.—1 KINGS 18:21.

ELIJAH FOUND THE PEOPLE OF HIS DAY VERY UNDECIDED WHETHER they had better worship Jehovah or a Phœnician idol called Baal. Without wasting any time in argument, he proceeds to demonstrate which deity is worthy of adoration. Two bullocks are caught and led up. "Now," says Elijah, "you slay that bullock, and I will slay this one. If fire comes from heaven and consumes your sacrifice, we will all go over to your god; but if fire comes from heaven and consumes my sacrifice, then you will all come over to my God." I hear the groan of the first bullock, under the stroke of the bludgeon, as he staggers back and drops dead. He is quartered, and put upon an altar of stones and wood. Now, Baal, is the time to do your best. If you have any fire anywhere about you, throw it down now, and roast this beef. From seven o'clock in the morning until twelve o'clock at noon, the Baalites cry out for fire to come down from heaven, but it does not come. Elijah, unable to keep his face straight because of irresistible laughter, begins to jeer them, and say: "Perhaps your god has gone hunting. He may be on the track of a fox or a deer, and cannot stop until he has brought down the game; or he may be engaged in some very loud conversation, and he cannot hear you. Call louder!" Then they cried louder and louder, and they took their knives and ran them across their hands, and across their faces, and

across their feet, until the blood started, as much as to say, "Oh, Baal! if you don't hear us, and don't send down fire from heaven, we will kill ourselves. Then what will you do?" It is nightfall, or almost that, and the bullock offered up by the Baalites is yet untouched on the altar. Now greater gravity comes to Elijah's countenance. From his overwhelming demeanor, I know him to be a prophet of the great God. I hear the groan of the second bullock as it falls down dead. It is quartered, and put upon the very same altar where the Baalites had just enacted their farce. "Now," says Elijah, "that there may be no cheating about this, and no sleight-of-hand, and that there may be no fool in the first century or in the nineteenth century who shall deny the possibility of the miracle, go down and dip up twelve barrels of water out of the sea at the foot of the cliff, and throw the water all over the place, so that it must be more than ordinary fire that consumes the sacrifice." I hear the splash and drip of the twelve barrels of water submerging the place. Everything is ready now. Look, you Israelitish priests! Look, ye followers of the true God.

All is still as the grave. Look! Elijah's deep and majestic voice rolls on the ear: "Lord God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel! Hear me, O Lord! hear me!" Instantly a flash in the sky, a bolt through the air, and everything is ablaze—the bullock, the wood, the water, the stones, the ground—tongues of flame licking up the water out of the trenches as a pack of thirsty hounds lap up a stream. Elijah looks around on the multitude, as much as to say: "All in this audience who are in favor of Baal as God, will say aye." No answer. He looks around upon the multitude again, as much as to say: "All those in this audience who are in favor of Jehovah as the Lord, will signify it," and there was a great shout, floating up through the trees, floating off over the sea, floating down through the ages, floating here: "The Lord, he is the God," they all cry out, "the Lord, he is the God!"

As then, so there are now two gods, and some of us would

worship one, and some of us would worship the other. Jehovah is *the* one, and this world is the other. If it is best to worship the world, let us all go over to that service. If it is best to worship Jehovah, let us all go over to His service. I do not now, at this point, express my preference. I take precisely the same position that Elijah took. Without saying which is the right God, and which is the false God, I simply cry out, in the hearing of this audience, "If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him."

There are a great many who are decided for God. It is no more plain that white is white and that black is black than it is plain that you are a Christian. You talk like it, you act like it. Satan has given you up as lost to him. You are fugitive slaves he will never catch. I will spend no more time in thinking of your case than a farmer spends in thinking of the sheaves in the barn while there are fifty loads in the field and the wind has changed to the northeast. You are for God. You are pronounced upon that side. You can afford to be let alone, with only one word of congratulation as I pass; but the text makes no reference to you, and I shall make no reference to you.

Then there are those who are decided for the world. You are pronounced on that side. You have no part in Christ. You tell me you are not Christians—you do not want to be; you have no anxiety about the future. If anybody asks you to serve God, you say "No!" with indignant emphasis. You are pronounced on the side of the world, and my text makes no allusion to you, and so I will make no allusion to you.

But there are those who are neither one thing nor the other—vacillating from side to side—now for God, now for the world; and it is to them I come, and I now address them, crying out in the words of the prophet: "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him."

For four or five days or weeks, you were seeking after God. You prayed. It may have been that the door was locked and no one knew it; but you prayed. You arose in some religious meeting and asked for the supplication of others. You read a few

chapters in the Bible with a good deal of earnestness. You seemed fully started for heaven; but the first blast of temptation made you change your tack. It is uncertain whether the ship is going to New Orleans or to Liverpool. You went fifty miles in one direction, then turned and went fifty miles in the other direction. "I ought to be a Christian"—that is your one opinion; "I ought not to be a Christian"—that is your other opinion; and between those two opinions you halt.

My text describes, in the first place, very graphically, the condition of *those who try to serve the world and Christ at the same time, by compromising the matter*. You want to go into Christian society, but you want to keep your old cronies. You want to come to the prayer meeting, but you want also to go into dissipating society. You want to have Christ in one hand—you want to have the world in the other hand. You want to be characterized for Christian society, and yet you are not willing to give up the double damning influence of the wine-cup. And tonight, I believe, there are fifteen hundred people in this house who are halting half way between God and Baal. Oh that I might persuade you with the prophet to do one thing or the other. You are in a most unsatisfactory position. You shrink back from the world, and you are losing its friendships and its joys, while, on the other hand, you are getting no advantage from the other side. You are halting in a desert. Three miles to the right there is a fountain, and three miles to the left there is a fountain. I do not pretend to say which fountain is the better; but I do say that either is better than standing down in the desert. If you do not mean to go clear over to God, then go clear over to the world. Perhaps you had better hunt up your season ticket to some sinful pleasure. Perhaps you had better replenish your wine cellar. Perhaps you had better crowd all the joys you can get out of sin into the next few months or years, because beyond that you shall never have any. Rake all the earth for satisfaction, and do it quickly, for the time is passing. If tonight, after a deliberate review of the whole subject, you think the world is the better master, then

go over to it and have the matter settled. But if, my friends, without any proposition on my part—for at this point in my discourse I express no preference for this or that God—if, without any proposition on my part, and after deliberately reviewing the whole subject, you conclude to go to Christ's side, then go. I do not pretend to say that that is the best side. I do not pretend now that all Christians are not hypocrites, and that the church is not a fraud, and that heaven is not a cheat; but I do say that if after what you have heard against Christ, you still come to the conclusion that He is not so very undesirable after all, if you would really like to come on the side where the martyrs stood, if you would like to be on the side where your old-fashioned Christian father and mother used to stand, if you would like to be on the side where the one hundred and forty and four thousand radiant and tearless ones are standing, if you really have a longing after that side, and yearn finally to join those who are unbesieged of sin, and sorrow, and trouble—then go over on that side. Do not die of thirst in a path across which there come a thousand buckets dripping from the spring. Do not starve on the doorstep of heaven, while within you hear the clash of the golden platters. Do not stand scraping the discordant strings of that worn-out instrument, when you may join the minstrelsy of God and the Lamb. Aye, stick to the *Ville du Havre* and go down, or swim to the *Loch Earn* and be saved. "If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him."

Again, I remark that my text describes graphically the condition of those who have grace in their heart, but have not decided to make profession of it. Where do you go to church? "Oh," says some man, "I go to a Presbyterian church, or a Methodist church, or a Baptist church; but I don't belong to any of them." So the world claims him and the church claims him. The world has a right to claim him because he has never taken his name off its books; the church claims him because he helps to support its institutions—while, at the same time, he belongs to neither, practically. He wants to be a silent partner

in the Lord's firm and get, at the last, his share of the spiritual profits, without having his name exposed on the signboard. What is the matter? Is not the church good enough for them? Or are they not good enough for the church? Ah, the trumpet will sound and the dead will arise, and there will be two wings of the Lord's army, the church militant and the church triumphant; and there will be two rolls, the roll of the heavenly troops and the roll of the earthly troops. On which roll is your name inscribed? I hear the roll call of the dead—I hear the calling of those two great lists of the church in heaven and the church on earth. I am waiting for your name to be announced? Ah! not on either of them? Can it be? When the Lord's host comes at last around about His throne, there may be some stragglers in the army who will get through, but not many. When God's men-of-war go into battle, let every ship show its colors. At the close of a great victory in time of war they have a banquet and invite the generals, and officers, and some of the men to sit down at the banquet. The table is covered with luxuries and aglitter with silver, and they have a grand time. Now, in our church in two or three weeks, we shall have a banquet. There will be a multitude there. The King himself will be there, and while we celebrate the victory of Christ over the newly conquered souls, there will be a joy and a congratulation such as we have never experienced. Oh, when that day comes, and the music sounds, and the wine-cup is poured, and the galleries of heaven are filled with celestial congratulations, will you be at the table? "Come, for all things are now ready." But I must look out lest I betray my preference, and lest my heart spoil the plan of my sermon by telling you on which side I am; so I halt here and do no more than the prophet did, when, without expressing any preference for this god or that god, he cried out: "If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." Be on one side or the other.

I remark again, my text most powerfully and graphically describes the indecision of *those who do not know what is the time to attend to religion*. There are two clarion voices in that

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man's soul. The one says: "Now." The other says: "Tomorrow." I do not pretend to say which is the best time. Choose yourself as to which is the best time. Perhaps it is better to put off this matter of religion for ten years. If so, drop the whole subject now. Just as a judge in court sets down a trial for three months ahead, and does not bother himself about the trial until that day comes, so set down a day for your conversion, ten years from now. If you can keep the world all these ten years, and at the close of that time can take Christ, will it not be better than to take Him now? Decided, then, let it be that ten years from now you will attend to it. Or, if you be in robust health, and your prospects are very fair, then put it off twenty years. But I hear some one say: "How if an accident should take me off before that? How if I should lose my reason before that? How if my day of grace should end before that? How if the Holy Spirit should leave my soul before that? How if the avalanche of my transgressions should crush me before that? How if I should lift my eyes on hell before that?" Oh, I see the point you make. You mean to say: "I think that it may be now or never." I think you mean to say that of a million souls lost, 999,999 are lost through procrastination.

I think you mean to say that there is not more than one soul in a century that goes into the lost world through anything but putting it off. I think you mean to say that if in the doomed world it was asked that all those rise up who had been destroyed through procrastination they would all rise up, crying out: "We lost heaven by putting it off!" Oh, if around that one word "now" there clusters all heaven; if around that one word "tomorrow" there hisses the forked tongues of despair, then perhaps tonight you had better decide the matter, one way or the other, and say: "Oh, Lord God, this moment I surrender myself into Thy keeping"; or else say: "I put this matter off for twenty years. Witness, heaven, earth, and hell, that I am not afraid to take the responsibility." When you go out of this building tonight, you will not find a street leading directly to the north. You will have to go to east or west, up

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or down Schermerhorn Street; and it is just so about your soul—you cannot go straight leaving this place; you will either go to the right or to the left; you will either go toward God or toward Baal—toward light or toward darkness. You start to-night on a journey that will never end. The foot will stiffen, and the lungs will fail to catch the air, and over the eyes there will come a film that will shut out the light of the sun, and moon, and stars, and your body will stop; but your soul will go on, on, up, up; or down, down; through Edens or deserts, along rivers of light, or by Marahs of eternal bitterness; under palm or bramble, across homesteads or hovels; halting at the hall filled with music at the marriage of the king's son, or halting where Despair, with skeleton arms beats the drum with the "Dead March" of the soul: "Woe! Woe!"

Do you expect, with a thin court-plaster of words, to heal a wound deep as the soul? Step very gently about a broken heart. . . .

—TALMAGE.



6. JOB'S COMFORTERS



Miserable comforters are ye all.—JOB 16:2.

THE MAN OF UZ HAD A GREAT MANY TRIALS—THE LOSS OF HIS family, the loss of his property, the loss of his health, but the most exasperating thing that came upon him was the tantalizing talk of those who ought to have sympathized with him. And looking around upon them, and weighing what they had said, he utters the words of my text.

Why did God let sin come into the world? It is a question I often hear discussed, but never satisfactorily answered. God made the world fair and beautiful at the start. If our first parents had not sinned in Eden they might have gone out of that garden and found fifty paradises all around the earth—Europe, Asia, Africa, North America and South America—so many flower gardens or orchards of fruit, redolent and luscious. I suppose that when God poured out the Gihon and the Hiddekel, He poured out, at the same time, the Hudson and the Susquehanna; the whole earth was very fair and beautiful to look upon. Why did it not stay so? God had the power to keep back sin and woe. Why did He not keep them back? Why not every cloud roseate, and every step a joy, and every sound music, and all the ages a long jubilee of sinless men and sinless women? God can make a rose as easily as He can make a thorn. Why, then, the predominance of thorns? He can make good, fair, ripe fruit as well as gnarled and sour fruit. Why so

much, then, that is gnarled and sour? He can make men robust in health. Why, then, are there so many invalids? Why not have for our whole race perpetual leisure instead of this tug, and toil, and tussle for a livelihood? I will tell you why God let sin come into the world—when I get on the other side of the River of Death. That is the place where such questions will be answered and such mysteries solved. He who this side that river attempts to answer the question only illustrates his own ignorance and incompetency. All I know is one great fact, and that is, that a herd of woes has come in upon us, trampling down everything fair and beautiful. A sword at the gate of Eden and a sword at every gate.

More people under the ground than on it. The graveyards in vast majority. The six thousand winters have made more scars than the six thousand summers* can cover up. Trouble has taken the tender heart of this world in its two rough hands and pinched it until the nations wail with the agony. If all the mounds of graveyards were put side by side, you might step on them and nothing else, going all around the world, and around again, and around again. These are the facts. And now I have to say that, in a world like this, the grandest occupation is that of giving condolence. This holy science of imparting comfort to the troubled we ought all of us to study. There are many of you who could look around upon some of your very best friends, who wish you well, and are very intelligent, and yet be able truthfully to say to them in your days of trouble: "Miserable comforters are ye all."

I remark, in the first place, *that very voluble people are incompetent for the work of giving comfort.* Bildad and Eliphaz had the gift of language, and with their words almost bothered Job's life out. Alas! for these voluble people that go among the houses of the afflicted, and talk, and talk, and talk, and talk. They rehearse their own sorrows, and then they tell the poor sufferers that they feel badly now, but they will feel worse

* According to the Ussher chronology.

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after a while. Silence! Do you expect, with a thin court-plaster of words, to heal a wound deep as the soul? Step very gently around a broken heart. Talk very softly around those whom God has bereft. Then go your way. Deep sympathy has not much to say. A firm grasp of the hand, a compassionate look, just one word that means as much as a whole dictionary, and you have given, perhaps, all the comfort that a soul needs. A man has a terrible wound in his arm. The surgeon comes and binds it up. "Now," he says, "carry that arm in a sling, and be very careful of it. Let no one touch it." But the neighbors have heard of the accident, and they come in, and they say: "Let us see it." And the bandage is pulled off, and this one and that one must feel it and see how much it is swollen, and there is irritation and inflammation, and exasperation where there ought to be healing and cooling. The surgeon comes in, and says: "What does all this mean? You have no business to touch those bandages. That wound will never heal unless you let it alone." So there are souls broken down in sorrow. What they most want is rest, or very careful and gentle treatment; but the neighbors have heard of the bereavement, or of the loss, and they come in to sympathize, and they say: "Show us the wound. What were his last words? Rehearse now the whole scene. How did you feel when you found you were an orphan?" Tearing off the bandages here, and pulling them off there, leaving a ghastly wound that the balm of God's grace had already begun to heal. Oh, let no loquacious people, with ever-rattling tongues, go into the homes of the distressed.

Again, I remark, all those persons are incompetent to give any kind of comfort who act merely *as worldly philosophers*. They come in and say: "Why, this is what you ought to have expected. The laws of nature must have their way," and then they get eloquent over something they have seen in *post mortem* examinations. Now, away with all human philosophy at such a time. What difference does it make to that father and mother what disease their son died of? He is dead, and it

makes no difference what the trouble was. If the philosopher be of the stoical school, he will come and say: "You ought to control your feelings. You must not cry so. You must cultivate a cooler temperament. You must have self-reliance, self-government, self-control"—an iceberg reproving a hyacinth for having a drop of dew in its eye. A violinist has his instrument, and he sweeps his fingers across the strings, now evoking strains of joy, and now strains of sadness. He cannot play all the tunes on one string. The human soul is an instrument of a thousand strings, and all sorts of emotions were made to play on it. Now an anthem, now a dirge. It is no evidence of weakness when one is overcome of sorrow. Edmund Burke was found in the pasture with his arms around a horse's neck, caressing him, and someone said: "Why, the great man has lost his mind." No; that horse belonged to his son, who had recently died; and his great heart broke over the grief. It is no sign of weakness that men are overcome of their sorrows. Thank God for the relief of tears. Have you never been in trouble when you could not weep, and you would have given anything for a cry? David did well when he mourned for Absalom, Abraham did well when he bemoaned Sarah. Christ did well when He wept for Lazarus; and the last man that I want to see come anywhere near me when I have any kind of trouble is a worldly philosopher.

Again, I remark, those persons are incompetent for the work of comfort-bearing who have *nothing but cant to offer*. There are those who have the idea that you must groan over the distressed and afflicted. There are times in grief when one cheerful face dawning on a man's soul is worth a thousand dollars to him. Do not whine over the afflicted. Take the promises of the Gospel, and utter them in a manly tone. Do not be afraid to smile if you feel like it. Do not drive any more hearses through that poor soul. Do not tell him the trouble was foreordained; it will not be any comfort to know it was a million years coming. If you want to find splints for a broken bone do not take cast iron. Do not tell them it is God's justice that weighs out grief. They want now to hear of God's tender

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mercy. In other words, do not give them *aqua fortis*.* when they need valerian.**

Again, I remark, those persons are poor comforters who have never had any trouble themselves. A larkspur cannot lecture on the nature of a snowflake—it never saw a snowflake; and those people who have always lived in the summer of prosperity cannot talk to those who are frozen in disaster. God keeps aged people in the world, I think, for this very work of sympathy. They have been through all these trials. They know all that which irritates and all that which soothes. If there are men and women here who have old people in the house, or near at hand, so that they can easily reach them, I congratulate you. Some of us have had trials in life, and although we have had many friends around about us we have wished that father and mother were still alive that we might go and tell them. Perhaps they could not say much, but it would have been such a comfort to have them around. These aged ones who have been all through the trials of life know how to give condolence. Cherish them; let them lean on your arm—these aged people. If, when you speak to them, they cannot hear just what you say the first time, and you have to say it a second time, when you say it the second time, do not say it sharply. If you do, you will be sorry for it on the day when you take the last look and brush back the silvery locks from the wrinkled brow just before they screw the lid on. Blessed be God for the old people! They may not have much strength to go around, but they are God's appointed ministers of comfort to a broken heart.

People who have not had trial themselves cannot give comfort to others. They may talk very beautifully and they may give you a great deal of poetic sentiment; but while poetry is perfume that smells sweet, it makes a very poor salve. If you have a grave in a pathway, and somebody comes and covers it all over with flowers, it is a grave yet. Those who have not had

* Nitric acid.

** A medicinal herb.

grief themselves know not the mystery of a broken heart. They know not the meaning of childlessness, having no one to put to bed at night, standing in a room where every book, and picture, and door are full of memories—the doormat where she sat, the cup out of which she drank—the place where she stood at the door and clapped her hands—the odd figures that she scribbled—the blocks with which she built a house. Ah, no, you must have trouble yourself before you can comfort others. But come all ye who have been bereft, and ye who have been comforted in your sorrows, and stand around these afflicted souls and say to them: "I had that very sorrow myself. God comforted me and He will comfort you," and that will go right to the spot. In other words, to comfort others, we must have faith in God, practical experience, and good, sound, common sense.

But there are three or four considerations that I will bring to those who are sorrowful and distressed, and that we can always bring to them, knowing that they will effect a cure. And the first consideration is that God sends our troubles in love. I often hear people in their troubles say: "Why, I wonder what God has against me." They seem to think God has some grudge against them because trouble and misfortune have come. Oh, no. Do you not remember that passage of Scripture: "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth"? A child comes in with a very big splinter in its hand, and you try to extract it. It is a very painful operation. The child draws back from you, but you persist. You are going to take that splinter out, so you take the child with a gentle but firm grasp, for although there may be pain in it, the splinter must come out. And it is love that dictates and makes you persist. My friends, I really think that nearly all our sorrows in this world are only the hand of our Father extracting some thorn. If all these sorrows were sent by enemies I would say, arm yourselves against them, and as in tropical climes when a tiger comes down from the mountains, and carries off a child from the village, the neighbors band together and go into the forest and hunt the monster, so

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I would have you, if I thought these misfortunes were sent by an enemy, go out and battle against them. But no, they come from a Father so kind, so loving, so gentle, that the prophet, speaking of His tenderness and mercy, drops the idea of a father, and says: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you."

Again, I remark, there is comfort in the thought that God by all this process *is going to make you useful*. Do you know that those who accomplish the most for God and heaven have all been under the harrow? Show me a man that has done anything for Christ in this day, in public or private, who has had no trouble, and whose path has been smooth. Ah, no! Go this afternoon at three o'clock into that beautiful parlor in Philadelphia and see some twenty outcast children there, and ask the history of that home, and why it is that that Christian woman every Sabbath afternoon gathers in these outcasts, and talks with them, and prays with them, and tells them of Jesus, and is getting them, by the grace of God, prepared for heaven. You want to know the history of that family? I could go back and tell it. She was not always an earnest Christian woman—once a daughter of fashion; but the first day of my pastorate in Philadelphia I confronted her in awful grief. In the next room her only child lay. He had been drowned and they had just brought him in. Oh, how impotent all human comfort seemed to be there and then; but God comforted and lifted her out of that darkness, and through all that tribulation He blessed her, and by a baptism of tears she was set apart to look after the outcast, and the destitute, and the abandoned. What useless beings we are until sanctified trouble molds us.

I once went through an ax factory, and I saw them take the bars of iron and thrust them into the terrible furnaces. Then sweating workmen with long tongs stirred the blaze. Then they brought out a bar of iron and put it in a crushing machine, and then they put it between jaws that bit it in twain. Then they put it on an anvil, and there were great hammers swung by machinery—each one half a ton in weight—that

went thump! thump! thump! If that iron could have spoken, it would have said: "Why all this beating? Why must I be pounded any more than any other iron?" The workmen would have said: "We want to make axes out of you, keen, sharp axes—axes with which to hew down the forest, and build ships, and erect houses and carry on a thousand enterprises of civilization. That's the reason we pound you." Now, God puts a soul into the furnace of trial, and then it is brought out and run through the crushing machine, and then it comes down on the anvil, and upon it blow after blow, blow after blow, and the soul cries out: "Oh, Lord, what does all this mean?" God says: "I want to make something very useful out of you. You will be something to hew with, and something to build with. It is a practical process through which I am putting you." Yes, my Christian friends, we want more tools in the Church of God; not more wedges to split with. We have enough of these. Not more bores with which to drill. We have too many bores. What we really want is keen, sharp, well-tempered axes, and if there be any other way of making them than in the hot furnace, and on the hard anvil, and under the heavy hammer, I do not know what it is. Remember that if God brings any kind of chastisement upon you, it is only to make you useful. Do not sit down discouraged, and say: "I have no more reason for living. I wish I were dead." Oh, there never was so much reason for your living as now. By this ordeal you have been consecrated a priest of the most high God. Go out and do your whole work for the Master.

Again, there is comfort in the thought that all our *troubles are a revelation*. Have you ever thought of it in that connection? The man who has never been through chastisement is ignorant about a thousand things in his soul he ought to know. For instance, here is a man who prides himself on his cheerfulness of character. He has no patience with anybody who is depressed in spirits. Oh, it is easy for him to be cheerful, with his fine house, his full wardrobe, and well-strung instruments of music, and tapestried parlor, and plenty of money in the bank

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waiting for some permanent investment. It is easy for him to be cheerful. But suppose his fortune goes to pieces, and his house goes down under the sheriff's hammer, and the banks will not have anything to do with his paper. Suppose those people who were once elegantly entertained at his table get so short-sighted that they cannot recognize him on the street. How then? Is it so easy to be cheerful? It is easy to be cheerful in the home, after the day's work is done, and the light is turned on, and the house is full of romping little ones. But suppose the piano is shut because the fingers that played on it will no more touch the keys, and the childish voice that asked so many questions will ask no more. Then is it so easy? When a man wakes up and finds that his resources are all gone, he begins to rebel, and he says: "God is hard; God is outrageous. He had no business to do this to me." My friends, those of us who have been through trouble know what a sinful and rebellious heart we have, and how much God has to put up with, and how much we need pardon. It is only in the light of a flaming furnace that we can learn our own weakness and our own lack of moral resource.

There is also a great deal of comfort in the fact that there will be a family reconstruction *in a better place*. From Scotland, or England, or Ireland, a child emigrates to America. It is a very hard parting, but after a while the mother comes, and after a while the father comes, and now they are all here, and they have a time of great congratulation and a very pleasant reunion. Well, it is just so with our families: they are emigrating to a better land. Now, one goes out. Oh, how hard it is to part with him! Another goes. Oh, how hard it is to part with her! And another, and another, and we ourselves will, after a while, go over, and then we will be together. Oh, what a reunion! Do you believe that? "Yes," you say. Oh, you do not! You do not believe it as you believe other things. If you do, and with the same emphasis, it would take nine-tenths of your trouble off your heart. The fact is, heaven to many of us is a great fog. It is away off somewhere, filled with

an uncertain and indefinite population. That is the kind of heaven that many of us dream about; but it is the most tremendous fact in all the universe—this heaven of the Gospel. Our departed friends are not afloat. The residence in which you live is not so real as the residence in which they stay. *You* are afloat—you who do not know in the morning what will happen before night. They are housed and safe forever. Do not, therefore, pity your departed friends who have died in Christ. They do not need any of your pity. You might as well send a letter of condolence to Queen Victoria on her obscurity, or to the Rothschilds on their poverty, as to pity those who have won the palm. Do not say of those who are departed: "Poor child!" "Poor father!" "Poor mother!" They are not poor. *You* are poor—you whose homes have been shattered, not they. You do not dwell much with your families in this world. All day long you are off to business. Will it not be pleasant when you can be together all the while? If you have had four children and one is gone, and anybody asks how many children you have, do not be so infidel as to say three. Say four—one in heaven. Do not think that the grave is unfriendly. You go into your room and dress for some grand entertainment, and you come forth beautifully appareled; and the grave is only the place where we go to dress for the glorious resurrection, and we will come out radiant, mortality having become immortality. Oh, how much condolence there is in this thought! I expect to see my kindred in heaven—I expect to see them just as certainly as I expect to go home today. Aye, I shall more certainly see them. Eight or ten will come up from the graveyard back of Somerville, and one will come from the mountains back of Amoy, China, and another will come up from the sea off Cape Hatteras, and thirty will come up from Greenwood; and I shall know them better than I ever knew them here. And your friends—they may be across the sea, but the trumpet that sounds here will sound there. You will come up on just the same day. Some morning you have overslept yourself, and you open your eyes and see that the sun is high in the

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heavens, and you say: "I have overslept, and I must be up and away." So you will open your eyes on the morning of the resurrection, in the full blaze of God's light, and you will say: "I must be up and away." Oh, yes, you will come up, and there will be a reunion, a reconstruction of your family. I like what Halyburton (I think it was)—good old Mr. Halyburton—said in his last moments: "I thank God that I ever lived, and that I have a father in heaven, and a mother in heaven, and brothers in heaven, and sisters in heaven, and I am now going up to see them."

I remark, once more, our troubles in this world *are preparative for glory*. What a transition it was for Paul—from martyrdom in Rome to the calm presence of Jesus! What a transition it was for Latimer—from the stake to a throne! What a transition it was for Robert Hall—from insanity to glory! What a transition it was for Richard Baxter—from dropsy to the "saint's everlasting rest!" And what a transition it will be for you—from a world of sorrow to a world of joy. John Holland, when he was dying, said: "What means this brightness in the room? Have you lighted the candles?" "No," they replied, "we have not lighted any candles." Then said he, "Welcome, heaven!" The light already beaming on his pillow. Oh! ye who are persecuted in this world, your enemies will get off the track after a while, and all will speak well of you among the thrones. Ho! ye who are sick now. No medicines to take there. One breath of the eternal hills will thrill you with immortal vigor. And ye who are lonesome now. There will be a million spirits to welcome you into their companionship. Oh, ye bereft souls! There will be no gravedigger's spade that will cleave the side of that hill, and there will be no dirge wailing from that temple. The river of God, deep as the joy of heaven, will roll on between banks odorous with balm, and over depths bright with jewels, and under skies roseate with gladness, arcosies of light going down the stream to the stroke of glittering oar and the song of angels! Not one sigh in the wind; not one tear mingling with the waters.

The Gospel is not a syllogism; it is not casuistry; it is not polemics, or the science of squabble. It is blood-red fact; it is warm-hearted invitation; it is leaping, bounding, flying good news; it is efflorescent with all light; it is rubescient with all summery glow; it is arborescent with all sweet shade. . . .—TALMAGE.

7. THE STORMING OF THE TEMPLE OF BERITH

And Abimelech gat him up to Mount Zalmon, he and all the people that were with him; and Abimelech took an ax in his hand, and cut down a bough from the trees, and took it, and laid it on his shoulder and said unto the people that were with him: What ye have seen me do, make haste, and do as I have done. And all the people likewise cut down every man his bough, and followed Abimelech, and put them to the hold, and set the hold on fire upon them; so that all the men of the tower of Shechem died.—JUDGES 9:48,49.

ABIMELECH IS A NAME MALODOROUS IN BIBLE HISTORY, AND yet full of profitable suggestion. Buoys are black and uncomely, but they tell where the rocks are. The snake's rattle is hideous, but it gives timely warning. From the piazza of my summer home, night by night, I saw a lighthouse fifteen miles away, not placed there for adornment, but to tell mariners to stand off from that dangerous point. So all the iron-bound coast of moral danger is marked with Saul, and Herod, and Rehoboam, and Jezebel, and Abimelech. These bad people are mentioned in the Bible not only as warnings, but because there were sometimes flashes of good conduct in their lives worthy of imitation. God sometimes drives a very straight nail with a very poor hammer.

The city of Shechem had to be taken, and Abimelech and his men were to do it. I see the dust rolling up from their excited march. I hear the shouting of the captains and the yell

of the besiegers. The swords clack sharply on the parrying shields, and the shouts of two armies in death grapple are horrible to hear. The battle goes on all day; and as the sun is setting Abimelech and his army cry, "Surrender!" to the beaten foe. And unable longer to resist, the city of Shechem falls; and there are pools of blood, and dissevered limbs, and glazed eyes looking up begging for mercy that war never shows, and dying soldiers with their heads on the laps of mother, or wife, or sister, who have come out for the last offices of kindness and affection; and a groan rolls across the city, stopping not, because there is no spot for it to rest, so full is the place of other groans. A city wounded! A city dying! A city dead! Wail for Shechem, all ye who know the horrors of a sacked town!

As I look over the city I can find only one building standing, and that is the temple of the god Berith. Some soldiers outside of the city in a tower, finding that they can no longer defend Shechem, now begin to look out for their own personal safety, and they fly to this temple of Berith. They get within the door, shut it, and they say: "Now, we are safe. Abimelech has taken the whole city, but he cannot take this temple of Berith. Here we shall be under the protection of the gods." Oh, Berith, the god, do your best now for these refugees. If you have eyes, pity them. If you have hands, help them. If you have thunderbolts, strike for them. But how shall Abimelech and his army take this temple of Berith and the men who are there fortified? Will they do it with sword? Nay. Will they do it with spear? Nay. With battering ram, rolled up by hundred-armed strength, crashing against the walls? Nay. Abimelech marches his men to a wood in Zalmon. With his ax he hews off a limb of a tree, and puts that limb on his shoulder, and then says to his men: "You do the same." They are obedient to their commander. There is a struggle as to who shall have axes. The whole wood is full of bending boughs, and crackling, and hacking, and cutting, until every one of the host has a limb of a tree cut down, and not only that, but has put it on his shoulder just as

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Abimelech showed him how. Are these men now all armed with a tree branch? The reply comes: "All armed." And they march on. Oh, what a strange army, with what strange equipment. They come up to the foot of the temple of Berith, and Abimelech takes his limb of a tree and throws it down; and the first platoon of soldiers come up and they throw down their branches; and the second platoon, and the third, until all around about the temple of Berith, there is a pile of tree branches. The Shechemites look out from the window of the temple upon what seems to them childish play on the part of their enemies. But soon the flints are struck, and the spark begins to kindle the brush, and the flame comes up all through the pile, and the red elements leap to the casement, and the woodwork begins to blaze, and one arm of flame is thrown up on the right side of the temple, and another arm of flame is thrown up on the left side of the temple, until they clasp their lurid palms under the wild night sky, and the cries of "Fire!" within, and of "Fire!" without, announce the terror, and the strangulation, and the doom of the Shechemites, and the complete overthrow of the temple of the God Berith. Then there went up a shout, long and loud, from the stout lungs of Abimelech and his men as they stood amid the ashes and the dust crying: "Victory! Victory!"

Now, I learn first from this subject *the folly of depending upon any one form of tactics in anything we have to do for this world or for God*. Look over the weapons of olden times—javelins, battle-axes, habereons, and show me a single weapon with which Abimelech and his men could have gained such complete triumph. It is no easy thing to take a temple thus armed. I saw a house yesterday where, during revolutionary times, a man and his wife kept back a whole regiment hour after hour because they were inside the house and the assaulting soldiers were outside the house. Yet here Abimelech and his army come up, they surround this temple, and they capture it without the loss of a single man on the part of Abimelech, although I suppose some of the old Israelitish heroes told

Abimelech: "You are only going up there to be cut to pieces." Yet you are willing to testify today that by no other mode—certainly not by ordinary modes—could that temple so easily, so thoroughly, have been taken. Fathers and mothers, brethren and sisters in Jesus Christ, what the church most wants to learn this day is that any plan is right, is lawful, is best, which helps to overthrow the temple of sin and capture this world for God. We are very apt to stick to the old modes of attack. We put on the old-style coat of mail. We come up with the sharp, keen, glittering steel spear of argument, expecting in that way to take the castle; but they have a thousand spears where we have ten. And so the castle of sin stands. Oh, my friends we will never capture this world for God by any keen saber of sarcasm, by any glittering lances of rhetoric, by any sapping and mining of profound disquisition, by any gunpowder explosions of indignation, by sharp shootings of wit, by howitzers of mental strength made to send shells five miles, by cavalry horses gorgeously caparisoned, pawing the air. In vain all the attempts on the part of these ecclesiastical foot soldiers, light horsemen, and grenadiers.

My friends, I propose a different style of tactics. Let each one go to the forest of God's promise and invitation, and hew down a branch, and put it on his shoulder, and let us all come around these obstinate iniquities, and then, with this pile, kindled by the fires of a holy zeal and the flames of a consecrated life, we will burn them out. What steel cannot do, fire may. And I announce myself in favor of any plan of religious attack that succeeds—any plan of religious attack, however radical, however odd, however unpopular, however hostile to all the conventionalities of Church and State. If one style of prayer does not do the work, let us try another style. If the church music of today does not get the victory, then let us make the assault with a backwoods chorus. If a prayer meeting at half-past seven in the evening does not succeed, let us have one as early in the morning as when the angel found Jacob's wrestling too much for him. If a sermon with the three

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authorized heads does not do the work, then let us have a sermon with twenty heads, or no head at all. We want more heart in our song, more heart in our almsgiving, more heart in our prayers, more heart in our preaching. Oh, for less of Abimelech's sword and more of Abimelech's conflagration! I had often heard, "There is a fountain filled with blood" sung artistically by four birds perched on their Sunday roost in the gallery, until I thought of Jenny Lind, and Nilsson, and Sontag, and all the other warblers; but there came not one tear to my eye, nor one master emotion to my heart. But one night I went down to the African Methodist meeting-house in Philadelphia, and at the close of the service a black woman in the midst of the audience began to sing that hymn, and all the audience joined in, and we were floated some three or four miles nearer heaven than I have ever been since. I saw with my own eyes that "fountain filled with blood"—red, agonizing, sacrificial, redemptive, and I heard the crimson plash of the wave as we all went down under it.

For sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.

Oh, my friends, the Gospel is not a syllogism, it is not casuistry, it is not polemics, or the science of squabble. It is blood-red fact, it is warm-hearted invitation; it is leaping, bounding, flying good news; it is efflorescent with all light; it is rufescent with all summery glow; it is arborescent with all sweet shade. I have seen the sun rise on Mount Washington, and from the Tip-top House; but there was no beauty in that compared with the day-spring from on high when Christ gives light to a soul. I have heard Parepa sing, but there was no music in that compared with the voice of Christ when He said: "Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace." Good news! Let every one cut down a branch of this tree of life and wave it. Let him throw it down and kindle it. Let all the way from Mount Zalmon to Shechem be filled with the tossing joy. Good news! This bon-

fire of the Gospel shall consume the last temple of sin, and will illumine the sky with apocalyptic joy that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Any new plan that makes a man quit his sin, and that prostrates a wrong, I am as much in favor of as though all the doctors, and the bishops, and the archbishops, and the synods, and the academical gownsmen of Christianity sanctioned it. The temple of Berith must come down, and I do not care how it comes down.

Still further, I learn from this subject *the power of example*. If Abimelech had sat down on the grass, and told his men to go and get the boughs, and go out to the battle, they would never have gone at all, or if they had, it would have been without any spirit or effective result; but when Abimelech goes with his own ax and hews down a branch, and with Abimelech's arm puts it on Abimelech's shoulder, and marches on, then my text says that all the people did the same. How natural that was! What made Garibaldi and Stonewall Jackson the most magnetic commanders of this century? They always rode ahead. Oh, the overcoming power of example. Here is a father on the wrong road: all his boys go on the wrong road. Here is a father who enlists for Christ: his children enlist. I saw in some of the picture galleries of Europe that there would be sometimes four or five artists taking copies of the pictures. These copies they were going to carry with them, perhaps to distant lands; and I have thought that your life and character are a masterpiece, and it is being copied, and long after you are gone it will bloom or blast in the homes of those who knew you, and be a Gorgon or a Madonna. Look out what you say. Look out what you do. Eternity will hear the echo. The best sermon ever preached is a holy life. The best music ever chanted is a consistent walk. If you want others to serve God, serve Him yourself. If you want others to shoulder their duty, shoulder yours. Where Abimelech goes his troops go. Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat Jacob. The father good, it was easy enough for the son and grandson to be good. Ahaziah begat Joash, and Joash begat Jeroboam. The father bad, it was

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enough for the son and grandson to be bad. Oh, start out for heaven today, and your family will come after you, and your business associates will come after you, and your social friends will join you. With one branch of the tree of life for a baton, marshal just as many as you can gather. Oh, the infinite, the semi-omnipotent power of a good or a bad example!

I saw the other day, near the beach, a wrecker's machine. It was a cylinder with holes in the side for long poles with strong leverage. When there is another vessel in trouble or going to pieces out in the offing, the wreckers shoot a rope out to the suffering men. The latter grasp it, and the wreckers turn the cylinder, and the rope winds around the cylinder, and the shipwrecked are saved. So at your feet, today, there is an influence with a tremendous leverage. The rope attached to it swings far out into the billowy future. Your children, your children's children, and all the generations that are to follow, will grip that influence and feel the pull long after the figures on your tombstone are so nearly worn out that the visitor cannot tell whether it was in 1874, or 1774, or 1674, that you died.

Still further, I learn from this subject *the advantage of concerted action*. If Abimelech had gone out merely with a tree branch, the work would not have been accomplished, nor if ten, twenty, or thirty men had gone; but when all the axes are lifted, and all the sharp edges fall, and all these men carry each his tree branch down and throw it about the temple, the victory is gained—the temple falls. My friends, where there is one man in the Church of God at this day shouldering his whole duty, there are a great many who never lift an ax or swing a blow. It seems to me as if there were ten drones in every hive to one busy bee, as though there were twenty sailors sound asleep in the ship's hammock to four men on the stormy deck. It seems as if there were fifty thousand men belonging to the reserve corps, and only one thousand active combatants. Oh, we all want our boat to get over to the golden sands; but the most of us are seated either in the prow or in the stern, wrapped in our striped shawl, holding a big-handled sunshade, while oth-

ers are blistered in the heat, and pull until the oarlocks groan, and the blades bend till they snap. Oh, you religious sleepy heads, wake up! While we have in our church a great many who are toiling for God, there are some too lazy to brush the flies off their heavy eyelids. You have laid so long in one place that the ants and caterpillars have begun to crawl over you! I should not wonder if some of this church membership waked up in hell. What do you know, my brother, about a living Gospel made to storm the world? Now, my idea of Christian is a man on fire with zeal for God: if your pulse ordinarily beats sixty times a minute when you think of other themes, and talk about other themes and does not go up to seventy-five or eight when you come to talk about Christ and heaven, it is because you do not know the one and have a poor chance of getting to the other.

In a former charge, one Sabbath, I took into the pulpit the church records, and I laid them on the pulpit and opened them, and said: "Brethren, here are the church records. I find a great many of you whose names are down here are off duty." Some were afraid I would read the names, for at that time some of them were deep in the worst kind of oil stocks, and were idle in Christian work. But if the ministers of Christ in Brooklyn, and New York, and in all the cities, today, should bring the church records into the pulpit and read, oh, what a flutter there would be! There would not be fans enough in church to keep the cheeks cool. I do not know but that it would be a good thing if the minister once in a while should bring the church records in the pulpit and call the roll, for that is what I consider every church record to be—merely the muster roll of the Lord's army—the reading of which should reveal where every soldier is and what he is doing. Suppose, in military circles, on the morning of battle, the roll is called, and out of a thousand men only a hundred men in the regiment answer. What excitement there would be in camp! What would the colonel say? What high talking there would be among the captains, and majors, and the adjutants! Suppose word came

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to headquarters that these delinquents excused themselves on the ground that they had overslept, or that the morning was damp and they were afraid of getting their feet wet, or that they were busy cooking rations. My friends, this is the morning of the day of God Almighty's battle! Do you not see the troops? Hear you not all the trumpets of heaven and all the drums of hell? Which side are you on? If you are on the right side, to what cavalry troop, to what artillery service, to what garrison duty do you belong? In other words, in what Sabbath school do you teach? In what prayer meeting do you exhort? To what penitentiary do you declare eternal liberty? To what almshouse do you announce the riches of heaven? What broken bone of sorrow have you ever set? Are you doing nothing? Is it possible that a man or woman sworn to be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ is doing nothing? Then hide the horrible secret from the angels. Keep it away from the book of judgment. If you are doing nothing, do not let the world find it out, lest it charge your religion with being a false face. Do not let your cowardice and treason be heard among the martyrs about the throne, lest they forget the sanctity of the place and curse your betrayal of that cause for which they agonized and died.

May the eternal God rouse us all to action! As for myself, I feel I would be ashamed to die now and enter heaven until I have accomplished something more decisive for the Lord who bought me. I have thought on this, the first Sabbath after the summer vacation, I would like to join with you in an oath, with hand high uplifted to heaven, swearing new allegiance to Jesus Christ and to work more for His cause and kingdom. Oh, brethren, how swiftly the time does go by! It seems to me I never saw such a swift summer—never a summer that had such nimble feet. It seems to me as if the years had gained some new power of locomotion—a kind of electric speed. Last Sabbath was an awful day to me. I had nothing to do but to think, and when I thought of how little I had accomplished for Christ, and of how short a time yet remained to work for Him,

my head grew dizzy and my heart ached, and I felt as if I must fly into your presence and utter this rallying cry for Jesus.

If this afternoon you take a short sleep (and you are entitled to it, for God intended the Sabbath not only for rest for the soul, but rest for the body), you will at least have one or two hours in which to lay out a plan for Christian work in this ecclesiastical year. Husband and wife, talk with each other. Brothers and sisters, resolve upon some new work for Christ. On your knees cry unto God: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and stay on your knees until you get the answer. Are you ready to join with me in some new work for Christ? I feel that there is such a thing as claustral piety, that there is such a thing as insular work; but it seems to me that what we want now is concerted action. The temple of Berith is very broad, and it is very high. It has been going up by the hands of men and devils, and no human enginery can demolish it; but if the fifty thousand ministers of Christ in this country should each take a branch of the tree of life, and all their congregations should do the same, and we should march on and throw these branches around the great temples of sin, and worldliness, and folly, it would need no match, or coal, or torch of ours to touch off the pile, for, as in the days of Elijah, fire would fall from heaven and kindle the bonfire of Christian victory over sin. It is kindling now! Huzzah! The day is ours!

Still further, I learn from this subject the danger of false refuges. As soon as these Shechemites got into the temple, they thought they were safe. They said: "Berith will take care of us. Abimelech may batter down everything else; he cannot batter down this temple where we are now hid." But very soon they heard the timbers crackling, and they were smothered with smoke, and they died miserably. And you and I are just as much tempted to false refuges. The mirror this morning may have persuaded you that you have a comely cheek; your best friends may have persuaded you that you have elegant manners; Satan may have told you that you are all right; but bear with me if I tell you that if unpardoned you are all wrong. I

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have no clinometer by which to measure how steep is the inclined plane you are descending, but I know it is very steep. "Well," you say, "if the Bible is true I am a sinner. Show me some refuge. I will step right into it." I suppose every person in this audience this moment is stepping into some kind of refuge. Here you step in the tower of good works. You say: "I shall be safe here, in this refuge." The battlements are adorned; the steps are varnished; on the wall are pictures of all the suffering you have alleviated, and all the schools you have established, and all the fine things you have ever done. Up in that tower you feel you are safe. But hear you not the tramp of your unpardoned sins all around the tower? They each have a match. They are kindling the combustible material. You feel the heat and the suffocation. Oh! may you leap in time, the Gospel declaring: "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified." "Well," you say, "I have been driven out of that tower; where shall I go?" Step into this tower of indifference. You say: "If this tower is attacked, it will be a great while before it is taken." You feel at ease. But there is an Abimelech, with ruthless assault, coming on. Death and his forces are gathering around, and they demand that you surrender everything, and they clamor for your immortal overthrow, and they throw their skeleton arms in the window, and with their iron fists they beat against the door, and while you are trying to keep them out you see the torches of judgment kindling, and every forest is a torch, and every mountain a torch, and every sea a torch, and while the Alps, and Pyrenees, and Himalayas turn into live coals, blown redder and redder by the whirlwind breath of a God omnipotent, what will become of your refuge of lies?

"But," says someone, "you are engaged in a very mean business, driving us from tower to tower." Oh, no! I want to tell you of a Gibraltar that never has been and never will be taken, of a wall that no Satanic assault can scale, of a bulwark that the judgment earthquakes cannot budge. The Bible refers to it when it says: "In God is thy refuge, and underneath thee

are the everlasting arms." Oh! fling yourself into it. Tread down unceremoniously everything that intercepts you. There are enough hounds of death and peril after you to make you hurry. Many a man has perished just outside the tower, with his foot on the step, with his hand on the latch. Oh, get inside! Not one surplus second have you to spare. Quick, quick, quick!

There are some who gave me a farewell handshake when I went off two months ago who are not here today. Where are they? When in the closing service I opened my hymn book and found the place, they opened their hymn books and found the same place. I open my book today; they do not open theirs. Great God, is life such an uncertain thing? If I bear a little too hard with my right foot on the earth, does it break through into the grave? Is this world which swings at the speed of thousands of miles an hour around about the sun going with tenfold more speed toward the judgment day? Oh, I am overborne with the thought, and in the confusion I cry to one and I cry to the other: "O time! O eternity! O the dead! O the judgment day! O Jesus! O God!" But catching at the last apostrophe, I feel that I have something to hold on to; for "in God is thy refuge, and underneath thee are the everlasting arms." And exhausted with my failure to save myself, I throw my whole weight of body, mind, and soul on this Divine promise, as a weary child throws itself into the arms of its mother, a wounded soldier throws himself on the hospital pillow, as a pursued man throws himself into the refuge: for "in God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." I can speak no more for the gladness. Oh, for a flood of tears with which to express the joy of this eternal rescue!

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My brother, if your friends had acted as crazily about worldly things as you have acted about spiritual things, you would have sent them before this to Bloomingdale Insane Asylum. . . —TALMAGE.

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8. THE OLD CORN OF CANAAN

And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land.—JOSHUA 5:12.

ONLY THOSE WHO HAVE HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE COMMISSARIAT of an army know what a job it is to feed and clothe five or six hundred thousand men. Well, there is such a host as that marching across the desert. They are cut off from all army supplies. There are no rail trains bringing down food or blankets. Shall they all perish? No. The Lord comes from heaven to the rescue, and He touches the shoes and the coats which in a year or two would have been worn to rags and tatters, and they become storm-proof and time-proof, so that after forty years of use the coats and the shoes are as good as new. Besides that, every morning there is a shower of bread—not sour and soggy, for the rising of that bread is made in heaven, and celestial fingers have mixed it and rolled it into balls, light, flaky, and sweet, as though they were the crumbs thrown out from a heavenly banquet. Two batches of bread made every day in the upper mansion—one for those who sit at the table with the King, and the other for the marching Israelites in the wilderness. I do not very much pity the Israelites because they had only manna to eat. It was, I suppose, the best food ever provided. I know that the ravens brought food to hungry Elijah; but I should not have liked so well those black waiters. Rather would I have the fare that came down every morning in buckets of dew—clean, sweet, God-provided edibles. But

now the Israelites have taken their last bit of it in their fingers, and put the last delicate morsel of it to their lips. They look out and there is no manna. Why this cessation of heavenly supply? It was because the Israelites had arrived in Canaan, and they smelled the breath of the harvest fields, and the crowded barns of the country were thrown open to them. All the inhabitants had fled, and in the name of the Lord of Hosts the Israelites took possession of everything. Well, the threshing-floor is cleared, the corn is scattered over it, the oxen are brought around in lazy and perpetual circuit until the corn is trampled loose; then it is winnowed with a fan, and it is ground, and it is baked, and, lo, there is enough bread for all the worn-out host: "And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land."

The division of this subject leads me, first, to speak of especial relief for especial emergency; and, second, of the old corn of the Gospel for ordinary circumstances.

If these Israelites crossing the wilderness had not received bread from the heavenly bakeries, there would first have been a long line of dead children half buried in the sand; then there would have been a long line of dead women waiting for the jackals; then there would have been a long line of dead men unburied, because there would have been no one to bury them. It would have been told in the history of the world that a great company of good people started out from Egypt for Canaan, and were never heard of—as thoroughly lost in the wilderness of sand as the *City of Boston* and the *President* were lost in the wilderness of waters. What use was it to them that there was plenty of corn in Canaan, or plenty of corn in Egypt? What they wanted was something to eat right there, where there was not so much as a grass blade. In other words, an especial supply for an especial emergency. That is what some of you want. The ordinary comfort, the ordinary direction, the ordinary counsel, do not seem to meet your case. There are those who feel that they must have a miraculous and immediate supply, and you shall have it.

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Is it pain and physical distress through which you must go? Does not Jesus know all about pain? Did He not suffer it in the most sensitive part of head, and hand, and foot? He has a mixture of comfort, one drop of which shall cure the worst paroxysm. It is the same grace that soothed Robert Hall when, after writhing on the carpet in physical torture, he cried out: "Oh, I suffered terribly, but I didn't cry out while I was suffering, did I? Did I cry out?" There is no such nurse as Jesus—His hand the gentlest, His foot the lightest, His arm the strongest. For especial pang, especial help.

Is it approaching sorrow? Is it long, shadowing bereavement that you know is coming, because the breath is short, and the voice is faint, and the cheek is pale? Have you been calculating your capacity or incapacity to endure widowhood, or childlessness, or a disbanded home, and cried: "I cannot endure it"? Oh, worried soul, you will wake up amid all your troubles and find around about you the sweet consolations of the Gospel as thickly strewn as was the manna around about the Israelitish encampment. Especial solace for especial distress.

Or is it a trouble past, yet present? A silent nursery? A vacant chair opposite you at the table? A choking sense of loneliness? A blot of grief so large that it extinguishes the light of sun, and puts out bloom of flower, and makes you reckless as to whether you live or die? Especial comfort for that especial trial. Your appetite has failed for everything else. Oh, try a little of this wilderness manna. "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee." "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth you." "Can a mother forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion upon the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget, yet will not I."

Or is it the grief over a dissipated companion? There are those here who have it, so I am not speaking in the abstract, but to the point. You have not whispered it, perhaps, to your most intimate friend; but you see your home going away gradually from you, and unless things change soon it will be entirely destroyed. Your grief was well depicted by a woman

presiding at a women's meeting, when her intoxicated husband staggered up to the platform, to her overwhelming mortification and the disturbance of the audience, and she pulled a protruding bottle from her husband's pocket, and held it up before the audience and cried out: "There is the cause of my woe. There are the tears and the life-blood of a drunkard's wife." And then looking up to heaven, she said: "How long, O Lord, how long?" and then, looking down to the audience, cried: "Do you wonder I feel strongly on this subject? Sisters, will you help me?" And hundreds of voices responded: "Yes, yes, we will help you." You stand, some of you, in such a tragedy today. You cannot even ask him to stop drinking. It makes him cross, and he tells you to mind your own business. Is there any relief in such a case? Not such as is found in the rigmarole of comfort ordinarily given in such cases. But there is a relief that drops in manna from the throne of God. Oh, lift up your lacerated soul in prayer, and you will get Omnipotent comfort. I do not know in what words the soothing influence may come, but I know that for special grief there is especial deliverance. I give you two or three passages. Try them. Take that which best fits your soul. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." "All things work together for good to those who love God." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." I know there are those who, when they try to comfort people, always bring the same stale sentiment about the usefulness of trial. Instead of bringing a new plaster for a new wound, and fresh manna for fresh hunger, they rummage their haversac to find some crumb of old consolation, when from horizon to horizon the ground is white with the new-fallen manna of God's help not five minutes old!

But after 14,600 consecutive days of falling manna—Sundays excepted—the manna ceased. Some of them were glad of it. You know they had complained to their leader, and wondered that they had to eat manna instead of onions. Now the fare is changed. Those people in that army under forty years of age had never seen a cornfield, and now, when they hear

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the leaves rustling, and see the tassels waving, and the billows of green flowing over the plain as the wind touched them, it must have been a new and lively sensation. "Corn!" cried the old man as he husked an ear. "Corn!" cried the children as they counted the shining grains. "Corn!" shouted the vanguard of the host as they burst open the granaries of the affrighted population—the granaries that had been left in the possession of the victorious Israelites. Then a fire was kindled, and the ears of corn were thrust into it, and fresh and crisp, and tender, was devoured by the hungry victors; and bread was prepared, and many things that can be made out of flour regaled the appetites that had been sharpened by the long march: "And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land."

Blessed be God, we stand in just such a field today, the luxuriant grain coming above the girdle, the air full of the odors of the ripe old corn of the Gospel Canaan. "Oh," you say, "the fare is too plain." While I was in Paris I liked for a while the rare and exquisite cookery; but I soon wished I was home again and had the plain fare of my native land. So it is a fact that we soon weary of the syrups, and the custards, and the whipped foam of fanciful religionists, and we cry, "Give us plain bread made out of the old corn of the Gospel Canaan." That is the only food that can quell the soul's hunger.

There are men here who hardly know what is the matter with them. They have tried to get together a fortune and larger account at the bank, and to get investments yielding larger percentages. They are trying to satisfy their soul with a diet of bank notes and government securities. There are others here who have been trying to get famous, and have succeeded to a greater or less extent; and they have been trying to satisfy their soul with the chopped feed of magazines and newspapers. All these men are no more happy now than before they made the first thousand dollars—no more happy now than when for the first time they saw their names favorably mentioned. They cannot analyze or define their feelings; but I will tell them

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what is the matter: they are hungry for the old corn of the Gospel. That you must have, or be pinched, and wan, and wasted, and hollow-eyed, and shriveled up with an eternity of famine.

The infidel scientists of this day are offering us a different kind of soul food; but they are, of all men, the most miserable. I have known many of them; but I never knew one of them who came within a thousand miles of being happy. The great John Stuart Mill provided for himself a new kind of porridge, but yet, when he comes to die, he acknowledges that his philosophy never gave him any comfort in days of bereavement, and in a roundabout way he admits that his life was a failure. So it is with all infidel scientists. They are trying to live on telescopes, and crucibles, and protoplasm, and they charge us with cant, not realizing that there is no such intolerable cant in all the world as this perpetual talk we are hearing about "positive philosophy," and "the absolute," and "the great-to-be," and "the everlasting no," and "the higher unity," and "the latent potentialities," and "the cathedral of the immensities." I have been translating what these men have been writing, and I have been transcribing what they have been doing, and I will tell you what it all means. It means that they want to kill God! And my only wonder is that God has not killed them. I have, in other days, tasted of their confections, and I come back and tell you today that there is no nutriment, or life, or health in anything but the bread made out of the old corn of the Gospel. What do I mean by that? I mean that Christ is the bread of life, and, taking Him, you live, and live forever.

But, you say, corn is of but little practical use unless it is threshed, and ground, and baked.* I answer, this Gospel corn has gone through that process. When on Calvary all the hoofs of human scorn come down on the heart of Christ, and all the flails of satanic fury beat Him long and fast, was not the corn threshed? When the mills of God's indignation against sin caught Christ between the upper and nether rollers, was not

* In England "corn" is used to denote wheat.

the corn ground? When Jesus descended into hell, and the flames of the lost world wrapped Him all about, was not the corn baked? Oh, yes, Christ is ready. His pardon all ready; His peace all ready; everything ready in Christ. Are you ready for Him?

You say: "That is such a simple Gospel!" I know it is. You say you thought religion was a strange mixture of elaborate compounds. No, it is so plain that any abecedarian may understand it. In its simplicity is its power. If you could realize that Christ died to save from sin, and death, and hell, not only your minister and your neighbor, and your father and your child, but also *you*, it would make this hour like the judgment day for agitations, and, no longer able to keep your seat, you would leap up, crying: "*For me! For me!*"

A new convert said: "I could not sleep, thinking over that passage, 'Whosoever believeth on the Son hath life,' and so I got up, and lighted a candle, and found my Bible, and read it over: 'Whosoever believeth on the Son hath life.'" "Why," says someone, "didn't you now that was in the Bible before?" "Oh, yes," he replied, "I knew it was in the Bible, but I wanted to see it with my own eyes, and then I rested." God grant that you, my brother, may see it with your own eyes, and hear it with your own ears, and feel it with your own heart, that you are a lost soul, but that Christ comes for your extrication. Can you not take that truth and digest it, and make it a part of your immortal life? It is only bread.

You have noticed that invalids cannot take all kinds of food. The food that will do for one will not do for another. There are kinds of food which will produce, in cases of invalidism, very speedy death. But you have noticed that all persons, however weak they may be, can take bread. Oh, soul sick with sin, invalid in your transgressions, I think this Gospel will agree with you. I think if you cannot take anything else, you can take this. Lost—found! Sunken—raised! Condemned—pardoned! Cast out—invited in! That is the old corn of the Gospel.

You have often seen a wheel with spokes of different colors,

and when the wheel was rapidly turned all the colors blended into a rainbow of exquisite beauty. I wish I could take the peace, and the life, and the joy, and glory of Christ, and turn them before your soul with such speed and strength that you would be enchanted with the revolving splendors of that name which is above every name—the name written once with tears of exile and in blood of martyrdom, but written now in burnished crown, and lifted scepter, and trans-angelic throne.

There is another characteristic about bread, and that is you never get tired of it. There are people here seventy years of age who find it just as appropriate for their appetite as they did when, in childhood, their mother cut a full slice for them. You have not got tired of bread, and that is a characteristic of the Gospel. Old Christian man, are you tired of Jesus? If so, let us take His name out of our Bible, and let us erase that name wherever we see it. Let us cast it out of our hymnology, and let "There is a Fountain," and "Rock of Ages" go into forgetfulness. Let us tear down the communion table where we celebrate His love. Let us dash down the baptismal bowl where we were consecrated to Him. Let us hurl Jesus from our heart, and ask some other hero to come in. Let us say: "Go away, Jesus; I want another companion, another friend, than Thou art." Could you do it? The years of your past life, aged man, would utter a protest against it, and the graves of your Christian dead would charge you with being an ingrate, and your little grandchildren would say: "Grandfather, don't do that. Jesus is the One to whom we say our prayers at night, and who is to open heaven when we die? Grandfather, don't do that." Tired of Jesus? The Burgundy rose you pluck from the garden is not so fresh, and fair, and beautiful. Tired of Jesus? As well get weary of the spring morning, and the voices of the mountain stream, and the quiet of your own home, and the gladness of your own children. Jesus is bread, and the appetite for that is never obliterated.

I notice that you take bread three times a day. It is on your table morning, noon, and night, and if it is forgotten, you say:

“Where is the bread?” Just so certainly you need Jesus three times a day. Oh, do not start out without Him; do not dare to go out of the front door; do not dare to go off the front steps, without first having communed with Him. Before noon there may be perils that will destroy body, mind, and soul forever. You cannot afford to do without Him. You will during the day be amid sharp hoofs and swift wheels, and dangerous scaffoldings threatening the body, and traps for the soul that have taken some who are more wily than you. When they launch a new vessel, they break against the side of it a bottle of wine. That is a sort of superstition among sailors. But, oh, on the launching of every day, that we might strike against it at least one earnest prayer for Divine protection. That would not be superstition: that would be Christian. Then at the apex of the day, at the tip-top of the hours, equidistant from morning and night, look three ways. Look backward to the forenoon; look ahead to the afternoon; look up to that Saviour who presides over all. You want bread at noon. You may find no place in which to kneel amid the cotton bales and the tierces of rice; but if Jonah could find room to pray in the whale’s belly, most certainly you will never be in such a crowded place that you cannot pray. Bread at noon! When the evening hour comes, and your head is buzzing with the day’s engagements, and your whole nature is sore from the abrasion of rough life, and you see a great many duties you have neglected, then commune with Christ, asking His pardon, thanking Him for His love. That would be a queer evening repast at which there was no bread.

This is the nutriment and life of the plain Gospel that I commend to you. I do not know how some of our ministers make it so intricate, and elaborate, and mystifying a thing. It seems as if they had a sort of mongrelism in religion—part humanitarianism, part spiritualism, part nothingarianism; and sometimes you think they are building their temple out of the “Rock of Ages,” but you find there is no rock in it at all. It is stucco. The Gospel is plain. It is bread. There are no fogs hov-

ering over this river of life. All the fogs hover over the marsh of human speculation. If you cannot tell when you hear a man preach whether or not he believes in the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, it is because he does not believe in it. If, when you hear a man preach, you cannot tell whether or not he believes that sin is inborn, it is because he does not think it is congenital. If, when you hear a man talk in pulpit or prayer meeting, you cannot make up your mind whether or not he believes in regeneration, it is because he does not believe in it. If, when you hear a man speak on religious themes, you cannot make up your mind whether or not he thinks the righteous and the wicked will come out at the same place, then it is because he really believes their destinies are coterminous.

Do not talk to me about a man being doubtful about the doctrines of grace. He is not doubtful to me at all. Bread is bread, and I know it the moment I see it. I had a cornfield which I cultivated this summer with my own hand. I did not ask once in all the summer: "Is this corn?" I did not hunt up the *Agriculturist* to get a picture of corn. I was born in sight of a cornfield, and I know all about it. When these Israelites came to Canaan and looked off upon the fields, the cry was: "Corn! Corn!" And if a man has once tasted of this heavenly bread he knows it right away. He can tell this corn of the Gospel Canaan from "the chaff which the wind driveth away." I bless God so many have found this Gospel corn. It is the bread of which if a man eat he shall never hunger. I set the gladness of your soul to the tunes of "Ariel" and "Antioch." I ring the wedding bells, for Christ and your soul are married, and there is no power on earth or in hell to get out letters of divorce-ment.

But alas for the famine-struck. Enough corn, yet it seems you have no sickle to cut it, no mill to grind it, no fire to bake it, no appetite to eat it. Starving to death, when the plain is golden with a magnificent harvest. My brother, if your friends had acted as crazily about worldly things as you have acted about spiritual things, you would have sent them before this


THE OLD CORN OF CANAAN

to Bloomingdale Insane Asylum. You do not seem to realize the hunger that is gnawing on your soul, the precipices on the edge of which you walk, the fires into which you run. Oh, the insanity, the awful madness, of a man that will not take Christ. When I think of the risks you run, it seems as if I must rush from the pulpit and take you by the shoulder and tell you of what is coming and how little you are ready for it.


This summer I rode some thirteen miles to see the *Alexander da Valley*, a steamer that was beached near Southampton, Long Island, last winter. It was a splendid vessel. As I walked up and down the decks, and in the cabins, I said: "What a pity that this vessel should go to pieces, or be lying here idle." The wreckers had spent much money trying even to get her off, and succeeded once; but she came back again to the old place. While I was walking on deck every part of the vessel trembled with the beating of the surf on one side. Since then I have heard that the vessel had been sold and was to be knocked to pieces. They had given up the idea of getting her to sail again. How suggestive all that is to me. There are those who are aground in religious things. Once you started for heaven, but you are now aground. Several times we thought we had started you again heavenward, but you soon got back to the old place, and there is not much prospect you will ever reach the harbors of the blessed. I fear it will be said in regard to some of you: "No use. No use. To be destroyed without remedy." God's wreckers will pronounce you a hopeless case. *Beached for eternity!* And then it will be written in heaven concerning someone of your size, and complexion, and age, and name, that he was invited to be saved, but refused the offer, and starved to death within sight of the fields and granaries full of the Old Corn of Canaan.

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I could stand here and play a sweeter harp. I could talk of the gates of pearl, and the walls of precious stones, and the crowns of light. What is the use of talking of those things to those who have no preparation for that land, and who are on the wrong road?—TALMAGE.



9. THINGS WE NEVER GET OVER



All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.—MATTHEW 12:31,32.

He found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.—HEBREWS 12:17.

LET IT BE UNDERSTOOD AT THE OUTSET THAT THE PROTESTANT pulpit has no revelation not given to the Protestant pew. The minister of Christ has no right to lord it over the consciences of men. When we preach, we do not utter edicts; we only offer opinions. Let the Vatican issue the *fiat* that makes the people bow down into the dust; but in this land, and in this age, where King James's translation is in almost every hand and in almost every house, let every man understand that he has a right, equally with others, to interpret the Word of God for himself, asking only Divine illumination.

•As sometimes you gather the whole family around in the evening to hear some interesting book read, so now we gather—a great Christian family group—to study this text; and now may one and the same lamp cast its glow on all this vast circle of immortal souls.

You see from the first passage that there is a sin against the

Holy Ghost for which a man is never pardoned. Once having committed it, he is bound hand and foot for the dungeons of despair. Sermons may be preached to him, songs may be sung to him, prayers may be offered in his behalf; but all to no purpose. He is a captive for this world and a captive for the world that is to come. Do you suppose that there is anyone that has committed that sin? All sins are against the Holy Ghost; but my text speaks of *one* especially. It is very clear to my own mind that the sin against the Holy Ghost was the ascribing of the works of the Spirit to the agency of the devil in the time of the apostles. Indeed, the Bible distinctly tells us that. In other words, if a man had sight given to him, or if another was raised from the dead, and someone standing there should say: "This man raised from the dead was raised by satanic influence," the man who said that dropped down under the curse of the text, and had committed the fatal sin against the Holy Ghost. Now I do not think it possible in this day to commit that sin. I think it was possible only in apostolic times. But it is a very terrible thing ever to say anything against the Holy Ghost, and it is a marked fact that our race have been marvelously kept back from that profanity. You hear a man swear by the name of the Eternal God, and by the name of Jesus Christ, but you never heard a man swear by the name of the Holy Ghost. There are those in this house who fear they are guilty of the unpardonable sin. Have you such anxiety? Then I have to tell you positively that you have not committed that sin, because the very anxiety is a result of the movement of the gracious Spirit, and your anxiety is proof positive, as certainly as anything that can be demonstrated in mathematics, that you have not committed the sin that I have been speaking of. I can look off upon this audience and feel that there is salvation for all. It is not as when they put out with those life-boats from the *Loch Earn* for the *Ville de Havre*. They knew there was not room for all the passengers, but they were going to do as well as they could. But tonight we man the life-boat of the Gospel, and we cry out over the sea:

"Room for all." Oh that the Lord Jesus Christ would, this hour, bring you all out of the flood of sin and plant you on the deck of this glorious old Gospel craft. But while I have said I do not think it is possible for us to commit the particular sin spoken of in the first text, I have by reason of the second text to call your attention to the fact that there are sins which, though they may be pardoned, are in some respects irrevocable, and you can find no place for repentance, though you seek it carefully with tears. Esau had a birthright given him. In olden times it meant not only temporal but spiritual blessing. One day Esau took this birthright and traded it off for something to eat. Oh, the folly! But let us not be too severe upon him, for some of us may have committed the same folly. After he had made the trade he wanted to get it back. Just as though you tomorrow morning should take all your notes, and bonds, and Government securities, and should go into a restaurant, and in a fit of recklessness and hunger throw all those securities on the counter and ask for a plate of food, making that exchange. This was the one that Esau made. He sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, and he was very sorry about it afterwards; but "he found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

There is an impression in almost every man's mind that somewhere in the future there will be a chance where he can correct all his mistakes. Live as we may, if we only repent in time, God will forgive us, and then all will be as well as though we had never committed sin. My discourse will come in collision with that theory. I shall show you, my friends, as God will help me, that there is such a thing as unsuccessful repentance; that there are things done wrong that always stay wrong, and for them you may seek some place of repentance, and seek it carefully, but never find it.

Belonging to this class of irrevocable mistakes is the folly of a misspent youth. We may look back to our college days and think how we neglected chemistry, or geology, or botany, or mathematics. We may be sorry about it all our days. Can we

ever get the discipline or the advantage that we would have had had we attended to those duties in early life? A man wakes up at forty years of age and finds that his youth has been wasted, and he strives to get back his early advantages. Does he get them back—the days of boyhood, the days in college, the days under his father's roof? "Oh," he says, "if I could only get those times back again, how I would improve them!" My brother, you will never get them back. They are gone, gone. You may be very sorry about it, and God may forgive so that you may at last reach heaven; but you will never get over some of the mishaps that have come to your soul as a result of your neglect of early duty. You may try to undo it; you cannot undo it. When you had a boy's arms, and a boy's eyes, and a boy's heart, you ought to have attended to those things. A man says at fifty years of age: "I do wish I could get over these habits of indolence." When did you get them? At twenty or twenty-five years of age. You cannot shake them off. They will hang to you to the very day of your death. If a young man, through a long course of evil conduct, undermines his physical health, and then repents of it in after life, the Lord may pardon him; but that does not bring back good physical condition. I said to a minister of the Gospel last Sabbath night at the close of the service: "Where are you preaching now?" "Oh," he said: "I am not preaching. I am suffering from the physical effects of early sin. I can't preach now; I am sick." A consecrated man he now is, and he mourns bitterly over early sins; but that does not arrest their bodily effects. The simple fact is, men and women often take twenty years of their life to build up influences that require all the rest of their life to break down. Talk about a man beginning life when he is twenty-one years of age; talk about a woman beginning life when she is eighteen years of age! Ah, no! In many respects that is the time they close life. In nine cases out of ten, all the questions of eternity are decided before that. Talk about a majority of men getting their fortunes between thirty and forty! They get or lose their fortunes between ten and twenty. When you tell me that a man

is just beginning life, I tell you that he is just closing it. The next fifty years will not be of as much importance to him as the first twenty. Now, why do I say this? Is it for the annoyance of those who have only a baleful retrospection? You know that is not my way. I say it for the benefit of young men and women. I want them to understand that eternity is wrapped up in this hour, that the sins of youth we never get over, that you are now fashioning the mold in which your great future is to run, that a minute, instead of being sixty seconds long, is made up of everlasting ages. You see what dignity and importance this gives to the life of all our young folks. Why, in the light of this subject, life is not something to be frittered away, not something to be smirked about, not something to be danced out, but something to be weighed in the scales of eternity. Oh, young man, the sin of last night, the sin of tonight, the sin of tomorrow will reach over ten thousand years—aye, over the great and unending eternity. You may, after a while, say: "I am very sorry. Now I am thirty years of age, and I do wish I had never committed those sins." What does that amount to? God may pardon you; but undo those things you never will, you never can.

In this same category of irrevocable mistakes I put *all parental neglect*. We begin the education of our children too late. By the time they get to be ten or fifteen we wake up to our mistakes and try to eradicate this bad habit of the child; but it is too late. That parent who omits in the first ten years of the child's life to make an eternal impression for Christ, never makes it. The child will probably go on with all the disadvantages which might have been avoided by parental faithfulness. Now you see what a mistake that father or mother makes who puts off to late life adherence to Christ. Here is a man who at fifty years of age says to you: "I must be a Christian," and he yields his heart to God and sits in the house of prayer tonight a Christian. None of us can doubt it. He goes home and he says: "Here, at fifty years of age, I have given my heart to the Saviour. Now I must establish a family altar." What? Where

are your children now? One in Boston, another in Cincinnati, another in New Orleans. And you, my brother, at your fiftieth year, going to establish your family altar! Very well; better late than never; but alas! alas! that you did not do it twenty-five years ago.

When I was in Chamouni, Switzerland, I saw in the window of one of the shops a picture that impressed my mind very much. It was a picture of an accident that had occurred on the side of one of the Swiss mountains. A company of travelers, with guides, went up some very steep places—places which but few travelers attempted to go up. They were, as all travelers are there, fastened together with cords at the waist, so that if one slipped, the rope would hold him—the rope fastened to the others. Passing along the most dangerous point, one of the guides slipped, and they all slipped down the precipice; but after a while one more muscular than the rest struck his heels into the ice and stopped; but the rope broke, and down, hundreds and thousands of feet, the rest went. And so I see whole families bound together by ties of affection, and in many cases walking on slippery places of worldliness and sin. The father knows it and the mother knows it, and they are bound all together. After a while they begin to slide down, farther and farther and the father becomes alarmed and he stops, planting his feet on the "Rock of Ages." He stops, but the rope breaks, and those who had been tied fast to him by moral and spiritual influences go over the precipice. Oh, there is such a thing as coming to Christ soon enough to save ourselves, but not soon enough to save others. How many parents wake up in the latter part of life to find out the mistake! The parent says: "I have been too lenient," or, "I have been too severe in the discipline of my children. If I had the little ones around me again, how different I would do!" You will never have them around again. The work is done, the bent to the character is given, eternity is decided. I say this to young parents—those who are twenty-five, or thirty, or thirty-five years of age. Have

the family altar tonight. How do you suppose that father felt as he leaned over the couch of his dying son, and the son said to him: "Father, you have been very good to me. You have given me a fine education, and you have placed me in a fine social position; you have done everything for me in a worldly sense; but, father, you never told me how to die. Now I am dying, and I am lost."

In this category of irrevocable mistakes I place also the unkindness done to the departed. When I was a boy, my mother used to say to me sometimes: "DeWitt, you will be sorry for that when I am gone." And I remember just how she looked, sitting there, with cap and spectacles, and the old Bible in her lap; and she never said a truer thing than that, for I have often been sorry since. While we have our friends with us, we say unguarded things that wound the feelings of those to whom we ought to give nothing but kindness. Perhaps the parent, without inquiring into the matter, boxes the child's ears. The little one has fallen in the street and comes in covered with dust, and as though the first disaster were not enough, she whips it. After a while the child is taken, or the parent is taken, or the companion is taken, and those who are left say: "Oh, if only we could get back those unkind words, those unkind deeds. If only we could recall them." But you cannot get them back. You might bow down over the grave of that loved one, and cry, and cry, and cry. The white lips would make no answer. The stars shall be plucked out of their sockets, but these influences shall not be torn away. The world shall die, but there are some wrongs immortal. The moral of which is, take care of your friends while you have them, spare the scolding, be economical of the satire, shut up in a dark cave from which they shall never swarm forth all the words that have a sting in them. Some day you will wish you had—very soon you will—perhaps tomorrow. Oh, yes. While with a firm hand you administer parental discipline, also administer it very gently, lest some day there be a little slab and on it chiseled "Our Willie," or

"Our Charlie," when, though you bow down prone to the grave, and seek a place of repentance, and seek it carefully with tears, you shall not find it.

There is another sin that I place in the class of irrevocable mistakes, and that is *lost opportunities of getting good*. I never come to a Saturday night but that I can see that during that week I have missed opportunities of being good. I never come to my birthday but that I can see that I have wasted many chances of becoming better. I never go home on Sabbath from the discussion of a religious theme without feeling that I might have done it in a more successful way. How is it with you? If you take a certain number of bushels of wheat and scatter them over a certain number of acres of land, you expect a harvest in proportion to the amount of seed scattered. And I ask you tonight, have the sheaves of moral and spiritual harvest corresponded with the advantages given. How has it been with you? You may make resolutions for the future, but past opportunities are gone. In the long procession of future years all those past moments will march; but the archangel's trumpet that wakes the dead will not wake up for you one of those privileges. Esau has sold his birthright, and there is not wealth enough in the treasure-houses of heaven to buy it back again. What does that mean? It means that if you are going to get any advantage out of this Sabbath day, you will have to get it before the hand wheels around on the clock to twelve tonight. It means that every moment of our life has two wings, and that it does not fly like a hawk, in circles, but in a straight line from eternity to eternity. It means that though other chariots may break down or drag heavily, this one never drops the brake, and never ceases to run. It means that while at other feasts the cup may be passed to us, and we may reject it, and yet after a while take it, the cup-bearers to this feast never give us more than one chance at the chalice, and rejecting that, we shall "find no place for repentance, though we seek it carefully with tears."

There is one more class of sins that I put in this category of irrevocable offenses, and that is *lost opportunities of usefulness*. There comes a time when you can do a good thing for Christ. It comes only once. Your business partner is a proud man. In ordinary circumstances say to him: "Believe in Christ," and he will say: "You mind your business and I'll mind mine." But there has been affliction in the household. His heart is tender. He is looking around for sympathy and solace. Now is your time. Speak, speak, or forever hold your peace. There is a time in farm life when you plant the corn and when you sow the seed. Let that go by, and the farmer will wring his hands while other husbandmen are gathering in the sheaves. You are in a religious meeting, and there is an opportunity for you to speak out for God. You say: "I must do it." Your cheek flushes with embarrassment. You rise half way, but you cower before men whose breath is in their nostrils, and you shrink back, and the opportunity is gone, and all eternity will feel the effect of your silence. Try to get back that opportunity! You cannot find it. You might as well try to find the fleece that Gideon watched, or take in your hand the dew that came down on the locks of the Bethlehem shepherds, or to find the plume of the first robin that went across paradise. It is gone; it is gone forever. When an opportunity for personal repentance or of doing good passes away, you may hunt for it, but you cannot find it. You may fish for it, but it will not take the hook. You may dig for it, but you cannot bring it up. Remember what I tell you, that there are wrongs and sins that can never be corrected, that our privileges fly not in circles, but in a straight line, that the lightnings have not feet as swift as our privileges when they are gone; let an opportunity of salvation go by us an inch, the one hundredth part of an inch, the thousandth part of an inch, the millionth part of an inch, and no man can overtake it. Fire-winged seraphim cannot come up with it. The eternal God Himself cannot catch it.

I stand before those who have a glorious birthright. Esau's

was not so rich as yours. Sell it once and you sell it forever. The world wants to buy it. Satan wants to buy it. Listen for a moment to these brilliant offers and it is gone.

Why do I tell you these truths? I have stood before you year after year telling you these things. Some have yielded their hearts to God, and a glorious crop of souls has been reaped; but this audience of immortal men and women, are they all prepared for the great future? I could stand here and play a sweeter harp. I could talk of the gates of pearl, and the walls of precious stones, and the crowns of light. What is the use of talking of those things to those who have no preparation for that land, and who are on the wrong road? And so I stand here Sabbath after Sabbath endeavoring to persuade you to give up your sin, and seek after God, and be at peace with Him.

I remember the story of the lad on the *Arctic* some years ago—the lad Stewart Holland. A vessel crashed into the *Arctic* in a fog, and it was found that the ship must go down. Some of the passengers got off in the lifeboats, some got off on rafts; but three hundred went to the bottom. During all those hours of calamity, Stewart Holland stood at the signal gun, and it sounded across the sea, boom! boom! The helmsman forsook his place, the engineer was gone, and some fainted, and some prayed, and some blasphemed, and the powder was gone, and they could let off the signal gun no more. The lad broke in the magazine, and brought out more powder, and again the gun boomed over the sea. Oh, my friends, I behold many of you in immortal peril. Sickness will come down after a while upon you, death will come upon you, judgment will come upon you, eternity will come upon you. Some, having taken the warning, have gone off in the lifeboat and they are safe; but others are not making any attempt to escape. So I stand at this signal gun of the Gospel, sounding the alarm, Beware! Beware! "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." The wrath to come! The wrath to come! Boom! Boom! Fly to the hope of the Gospel. Jesus waits. He stretches out His arms to all this audience, and cries tonight with a tenderness I have never

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heard before: "Come unto me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." That is what you want, sinful, tempted, bruised, and dying soul! May the Lord help you to accept the mercy, and the solace, and the salvation of the Gospel! Hear it, that your soul may live!

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The question for you . . . to discuss is not whether Calvin or Arminius was right, nor whether a handful of water in holy baptism or a baptistery is better, nor whether fore-ordination and free agency can be harmonized. The practical question for you to discuss . . . is, "Where shall I spend eternity?"—TALMAGE.



10. ANXIETY



Sirs, what must I do to be saved?—ACTS 16:30.

LAST WEEK THE BOARD FENCES, THE STONE WALLS AND THE CITY car windows were covered with the advertisement of an infidel lecture on the subject, "What must we do to be saved?" Of course the allusion was to the text. I warrant you that the facetious lecturer asked the question in a different mood from that in which it was asked when it was originally propounded. I warrant you also that the audience who heard the question were in a different condition from the audience that originally heard it. The audience that gathered last week to hear the question of the text discussed, entered a beautiful auditorium, having paid fifty or seventy-five cents to hear the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ ridiculed. I would rather pay fifty cents for almost anything than to hear the Lord Jesus Christ dishonored. I would rather pay fifty cents to hear my dead father, or dead mother, or dead brother, or dead sister derided and ridiculed than to pay fifty cents to hear the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ defamed. Fifty cents is not much, but he who hears Christ caricatured, or His religion defamed, has an entertainment costly at any price.

The scene when the question was discussed, and the scene when the text was originally propounded cannot be compared. Incarcerated in a Philippian penitentiary, a place cold, and dark, and damp, and loathsome, and hideous, unillumined save by the torch of the official who comes to see if they are still

alive, are two ministers of Christ, their feet fast in instruments of torture, their shoulders dripping from the stroke of leathern thongs, their mouths hot with thirst, their heads faint because they may not lie down. In a comfortable room of that same building, and amid pleasant surroundings, is a paid officer of the government whose business it is to supervise the prison. It is night, and all is still in the corridors of the dungeon save as some murderer struggles with a horrid dream, or a ruffian turns over in his chains, or there is the cough of a dying consumptive amid the dampness; but, suddenly, crash! go the walls. The two men pass out free. The jail-keeper, although familiar with the darkness and the horrors hovering around the dungeon, is startled beyond all bounds, and, flambeau in hand, he rushes through the falling walls, shouting at the top of his voice: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

I stand today before hundreds, and perhaps thousands, who are asking the same question with more or less earnestness, and I accost you in this crisis of your soul with a message from heaven. There are those in this audience who might be more skilful in argument than I am; there are those here who can dive into deeper depths of science, or have larger knowledge; there are in this audience those before whom I would willingly bow as the inferior to the superior; but I yield to no one in this assemblage in a desire to have all the people saved by the power of an omnipotent Gospel, and with an all-consuming desire that sometimes almost impedes my utterance I beg you to accept immortal life.

I shall proceed to characterize the question of the agitated jail-keeper. And first, I characterize that question as *courteous*. He might have rushed in and said: "Paul and Silas, you vagabonds, are you tearing down this prison? Aren't you satisfied with disturbing the peace of the city by your infamous doctrines, and you are now going to destroy public property? Back with you to your places, you vagabonds!" He said no such thing. The word of four letters, "Sirs!" equivalent to "lords," recognized the majesty and the honor of their mission. Sirs!

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If a man with a captious spirit tries to find the way to heaven he will miss it. If a man comes out and pronounces all Christians as hypocrites and the religion of Jesus Christ as a fraud, and asks irritating questions about the mysterious and the inscrutable, saying, "Come, my wise man, explain this and explain that; if this be true how can that be true?"—no such man finds the way to heaven. The question of the text was decent, courteous, gentlemanly, deferential. Sirs!

Again, I characterize this question of the agitated jail-keeper as a *practical question*. He did not ask why God let sin come into the world, he did not ask how Christ could be God and man in the same person, he did not ask the doctrine of the decrees explained or want to know whom Cain married, or what was the cause of the earthquake. His present and everlasting welfare was involved in the question, and was not that practical? But I know multitudes of people who are bothering themselves about the nonessentials of religion. What would you think of a man who should, while discussing the question of the light and heat of the sun, spend his time down in a coal cellar when he might come out and see the one and feel the other? Yet there are multitudes of men who, in discussing *the chemistry of the Gospel*, spend their time down in the dungeon of their unbelief when God all the while stands telling them to come out into the noonday light and warmth of the Sun of righteousness. The question for you to discuss, my brother, is not whether Calvin or Arminius was right, not whether a handful of water in holy baptism or a baptistery is the better, not whether foreordination and free agency can be harmonized. The practical question for you to discuss, and for me to discuss, is, "Where will I spend eternity?"

Again, I characterize this question of the agitated jail-keeper as one *personal to himself*. I have no doubt he had many friends and was interested in their welfare. I have no doubt he found that there were persons in that prison who, if the earthquake had destroyed them, would have found their case desperate. He is not questioning about them. The whole weight

of his question turns on the pronoun "I." "What shall *I* do?" Of course, when a man becomes a Christian, he immediately becomes anxious for the salvation of other people; but until that point is reached the most important question is about your own salvation. "What is to be my destiny?" "What are my prospects for the future?" "Where am I going?" "What shall I do?" The trouble is we shuffle the responsibility off upon others. We prophesy a bad end to that inebriate, and terrific exposure to that defaulter, and awful catastrophe to that profligate. We are so busy in weighing other people we forget ourselves to get into the scales. We are so busy watching the poor gardens of other people that we let our own dooryard go to weeds. We are so busy sending off other people into the life-boat that we sink in the wave. We cry "Fire!" because our neighbor's house is burning down and seem to be uninterested that our own house is in the conflagration. Oh, wandering thoughts, disappear today. Blot out this entire audience except yourself. *Your sin, is it pardoned?* Your death, is it provided for? Your heaven, is it secured? A mightier earthquake than that which demolished the Philippian penitentiary will rumble about your ears. The foundations of the earth will give way. The earth by one tremor will fling all the American cities into the dust. Cathedrals and palaces and prisons which have stood for thousands of years will topple like a child's blockhouse. The sea will submerge the land, and the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans above the Alps and the Andes will clap their hands. What, then, will become of me? What then will become of you? I do not wonder at the anxiety of this man of my text, for he was not only anxious about the falling of the prison, but about the falling of a world.

Again, I characterize this question of the agitated jail-keeper as one of *incomparable importance*. Men are alike, and I suppose he had scores of questions on his mind, but all questions for this world are hushed up, forgotten, annihilated in this one question of the text: "What must I do to be saved?" And have you, my brother, any question of importance compared

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with that question? Is it a question of business? Your common-sense tells you that you will soon cease worldly business. You know very well that you will soon pass out of that partnership. You know that beyond a certain point, of all the millions of dollars of goods sold in New York and Brooklyn, you will not handle a yard of cloth, or a pound of sugar, or a penny's worth. After that, if a conflagration should start at Central Park and sweep clear to the Battery, it would not touch you, and would not damage you. If every cashier should abscond and every bank suspend payment, and every insurance company fail, it would not affect you. Oh, how insignificant is business this side the grave in comparison with business on the other side the grave! Have you made any purchases for eternity? Have you any securities that will last forever? Are you jobbing for time when you might be wholesaling for eternity? Is there any question so broad at the base, so overshadowing as the question: "What must I do to be saved?" Or is it a domestic question, something about father, or mother, or husband, or wife, or son, or daughter that is the more important question? You know by universal and inexorable law that that relation will soon be broken up. Father will be gone, mother will be gone, children will be gone, you will be gone; but after that, the question of the text will begin to harvest its chief gains, or deplore its worst losses, or roll up its mightiest magnitudes, or sweep its vaster circles—the question whether you will take wing and soar, or be chained and drop, whether you shall be built up or pulled down, whether God will be your father or your foe, whether in eternity you will be praising or blaspheming, chanting or groaning, be in a land of light and purity and joy, or in a death that never dies.

Oh, what a question, what an important question! Is there any question that compares with it in importance? What is it now to Napoleon III whether he triumphed or surrendered at Sedan, whether he died at the Tuileries or Chiselhurst, whether he was emperor or exile? Because he was laid out in the coffin in the dress of a field marshal, did that give him any

better chance for the future than if he had been laid out in a plain shroud? What difference will it soon make to you or to me whether in this world we walked or rode, whether we were bowed to or maltreated, whether we were applauded or hissed at, welcomed in, or kicked out, when laying hold of every moment of the future, and burning in every splendor or every grief, and overarching or undergirding all time and all eternity will be the plain, startling, infinite, stupendous question of the text: "What must I do to be saved?"

Again, I characterize this question of the agitated jail-keeper as one *crushed out by his misfortunes*. Because of falling of the penitentiary his occupation was gone. Besides that, the flight of a prisoner was ordinarily the death of the jailer. He was held responsible. If all had gone well, if the prison walls had not been shaken down by the earthquake, if the prisoners had all stayed quiet in the stocks, if the morning sunlight had calmly dropped on the jailer's pillow, do you think he would have hurled this red-hot question from his soul into the ear of his apostolic prisoners? Ah, no! you know as well as I do it was the earthquake that roused him up. And it is trouble that starts a great many people to asking the same question. It has been so with a vast multitude of you. Your apparel is not as bright as once it was. Why have you changed the garb? Do you like solferino, and crimson, and purple, as well as once? Yes. But you say: "While I was prospered and happy those colors were accordant with my feelings; now they would be discord to my soul." And so you have plaited up the shadows into your apparel. Oh, the world is a very different place from what it was once for you! Once you said: "Oh, if I could only have it quiet a little while." It is too quiet. Some people say that they would not bring back their departed friends from heaven even if they had the opportunity; but if you had the opportunity you would bring back your loved ones and soon their feet would be sounding in the hall, soon their voices would be heard in the family, and the old times would come back just as the festal

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days of Christmas and Thanksgiving—days gone forever. Oh, it is the earthquake that startled you to asking this question—the earthquake of domestic misfortune. Death is so cruel, so devouring, so relentless, that when it swallows up our loved ones we must have someone to whom we can carry our torn and bleeding hearts. We need a balsam better than anything that ever exuded from earthly tree to heal the pang of the soul. It is pleasant to have our friends gather around us and tell us how sorry they are, and try to break up the loneliness; but nothing but the hand of Jesus Christ can take the bruised soul and put it in His bosom, hushing it with the lullaby of heaven. Oh, brother! Oh, sister! the gravestone will never be lifted from your heart until Christ lifts it. Was it not the loss of your friends, or the persecution of your enemies, or the overthrow of your worldly estate—was it not an earthquake that started you out to ask this stupendous question of my text?

Again, I characterize this question of the agitated jail-keeper as *hasty, urgent, and immediate*. He put it on the run. By the light of his torch as he goes to look for the apostles, behold his face, see the startled look and see the earnestness. No one can doubt that the man is in earnest. He must have that question answered before the earth stops rocking, or perhaps he will never have it answered at all. Is that the way, my brother, my sister, you are putting this question? Is it on the run? Is it hasty? Is it urgent? Is it immediate? If it is not, it will not be answered. That is the only kind of question that is answered. It is the urgent and the immediate question of the Gospel Christ answers. A great many are asking this question, but they draw it out, and there is indifference in their manner as if they do not mean it. Make it an urgent question and then you will have it answered before an hour passes, before a minute passes. When a man with all the earnestness of his soul cries out for God he finds Him, and finds Him right away. I swing back the door of the lost world, and if one word might come up, only one word of warning, what do you think that word

would be? I can imagine what it would be. Only one word. It would come up like the howling of the everlasting storm, that one word: "Now! Now!"

How did those young men miss heaven? "Oh," they said, "we'll wait until we get to mid-life or old age; time enough yet." But the train rushed from the track and their lives were dashed out, or their feet slipped on the icy pavement and their skulls were fractured, or typhoid fever came down and rushed them out of life in delirium. They never saw mid-life. How did those men in mid-life lose their soul? Oh, they were waiting until their business matters were fixed up. They never had an opportunity, a better opportunity, than that which was offered to them then, but they procrastinated, they adjourned, they adjourned the case until the bill of costs destroyed the case. Adjourned, and adjourned, and adjourned. Bonds, mortgages, certificates of stock, safety deposits, government securities, are of no use where they are now. How did those old men miss heaven? "Oh," they said, "we'll put it off until the very last." They put it off. Their hearts were hardened. They tried to pray, but they could not pray. They tried to believe, but they could not believe. They tried to repent, but they could not repent. And the old man leaned heavier and heavier on the staff of old age, heavier and heavier, until the staff broke and he fell headlong.

Oh, are there not in this house today those who are postponing until the last hour attending to the things of the soul? I give it as my opinion that ninety-nine out of the one hundred deathbed repentances amount to nothing. Of all the scores of persons mentioned as dying in the Bible, how many do you read of that successfully repented in the last hour? Fifty? No. Forty? No. Thirty? No. Twenty? No. Ten? No. Five? No. One—only one, barely one, as if to demonstrate the fact that there is a bare possibility of repenting in the last hour, was saved. But that is improbable, awfully improbable, terrifically improbable. One hundred to one against the man. If, my brother, my sister, you have ever seen a man try to repent in the last

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hour, you have seen something very sad. I do not know anything on earth so sad as to see a man try to repent on a death-bed. There is not from the moment that life begins to breathe in infancy to the last gasp such an unfavorable, completely unfavorable, hour for repentance as the death hour, the last hour. There are the doctors standing with the medicines. There is the lawyer standing with the half-written will. There is the family in consternation as to what is to become of them. All the bells of eternity ringing the soul out of the body. All the past rising before us and all the future. Angels flying through the room. Devils plotting for the overthrow. Oh, that man is an infinite fool, an infinite fool, who procrastinates to the death-bed his repentance!

My text does not answer the question. It only asks it, with deep and importunate earnestness asks it, and, according to the rules of sermonizing, you would say, "Adjourn that to some other time." But I dare not. What are the rules of sermonizing to me when I am after souls? What other time could I have, when perhaps this is the only time? This might be my last time for preaching; this might be your last time for hearing.

After my friend in Philadelphia died, his children gave his church Bible to me and I read it, looked over it with much interest. I saw in the margin, written in lead pencil: "Mr. Talmage said this morning that the most useless thing in all God's universe is that any sinner should perish." I did not remember saying it, but it is true, and I say it now whether I said it then or not: the most useless thing in all God's universe is that any sinner should perish. Twelve gates wide open. Have you not heard how Christ bore our sorrows, and how sympathetic He is with all our woes? Have you not heard how that with all the sorrows of heart and all the agonies of hell upon Him He cried: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do"? By His feet blistered on the mountain way—by His back whipped until the skin came off, by His death-couch of four spikes, two for the hands and two for the feet—by His sepulcher, in which for the first time for thirty-three years the cruel world let Him

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alone—and by the heavens from which He bends in compassion, offering pardon and peace, and life eternal to all your souls, I beg of you put down your all at His feet.

I saw one hanging on a tree
In agony and blood,
Who put his languid eyes on me
As near His cross I stood.

Oh, never till my latest breath,
Will I forget that look;
It seemed to charge me with His death,
Though not a word He spoke.

In the troubled times of Scotland, Sir John Cochrane was condemned to death by the king. The death warrant was on the way. Sir John Cochrane was bidding farewell to his daughter Grizelle at the prison door. He said: "Farewell, my darling child, I must die." His daughter said: "No, father, you shall not die." "But," he said, "the king is against me, and the law is after me, and the death warrant is on its way, and I must die; do not deceive yourself, my dear child." The daughter said: "Father, you shall not die," as she left the prison gate. At night, on the moors of Scotland, a disguised wayfarer stood waiting for the horseman carrying the mail bags containing the death warrant. The disguised wayfarer, as the horse came by, clutched the bridle and shouted to the rider—to the man who carried the mail bags: "Dismount!" He felt for his arms, and was about to shoot, but the wayfarer jerked him from his saddle and he fell flat. The wayfarer picked up the mail bags, put them on his shoulder and vanished in the darkness, and fourteen days were thus gained for the prisoner's life, during which the father confessor was pleading for the pardon of Sir John Cochrane. The second time the death warrant is on its way. The disguised wayfarer comes along, and asks for a little bread and a little wine, starts on across the moors, and they say: "Poor man, to have to go out such a stormy night; it

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is dark and you will lose yourself on the moors." "Oh, no," he says, "I will not." He trudged on and stopped amid the brambles and waited for the horseman to come carrying the mail bags containing the death warrant of Sir John Cochrane. The mail carrier spurred on his steed, for he was fearful because of what had occurred on the former journey, when suddenly through the storm and through the darkness there was a flash of firearms and the horse became unmanageable, and as the mail carrier discharged his pistol in response, the horse threw him, and the disguised wayfarer put his foot on the breast of the overthrown rider, and said: "Surrender now!" The mail carrier surrendered his arms, and the disguised wayfarer put upon his shoulders the mail bags, leaped upon the horse, and sped away into the darkness gaining fourteen more days for the poor prisoner, Sir John Cochrane. And before the fourteen days had expired pardon had come from the king. The door of the prison swung open, and Sir John Cochrane was free. One day, when he was standing amid his friends, they congratulating him, the disguised wayfarer appeared at the gate, and he said, "Admit him right away." The disguised wayfarer came in and said: "Here are two letters; read them, sir." Sir John Cochrane read them. They were his two death warrants, and he threw them into the fire. Then said Sir John Cochrane: "To whom am I indebted? Who is this poor wayfarer that saved my life? Who is it?" And the wayfarer pulled aside and pulled off the jerkin and the cloak, and the hat, and lo, it was Grizelle, the daughter of Sir John Cochrane. "Gracious heaven!" he cried, "my child, my saviour, my own Grizelle!"

But a more thrilling story. The death warrant had come forth from the King of heaven and earth. The death warrant read: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." The death warrant coming on the black horse of eternal night:—We must die! We must die! But breasting the storm and putting out through the darkness was a disguised wayfarer, who gripped by the bridle the oncoming doom and flung it back, and put his

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wounded and bleeding foot on the overthrown rider. Meanwhile, pardon flashed from the throne, Go free! Open the gate! Strike off the chain! Go free! And today your liberated soul stands in the presence of the disguised wayfarer, and as He pulls off the disguise of robe, you find He is bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh, your brother, your Christ, your pardon, your eternal life. Let all earth and heaven break forth in praise. Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Thy kind arms I fall;
Be Thou my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all.

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Oh, small-souled man, when did God give you the contract for making gates?—TALMAGE.

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11. THE TWELVE-GATED GOSPEL



And the twelve gates were twelve pearls.—REVELATION 21:21.

OUR SUBJECT SPEAKS OF A GREAT METROPOLIS, THE EXISTENCE of which many have doubted. There has been a vast immigration into that city, but no emigration from it—so far as our natural vision can descry. “There is no such city,” says the un-devout astronomer. “I have stood in high towers with a mighty telescope, and have swept the heavens, and I have seen spots on the sun and caverns in the moon; but no towers have ever risen on my vision, no palaces, no temples, no shining streets, no massive wall. There is no such city.” Even very good people tell me that heaven is not a material organism, but a grand spiritual fact, and that the Bible descriptions of it are in all cases to be taken figuratively. I bring in reply to this what Christ said, and He ought to know: “I go to prepare”—not a theory, not a principle, not a sentiment; but “go to prepare a *place* for you.”

The resurrected body implies this. If my foot is to be re-formed from the dust, it must have something to tread on. If my hand is to be reconstructed, it must have something to handle. If my eye, having gone out in death, is to be rekindled, I must have something to gaze on. Your adverse theory seems to imply the resurrected body is to be hung on nothing, or to walk in air, or to float amid the intangibles. You tell us that

if there be material organisms, then a soul in heaven will be cramped and hindered in its enjoyments; but I answer: Did not Adam and Eve have plenty of room in the Garden of Eden? Although only a few yards or a few miles would have described the circumference of that place, they had ample room. And do you not suppose that God, in the immensities, can build a place large enough to give the whole race room, even though there be material organisms? Herschel looked into the heavens. As a Swiss guide puts his alpenstock between the glaciers, and crosses over from crag to crag, so Herschel planted his telescope between the worlds and glided from star to star, until he could announce to us that we live in a part of the universe but sparsely strewn with worlds; and he peers out into immensity until he finds a region no larger than our solar system in which there are fifty thousand worlds moving. And Professor Lang says that, by a philosophic reasoning, there must be somewhere a world where there is no darkness, but everlasting sunshine; so that I do not know but that it is simply because we have no telescope powerful enough that we cannot see into the land where there is no darkness at all, and catch a glimpse of the burnished pinnacles. As a conquering army, marching on to take a city, comes at nightfall to the crest of a mountain from which, in the midst of the landscape, they can see the castles they are to capture, rein in their war chargers and halt to take a good look before they pitch their tents for the night, so now, coming as we do on this mountain-top of prospect, I command this regiment of God to rein in their thoughts and halt, and before they pitch their tents for the night take one good, long look at the gates of the great city. "And the twelve gates were twelve pearls."

In the first place I want you to examine *the architecture of those gates*. Proprietors of large estates are very apt to have an ornamented gateway. Sometimes they spring an arch of masonry, the posts of the gate flanked with lions in statuary; the bronze gate is a representation of intertwining foliage, bird-haunted, until the hand of architectural genius drops ex-

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hausted, all its life frozen into the stone. Babylon had a hundred gates; so had Thebes. Gates of wood, and iron, and stone guarded nearly all the old cities. Moslems have inscribed upon their gateways inscriptions from the Koran of the Mahomedan. There have been a great many fine gateways, but Christ sets hand to the work, and for the upper city He swung a gate such as no eye ever gazed on untouched of inspiration. With the nail of His own cross He cut into it wonderful traceries, stories of past suffering and of gladness to come. There is no wood, or stone, or bronze in that gate, but from top to base, and from side to side, it is all of pearl. Not one piece picked up from Ceylon banks, and another piece from the Persian Gulf, and another piece from the island of Margarette; but one solid pearl picked up from the beach of everlasting light by heavenly hands, and hoisted and swung amid the shouting of angels. The glories of alabaster vase and porphyry pillar fade out before this gateway. It puts out the spark of feldspar and Bohemian diamond. You know how one little precious stone on your finger will flash under the lamp-light. But O! the brightness when the great gate of heaven swings, struck through and dripping with the light of eternal noonday. Julius Cæsar paid a hundred and twenty-five thousand crowns for one pearl. The Government of Portugal boasted of having a pearl larger than a pear. Cleopatra and Philip II dazzled the world's vision with precious stones. But gather all these together, and lift them, and add to them all the wealth of the pearl fisheries, and set them in the panel of one door, and it does not equal this magnificent gateway. An almighty hand hewed this, swung this, polished this.

Against this gateway, on the one side, dash all the splendors of earthly beauty. Against this gate on the other side beat the surges of eternal glory. O! the gate! the gate! It strikes an infinite charm through everyone that passes it. One step this side that gate and we are paupers. One step the other side that gate and we are kings. The pilgrim of earth going through sees in the one huge pearl all his earthly tears in crystal. O! the gate

of light! gate of pearl! gate of heaven! For our weary souls at last swing open:

When shall these eyes Thy heaven-built walls
And pearly gates behold;
Thy bulwarks with salvation strong,
And streets of shining gold?

O! Heaven is not a dull place. Heaven is not a contracted place. Heaven is not a stupid place. "I saw the twelve gates, and they were twelve pearls."

In the second place I want you to *count the number of those gates*. Imperial parks and lordly manors are apt to have one expensive gateway, and the others are ordinary; but look around at these entrances to heaven, and count them. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve. Hear it, all the earth and all the heavens. Twelve gates! I admit this is rather hard on sharp sectarians! Here is a bigoted Presbyterian who brings his Westminster Assembly Catechism, and he makes a gateway out of that, and he says to the world: "You go through there or stay out." And here is a bigoted member of the Reformed Church, and he makes a gate out of the Heidelberg Catechism, and he says: "You go through there or stay out." And here is a bigoted Methodist, and he plants two posts, and he says: "Now, you crowd in between those two posts or stay out." And here is a bigoted Episcopalian, who says: "Here is a liturgy out of which I mean to make a gate: go through it or stay out." And here is a bigoted Baptist, who says: "Here is a water-gate: you go through that or you must stay out." And so on in all our churches and in all our denominations there are men who make one gate for themselves, and then demand that the whole world go through it. I abhor this contractedness in religious views.

Oh, small-souled man, when did God give you the contract for making gates? I tell you plainly I will not go in at that gate. I will go in at any one of the twelve gates I choose. Here is a man who says: "I can more easily and more closely approach

my God through a prayer-book." I say: "My brother, then use the prayer-book." Here is a man who says: "I believe there is only one mode of baptism, and that is immersion." Then I say: "Let me plunge you!" Anyhow, I say, away with the gate of rough panel, and rotten posts, and rusted latch, when there are twelve gates and they are twelve pearls. The fact is, a great many of the churches in this day are being doctored to death. They have been trying for twenty-five years to find out all about God's decrees, and they want to know who are elected to be saved and who are reprobated to be damned, and they are keeping on discussing that subject when there are millions of souls who need to have the truth put straight at them that unless they repent they will all be damned. They sit counting the number of teeth in the jaw-bone with which they are to slay the Philistines when they ought to be wielding skilfully the weapon. They sit on the beach and see a vessel going to pieces in the offing, and instead of getting into a boat and pulling away for the wreck, they sit discussing the different styles of oarlocks. God intended us to know some things, and intended us not to know others. I have heard scores of sermons explanatory of God's decrees, but came away more perplexed than when I went. The only result of such discussion is a great fog. Here are two truths which are to conquer the world: man, a sinner—Christ, a saviour. Any man who adopts those two theories in his religious belief shall have my right hand in warm grip of Christian brotherhood.

A man comes down to a river in time of freshet. He wants to get across. He has to swim. What does he do? The first thing is to put off his heavy apparel, and drop everything he has in his hands. He must go empty-handed if he is going to the other bank. And I tell you when we have come down to the river of death and find it swift and raging, we will have to put off all our sectarianism, and lay down all our lumbrous creeds, and empty-handed put out for the other shore. "What," say you, "would you resolve all the Christian Church into one kind of church? Would you make all Christendom worship in

the same way, by the same forms?" Oh, no. You might as well decide that all people shall eat the same kind of food without reference to appetite, or wear the same kind of apparel without reference to the shape of their body. Your ancestry, your temperament, your surroundings will decide whether you go to this or that church, and adopt this or that church polity. One church will best get one man to heaven, and another church another man.

I am not opposed to fences being built around denominations of Christians. I am not opposed to a very high fence being built around each of the denominations of Christians; but I do say that in every fence there ought to be bars that you can let down, and a gate that you can swing open. Go home, therefore, today, and take your Bible and get down on your knees before God, and make your own creed. I am not opposed to creeds; I believe in them; but a creed that does not reach down to the depth of a man's immortal nature is not worth the paper that it is printed on. I do not care which one of the gates you go through, if only you go through one of the twelve gates that Jesus lifted.

Well now, I see all the redeemed of earth coming up toward heaven. Do you think they will get in? Yes. Gate the first: the Moravians come up; they believed in the Lord Jesus Christ; they pass through. Gate the second: the Quakers come up; they have received the inward light; they have trusted in the Lord; they pass through. Gate the third: the Lutherans come up; they had a great admiration for the reformer, and received the same grace that made Luther what he was, and they pass through. Gate the fourth: many of the Roman Catholics come up who look beyond the superstitions of their church, and, believing in salvation by Jesus Christ, they pass through. Gate the fifth: the German Reformed Church passes through. Gate the sixth: the Congregationalists pass through. Gate the seventh: the Baptists pass through. Gate the eighth: the Episcopalians pass through. Gate the ninth the Sabbatarians pass through. Gate the tenth: the Methodists pass through. Gate

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the eleventh: the Reformed Dutch Church passes through. Gate the twelfth: the Presbyterians pass through. But there are a great host of other denominations who must come in, and great multitudes who connected themselves with no visible church, but felt the power of godliness in their heart, and showed it in their life. Where is their gate? Will you shut all this remaining host out of the city? No. They may come in at our gate. Hosts of God, if you cannot get admission through any other entrance, come in at the twelfth gate.

Look out on the one hundred and forty and four thousand, and you cannot tell at what gate they came in. One Lord. One faith. One baptism. One glassy sea. One doxology. One triumph. One heaven. "Why, Luther, how did you get in?" "I came through the third gate." "Cranmer, how did you get in?" "I came through the eighth gate." "Adoniram Judson, how did you get through?" "I came through the seventh gate." "Hugh McKail, the martyr, how did you get through?" "I came through the twelfth gate." Glory to God! One heaven, but twelve gates.

In the third place, *notice the points of the compass toward which these gates look.* They are not on one side, or on two sides, or on three sides, but on four sides. This is no fancy of mine, but a distinct announcement. On the north, three gates; on the south, three gates; on the east, three gates; on the west, three gates. What does that mean? Why, it means that all nationalities are included, and it does not make any difference from what quarter of the earth a man comes up; if his heart is right, there is a gate open before him. On the north, three gates. That means mercy for Lapland, and Siberia, and Norway, and Sweden. On the south, three gates. That means pardon for Hindustan, and Algiers, and Ethiopia. On the east, three gates. That means salvation for China, and Japan, and Borneo. On the west, three gates. That means redemption for America. It does not make any difference how dark-skinned or how pale-faced men may be, they will find a gate right before them. Those plucked bananas under a tropical sun. Those

behind reindeer shot across Russian snows. From Mexican plateau, from Roman campania, from Chinese tea-field, from Holland dyke, from Scotch highlands, they come, they come. Heaven is not a monopoly for a few precious souls. It is not a Windsor Castle, built only for royal families. It is not a small town with a small population. But John saw it, and he noticed that an angel was measuring it, and he measured it this way, and then he measured it that way, and whichever way he measured it, it was fifteen hundred miles, so that Babylon and Thebes, and Tyre and Nineveh, and St. Petersburg and Canton, and Pekin and Paris, and London and New York, and all the dead cities of the past, and all the living cities of the present added together, would not equal the census of that great metropolis. Walking along a street, you can, by the contour of the dress, or of the face, guess where a man came from. You say: "That is a Frenchman; that is a Norwegian; that is an American." But the gates that gather in the righteous will bring them irrespective of nationality. Foreigners sometimes get homesick. Some of the tenderest and most pathetic stories have been told of those who left their native clime, and longed for it until they died. But the Swiss, coming to the high residence of heaven, will not long any more for the Alps, standing in the eternal hills. The Russian will not long any more for the luxuriant harvest fields he left, now that he hears the hum and the rustle of the harvests of everlasting light. The royal ones from earth will not long to go back again to the earthly court now that they stand in the palaces of the sun. Those who once lived among the groves of spice and oranges will not long to return, now that they stand under the trees of life that bear twelve manner of fruit.

While I speak, an ever-increasing throng is pouring through the gates. They are going up from Senegambia, from Patagonia, from Madras, from Hong Kong. "What!" you say, "do you introduce all the heathen into glory?" I tell you the fact is, the majority of the people in those climes die in infancy, and the infants all go straight into eternal life, and so the vast

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majority of those who die in China and India, the vast majority of those who die in Africa, go straight into the skies; they die in infancy. One hundred and sixty generations have been born since the world was created, and so I estimate that there must be fifteen thousand million children in glory. If at a concert two thousand children sing, your soul is raptured within you. Oh, the transport when fifteen thousand million little ones stand up in white before the throne of God, their chanting drawing out all the stupendous harmonies of Dusseldorf, and Leipzig, and Boston! Pour in through the twelve gates, oh, ye redeemed—banners lifted, rank after rank, saved battalion after saved battalion, until all the city of God shall hear the tramp, tramp!

Room yet. Room on the thrones. Room in the mansions. Room on the river bank. Let the trumpet of invitation be sounded until all earth's mountains hear the shrill blast and the glens echo it. Let missionaries tell it in Pagoda, and colporteurs sound it across the Western prairies. Shout it to the Laplander on his swift sled; halloo it to the Bedouin careering across the desert. News! News! A glorious heaven and twelve gates to get into it! Hear it! Oh, you thin-blooded nations of eternal winter—on the north, three gates. Hear it! Oh, you bronzed inhabitants panting under equatorial heats—on the south, three gates.

But I notice when John saw these gates, they were open—wide open. They will not always be so. After a while heaven will have gathered up all its intended population, and the children of God will have come home. Every crown taken. Every harp struck. Every throne mounted. All the glories of the universe harvested in the great garner. And heaven being made up, of course the gates will be shut. Austria in, and the first gate shut. Russia in, and the second gate shut. Italy in, and the third gate shut. Egypt in, and the fourth gate shut. Spain in, and the fifth gate shut. France in, and the sixth gate shut. England in, and the seventh gate shut. Norway in, and the eighth gate shut. Switzerland in, and the ninth gate shut.

Hindustan in, and the tenth gate shut. Siberia in, and the eleventh gate shut. All the gates are closed but one. Now, let America go in with all the islands of the sea and all the other nations that have called on God. The captives all freed. The harvests all gathered. The nations all saved. The flashing splendor of this last pearl begins to move on its hinges. Let two mighty angels put their shoulders to the gate and heave it to with silvery clang. 'Tis done! The twelfth gate shut!

Once more, *I want to show you the gate-keeper*. There is one angel at each one of those gates. You say that is right. Of course it is. You know that no earthly palace, or castle, or fortress would be safe without a sentry pacing up and down by night and by day; and if there were no defenses before heaven, and the doors set wide open with no one to guard them, all the vicious of earth would go up after a while, and all the abandoned of hell would go up after a while, and heaven, instead of being a world of light, and joy, and peace, and blessedness, would be a world of darkness and horror. So I am glad to tell you that while these twelve gates stand open to let a great multitude in, there are twelve angels to keep some people out. Robespierre cannot go through there, nor Hildebrand, nor Nero, nor any of the debauched of earth who have not repented of their wickedness. If one of these nefarious men who despised God should come to the gate, one of the keepers would put his hand on his shoulder and push him into outer darkness. There is no place in that land for thieves, and liars, and whoremongers, and defrauders, and all those who disgraced their race and fought against their God. If a miser should get in there he would pull up the golden pavement. If a house-burner should get in there he would set fire to the mansions. If a libertine should get in there he would whisper his abominations, standing on the white coral of the sea-beach. Only those who are blood-washed and prayer-lipped will get through.

Oh, my brother, if you should at last come up to one of the gates and try to pass through, and you had not a pass written

by the crushed hand of the Son of God, the gate-keeper would with one glance wither you forever.

There will be a password at the gate of heaven. Do you know what that password is? Here comes a crowd of souls up to the gate, and they say: "Let me in, let me in. I was very useful on earth. I endowed colleges, I built churches, and was famous for my charities; and having done so many wonderful things for the world, now I come up to get my reward." A voice from within says: "I never knew you." Another great crowd comes up, and they try to get through. They say: "We were highly honorable on earth, and the world bowed very lowly before us. We were honored on earth, and now we come up to get our honors in heaven"; and a voice from within says: "I never knew you." Another crowd advances, and says: "We were very moral people on earth, very moral indeed, and we come up to get appropriate recognition." A voice answers: "I never knew you." After a while I see another throng approach the gate, and one seems to be spokesman for all the rest, although their voices ever and anon cry: "Amen! amen!" This one stands at the gate, and says: "Let me in. I was a wanderer from God. I deserve to die. I have come up to this place, not because I deserved it, but because I have heard that there is a saving power in the blood of Jesus." The gate-keeper says: "That is the password, 'Jesus! Jesus!'" and they pass in, and they surround the throne, and the cry is: "Worthy is the lamb that was slain, to receive blessings and riches and honor and glory and power, world without end!"

I stand here, this hour, to invite you into any one of the twelve gates. I tell you now that unless your heart is changed by the grace of God, you cannot get in. Oh, when heaven is all done, and the troops of God shout the castle taken, how grand it will be if you and I are among them. Blessed are all they who enter in through the gates into the city.

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I cannot put my head on the pillow tonight until I have once more invited you to Christ. I feel a burden like a mountain on my soul. . . .

12. THE FOUR INSTALLMENTS

Ye are bought with a price.—I. CORINTHIANS 6:20.

YOUR FRIEND TAKES YOU THROUGH HIS VALUABLE HOUSE. YOU examine the arches, the fresco, the grass plots, the fish ponds, the conservatories, the parks of deer, and you say within yourself, or you say aloud: "What did all this cost?" You see a costly diamond flashing in an earring, or you hear a costly dress rustling across the drawing-room, or you see a high-mettled span of horses harnessed with silver and gold, and you begin to make an estimate of the value. The man who owns a large estate cannot instantly tell you what it is all worth. He says: "I will estimate so much for the house, so much for the furniture, so much for laying out the grounds, so much for the stock, so much for the barn, so much for the equipage—adding up in all making this aggregate."

Well, my friends, I hear so much about our mansion in heaven, about its furniture and the grand surroundings, that I want to know how much it is all worth and what has actually been paid for it. I cannot complete in a month or a year the magnificent calculation; but before I get through tonight, I hope to give you the figures. "Ye are bought with a price."

With some friends, I went into London Tower to look at the crown jewels of England. We walked around, caught one glimpse of them, and being in the procession were compelled to pass out. I wish that tonight I could take this audience into the tower of God's mercy and strength, that you might walk

around just once, at least, and see the crown jewels of eternity, behold their brilliance, and estimate their value. "Ye are bought with a price." Now, if you have a large amount of money to pay, you do not pay it all at once, but you pay it by installments—so much the first of January, so much the first of April, so much the first of July, so much the first of October, until the entire amount is paid. And I have to tell this audience that "you have been bought with a price," and that that price was paid in different installments.

The first installment paid for the clearance of our souls was the ignominious birth of Christ in Bethlehem. Though we may never be carefully looked after afterward, our advent into the world is carefully guarded. We come into the world amid kindly attentions. Privacy and silence are afforded when God launches an immortal soul into the world. Even the roughest of men know enough to stand back. But I have to tell you that in the village on the side of the hill, there was a very bedlam of uproar when Jesus was born. In a village capable of accommodating only a few hundred people, many thousand people were crowded; and amid ostlers, and muleteers, and camel drivers yelling at stupid beasts of burden, the Messiah appeared. No silence. No privacy. A better adapted place hath the eaglet in the eyrie—hath the whelp in the lion's lair. The exile of heaven lieth down upon the straw. The first night out from the palace of heaven spent in an outhouse. One hour after laying aside the robes of heaven, dressed in a wrapper of coarse linen. One would have supposed that Christ would have made a more gradual descent, coming from heaven first to a half-way world of great magnitude, then to Cæsar's palace, then to a merchant's castle in Galilee, then to a private home in Bethany, then to a fisherman's hüt, and last of all, to the stable. No, it was one leap from the top to the bottom!

Let us open the door of the caravansary in Bethlehem and drive away the camels. Press on through the group of idlers and loungers. What, Mary, no light? "No light," she says, "save that which comes through the door." What, Mary, no food?

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"None," she says, "except that which is brought in the sack on the journey." Let the Bethlehem woman who has come in here with kindly affections put back the covering from the Babe that we may look upon it. Look! Look! Uncover the head. Let us kneel. Let all voices be hushed. Son of Mary! Son of God! Child of a day—Monarch of eternity! In that eye the glance of a God. Omnipotence sheathed in that Babe's arm. That voice to be changed from the feeble plaint to the tone that shall wake the dead.

Hosanna! Hosanna! Glory be to God that Jesus came from throne to manger that we might rise from manger to throne, and that all the gates are open, and that the door of heaven, that once swung this way to let Jesus out, now swings the other way to let us in. Let all the bell-men of heaven lay hold of the rope and ring out the news: "Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy which shall be to all people; for today is born, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord!"

The second installment paid for our soul's clearance was the scene in *Quarantania*, a mountainous region full of caverns, where there are to this day panthers and wild beasts of all sorts, so that you must now, the traveler says, go there armed with knife, or gun, or pistol. It was there that Jesus went to think and to pray, and it was there that this monster of hell—more sly, more terrific than anything that prowled in that country—Satan himself, met Christ. The rose in the cheek of Christ—that Publius Lentullus, in his letter to the Roman Senate, ascribed to Jesus—that rose had scattered its petals. Abstinence from food had thrown Him into emaciation. The longest abstinence from food recorded in profane history is that of the crew of the ship *Juno*; for twenty-three days they had nothing to eat. But this sufferer had fasted a month and ten days before He broke fast.

Hunger must have agonized every fiber of the body, and gnawed on the stomach with teeth of death. The thought of a morsel of bread or meat must have thrilled the body with

something like ferocity. Turn out a pack of men hungry as Christ was ahungred, and if they had strength, with one yell they would devour you as a lion a kid. It was in that pang of hunger that Jesus was accosted, and Satan said: "Now change those stones which look like bread into an actual supply of bread." Had the temptation come to you and me, under those circumstances, we would have cried: "Bread it shall be!" and been almost impatient at the time taken for mastication; but Christ with one hand beat back the hunger, and with the other hand beat back the monarch of darkness. Oh, ye tempted ones, Christ was tempted. We are told that Napoleon ordered a coat of mail made; but he was not quite certain that it was impenetrable, so he said to the manufacturer of that coat of mail: "Put it on now yourself and let us try it"; and with shot after shot from his own pistol, the emperor found out that it was just what it pretended to be—a good coat of mail. Then the man received a large reward. I bless God that the same coat of mail that struck back the weapons of temptation from the heart of Christ we may now all wear; for Jesus comes and says: "I have been tempted, and I know what it is to be tempted. Take this robe that defended me, and wear it for yourselves. I shall see you through all trials and I shall see you through all temptation."

"But," says Satan still further to Jesus, "come, and I will show you something worth looking at," and after a half-day's journey they came to Jerusalem, and to the top of the Temple. Just as one might go up in the tower of Antwerp and look off upon Belgium, so Satan brought Christ to the top of the Temple. Some people at a great height feel dizzy, and have a strange disposition to jump; so Satan comes to Christ with a powerful temptation in that very crisis. Standing there at the top of the Temple they look off. A magnificent reach of country. Grain fields, vineyards, olive groves, forests, and streams, cattle in the valley, flocks on the hills, and villages, and cities, and realms. "Now," says Satan, "I'll make a bargain. Just

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jump off. I know it is a great way from the top of the Temple to the valley, but if you are divine you can fly. Jump off. It won't hurt you. Angels will catch you. Your Father will hold you. Besides, I'll make you a large present if you will. I'll give you Asia Minor, I'll give you India, I'll give you China, I'll give you Ethiopia, I'll give you Italy, I'll give you Spain, I'll give you Germany, I'll give you Britain, I'll give you all the world." What a temptation it must have been!

Go tomorrow morning and get in an altercation with some wretch crawling up from a gin cellar in the fourth ward, New York. "No," you say, "I would not bemean myself by getting in such a contest." Then think of what the King of heaven and earth endured when He came down and fought that great wretch of hell, and fought him in the wilderness and on top of the Temple. But I bless God that in that triumph over temptation Christ gives us the assurance that we also shall triumph. Having Himself been tempted, He is able to succor all those who are tempted. In a violent storm at sea, the mate told a boy—for the rigging had become entangled at the mast—to go up and right it. A gentleman standing on the deck said: "Don't send that boy up; he will be dashed to death." The mate said: "I know what I am about." The boy raised his hat in recognition of the order, and then rose hand over hand and went to work; and as he swung in the storm the passengers wrung their hands and expected to see him fall. The work done, he came down in safety; and a Christian man said to him: "Why did you go down in the forecastle before you went up?" "Ah," said the boy, "I went down to pray. My mother always taught me before I undertook anything great to pray." "What is that you have in your vest?" said the man. "Oh, that is the New Testament," he said, "I thought I would carry it with me if I really did go overboard." How well that boy was protected. I care not how great the height or how vast the depth, with Christ within us, and Christ beneath us, and Christ above us, and Christ all around us, nothing shall befall us in

the way of harm. Christ Himself having been in the tempest, will deliver all those who put their trust in Him. Blessed be His glorious name forever.

The third installment paid for our redemption was the Saviour's sham trial. I call it a sham trial—there has never been anything so indecent or unfair in the Tombs Court of New York as was witnessed at the trial of Christ. Why, they hustled Him into the courtroom at two o'clock in the morning. They gave Him no time for counsel. They gave Him no opportunity for subpoenaing witnesses. The ruffians who were wandering around through the midnight of course saw the arrest and went into the courtroom. But Jesus' friends were sober men, were respectable men, and at that hour, two o'clock in the morning, of course they were at home asleep. Consequently, Christ entered the courtroom with the ruffians.

No one to speak a word for Him. I lift the lantern until I can look into His face, and as my heart beats in sympathy for this, the best friend the world ever had, Himself now utterly friendless, an officer of the court comes up and smites Him in the mouth, and I see the blood stealing from gum and lip. Oh, it was a farce of a trial, lasting only perhaps an hour, and then the judge rises for the sentence. Stop! It is against the law to give sentence unless there has been an adjournment of the court between condemnation and sentence; but what cares the judge for the law? "The man has no friends—let Him die," says the judge, and the ruffians outside the rail cry: "Aha! aha! that's what we want. Pass Him out here to us. Away with Him, away with Him." Oh, I bless God that amid all the injustice that may be inflicted upon us in this world we have a Divine sympathizer. The world cannot lie about you nor abuse you as much as they did Christ, and Jesus stands today in every courtroom, in every home, in every store, and says: "Courage! By all my hours of maltreatment and abuse I will protect those who are trampled on." And when Christ forgets that two o'clock morning scene, and the stroke of the ruffian on the mouth, and the howling of the unwashed crowd, then He will

forget you and me in the injustices of life that may be inflicted upon us.

Further, I remark, the last great installment paid for our redemption was the demise of Christ. Three or four summers ago there was a very dark day when the sun was eclipsed. The fowl at noonday went to their perch, and we felt a gloom as we looked at the astronomical wonder. It was a dark day in London when the plague was at its height, and the dead, with uncovered faces, were taken in open carts and dumped in the trenches. It was a dark day when the earth opened and Lisbon sank; but the darkest day since the creation of the world was when the carnage of Calvary was enacted. It was about noon when the curtain began to be drawn. It was not the coming-on of a night that soothes and refreshes; it was the swinging of a great gloom all around the heavens. God hung it. As when there is a dead one in the house you close the shutters or turn the lattice, so God in the afternoon shut the windows of the world. As it is appropriate to throw a black pall upon the coffin as it passes along, so it was appropriate that everything should be somber that day as the great hearse of the earth rolled on, bearing the corpse of the King.

A man's last hours are ordinarily kept sacred. However you may have hated or caricatured a man, when you hear he is dying, silence puts its hand on your lips, and you would have a loathing for the man who could stand by a deathbed making faces and scoffing. But Christ in His last hour cannot be left alone. What, pursuing Him yet, after so long a pursuit? You have been drinking His tears. Do you want to drink His blood? They come up closely, so that notwithstanding the darkness they can glut their revenge with the contortions of His countenance. They examine His feet. They want to feel for themselves whether those feet are really spiked. They put out their hands, and touch the spikes, and bring them back wet with blood, and wipe them on their garments.

Women stand there and weep, but can do no good. It is no place for tender-hearted women. It wants a heart that crime

has turned into granite. The waves of man's hatred and of hell's vengeance dash up against the mangled feet, and the hands of sin and pain and torture clutch for His holy heart. Had He not been thoroughly fastened to the cross they would have torn Him down and trampled Him with both feet. How the cavalry horses arched their necks, and champed their bits and reared, and snuffed at the blood. Had a Roman officer called out for a light his voice would not have been heard in the tumult; but louder than the clash of the spears, and the wailing of womanhood, and the neighing of the chargers, and the bellowing of the crucifiers, there comes a voice crashing through, loud, clear, overwhelming, terrific. It is the groan of the dying Son of God! Look! What a scene! Look, oh, world, at what you have done. I lift the covering from that maltreated Christ to let you count the wounds and estimate the cost. Oh, when the nails went through Christ's right hand and through Christ's left hand—that bought both your hands with all their power to work, and lift, and write. When the nail went through Christ's right foot and Christ's left foot—that bought your feet, with all their power to walk, or run, or climb. When the thorn went into Christ's temple, that bought your brain with all its power to think and plan. When the spear cleft Christ's side, that bought your heart with all its power to love, and repent, and pray.

If a man is in no pain, if he is prospered, if he is well and he asks you to come, you take your time, and you say: "I can't come now. I'll come after a while. There is no haste." But if he is in want and trouble, you say: "I must go right away. I must go now." Tonight Jesus stretches out before you two wounded hands, and He begs you to come. Go, and you live. Stay away, and you die. Oh, that to Him who bought us we might give all our time, and all our prayers, and all our successes. I would we could think of nothing else, that we could do nothing else but come to Christ. He is so fair, He is so loving, He is so sympathizing, He is so good, I wish we could put our arms around his neck and say: "Thine, Lord,

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will I be forever." Oh that tonight you would begin to love Him. Would that I could take this audience and wreath it around the heart of my Lord Jesus Christ.

When in 1865 the Atlantic Cable was lost, do you remember that the *Great Eastern* and the *Medway* and the *Albany* went out to find it? Thirty times they sank the grapnel two-and-a-half miles deep in the water. After a while they found the cable and brought it to the surface. No sooner had it been brought to the surface than they lifted a shout of exultation, but the cable slipped back again into the water and was lost. Then for two weeks more they swept the sea with the grappling hooks, and at last they found the cable and they brought it up in silence. They fastened it this time. Then, with great excitement, they took one end of the cable to the electrician's room to see if there were really any life in it, and when they saw a spark and knew that a message could be sent, then every head was lifted, and the rockets flew, and the guns sounded, until all the vessels on the expedition knew the work was done and the continents were lashed together. Well, my friends, Sabbath after Sabbath we have come searching down for your soul. We have swept the sea with the grappling hook of Christ's Gospel. Again and again we have thought that you were at the surface, and we began to rejoice over your redemption; but at the moment of our gladness you sank back again into the world, and back again into sin. Tonight we come with this Gospel searching for your soul. We apply the cross of Christ first to see whether there is any life left in you, while all around the people stand, looking to see whether the work will be done, and the angels of God bend down and witness, and, oh, if now we could see only one spark of love, and hope, and faith, we would send up a shout that would be heard on the battlements of heaven, and two worlds would keep jubilee because communication is open between Christ and the soul, and your nature that has been sunk in sin has been lifted into the light and the joy of the Gospel.

I cannot put my head to the pillow tonight until I have once

more invited you to Christ. I feel a burden like a mountain on my soul. Must I meet this audience at the judgment-seat of Christ? Must we all be there? They shall come from the East, and the West, and from the North, and from the South, host above host, gallery above gallery, ten thousand times ten thousand. And will I be there, and will you be there, and must we give an account for this night's confronting and this night's work? Oh, Lord Jesus, lay hold of their souls this moment by thy grace, and if I never preach again, now let me call them to thyself, and implore them with tears to seek for the salvation of their souls. "This night thy soul may be required of thee, then whose shall these things be thou hast provided?" Oh, my brother, will you not now attend to the things of your soul? Shall not this be the moment when your salvation shall be reported in heaven? For many of you how many prayers have been offered? Father prayed for you. Mother prayed for you. Your Christian wives have been praying for you. Perhaps your Christian children have been praying for you, and yet you have not found the mercy of the Cross. Oh, Lord, save that man. Now is the accepted time. Now is the day of deliverance. Is there no charm in heaven? Is there no horror in hell? Is there no loveliness in the Cross? Is there no grandeur in the judgment, that your souls are not moved? "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come" and look at the fountain bursting from beneath the Rock of Ages. Though you have been wandering a great way off, though during this past week you have been to a place of which you would not like to tell your best friend, though you have wasted your estate of blessing, though you have been wandering on these ten or fifteen years with your back turned to all early Christian influences, you may this night accept Christ and be saved.

I have wondered these many years why so many people come to hear the Gospel as I preach it. You know I have not smoothed over anything. I believe they want to be saved, and I believe you have been sitting and standing tonight anxious after God and heaven. Though I tell you these plain truths

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in a plain way, with no possible earthly charm, you know what I tell you is true. You are an immortal soul, bound to the bar of God, and there is a heaven and there is a hell, and there is only one way of escaping the darkness, and there is only one way of winning a crown. May God Almighty, by His Spirit, raise in power what tonight has been sown in weakness, and when all these scenes have passed away, and you no more sit under the sounding of the Gospel, and it is no longer my joy to preach it on earth, may we enter into the blessed assemblage that stands around about the throne of God. No sorrow there. No sin there. No death there. Singing the eternal doxologies of the redeemed—oh, may that be our happy lot. God forbid that one of you should miss heaven.

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I preach to you a poor man's Christ.—TALMAGE.

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13. THE SPLENDID YOUNG MAN

One thing thou lackest.—MARK 10:21.

THE YOUNG MAN OF THE TEXT WAS OF A SPLENDID NATURE. WE fall in love with him at the first glance. He was amiable, and frank, and earnest, and educated, and refined, and respectable, and moral, and yet he was not a Christian. And so Christ addresses him in the words that I have read to you: "One thing thou lackest." I suppose that that text was no more appropriate to the young man of whom I have spoken than it is appropriate to the great multitude of people in this audience tonight. There are many things in which you are not lacking. For instance, you are not lacking in a good home. It is, perhaps, no more than an hour ago that you closed the door, returning to see whether it was well fastened, of one of the best homes in this city. The younger children of the house already asleep, the older ones, hearing your returning footsteps, will rush to the door to meet you. And when the winter evenings come, and the children are at their lessons, your wife is plying the needle, and you are reading a book or the paper, you will feel that you have a good home. Neither are you lacking, my friends, in the refinements and courtesies of life. You understand the polite phraseology of invitation, regards, and apology. I hope that you have on your best apparel. I shall wear no better dress at the wedding than when I come to the marriage of the King's Son. If I am well clothed on other occasions, I will be in the house of God. However reckless I may be about

my personal appearance at other times, when I come into a consecrated assemblage I shall have on the best clothes I have. We all understand the proprieties of everyday life and the proprieties of Sabbath life. Neither are you lacking in worldly success. You have not made as much money as you would like to make, but you have an income. While others are false when they say they have no income or are making no money, you have never told that falsehood. You have had a livelihood or you have fallen upon old resources, which is just the same thing, for God is just as good to us when He takes care of us by a surplus of the past as by present success. While, tonight, there are thousands of men with hunger tearing at the throat with the strength of a tiger's paw, not one of you is hungry. Neither are you lacking in pleasant friendship. You have real good friends. If the scarlet fever should come tonight to your house, you know very well who would come in and sit up with the sick one; or, if death should come, you know who would come in and take your hand tight in theirs with that peculiar grip which means, "I'll stand by you," and after the life has fled from the loved one, take you by the arm and lead you into the next room, and while you are gone to Greenwood they would stay in the house and put aside the garments and the playthings that might bring to your mind too severely your great loss. Friends! You all have friends. Neither are you lacking in your admiration of the Christian religion. There is nothing that makes you so angry as to have a man malign Christ. You get red in the face, and you say: "Sir, I want you to understand that though I am not myself a Christian, I don't like such things said as that in my store," and the man goes off, giving you a parting salutation, but you hardly answer him. You are provoked beyond all bounds. Many of you have been supporters of religion and have given more to the cause of Christ than some who profess His faith. There is nothing that would please you more than to see your son or daughter standing at the altar of Christ, taking the vows of the Christian. It might be a little hard on you, and might make you nervous

and agitated for a little while; but you would be man enough to say: "My child, that is right. Go on. I am glad you haven't been kept back by my example. I hope some day to join you." You believe all the doctrines of religion. A man out yonder says: "I am a sinner." You respond: "So am I." Someone says: "I believe that Christ came to save the world." You say: "So do I." Looking at your character, at your surroundings, I find a thousand things about which to congratulate you; and yet I must tell you in the love and fear of God, and with reference to my last account: "One thing thou lackest."

You need, my friends, in the first place, *the element of happiness*. Some day you feel wretched. You do not know what is the matter with you. You say: "I did not sleep last night. I think that must be the reason of my restlessness"; or, "I have eaten something that did not agree with me, and I think that must be the reason." And you are unhappy. Oh, my friends, happiness does not depend on physical condition. Some of the happiest people I have ever known have been those who have been wrapped in consumption, or paralyzed with neuralgia, or burning with the slow fire of some fever. I never shall forget one man in my first parish, who, in excruciation of body, cried out: "Mr. Talmage, I forget all my pain in the love and joy of Jesus Christ. I can't think of my sufferings when I think of Christ." Why, his face was illumined. I shall never forget it. There are young men in this house tonight who would give testimony to show that there is no happiness outside of Christ, while there is great joy in His service. There are young men who have not been Christians more than six months, who would stand up tonight, if I should ask them, and say that in those six months they have had more joy and satisfaction than in all the years of their frivolity and dissipation. Go to the door of that gin-shop tonight, and when the gang of young men come out, ask them whether they are happy. They laugh along the street, and they cheer, and they shout; but nobody has any idea that they are happy.

I could call upon the aged men in this house to give testi-

mony. There are aged men here who tried the world, and they tried religion, and they are willing to testify on our side. It was not long ago that an aged man arose in a praying circle, and said: "Brethren, I lost my son just as he graduated from college, and it broke my heart; but I am glad now he is gone. He is at rest, escaped from all sorrow and from all trouble. And then, in 1857, I lost all my property, and you see I am getting a little old, and it is rather hard upon me; but I am sure God will not let me suffer. He has not taken care of me for seventy-five years now to let me drop out of His hands." I went into the room of an ancient relative not long ago—his eyesight nearly gone, his hearing nearly gone—and what do you suppose he was talking about? The goodness of God and the joys of religion. He said: "I would like to go over and join my wife on the other side of the flood, and I am waiting until the Lord calls me. I am happy now. I shall be happy there." What is it that gives that aged man so much satisfaction and peace? Physical exuberance? No; it has all gone. Sunshine? He cannot see it. The voices of friends? He cannot hear them. It is the grace of God, that is brighter than sunshine and that is sweeter than music. If a harpist takes a harp and finds that all the strings but one are broken, he does not try to play upon it. Yet here I will show you an aged man, the strings of whose joy are all broken save one, and yet he thrums it with such satisfaction, such melody, that the angels of God stop the swift stroke of their wings, and hover about the place until the music ceases. Oh, religion's "ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." And if you have not the satisfaction that is to be found in Jesus Christ, I must tell you, with all the centered emphasis of my soul: "One thing thou lackest."

I remark again that you lack *the element of usefulness*. Where is your business? You say it is No. 45 such a street, or No. 260 such a street, or No. 300 such a street. My friend immortal, your business is wherever there is a tear to be wiped away or a soul to be saved. You may, before coming to Christ, do a great many noble things. You take a loaf of bread to that

starving man in an alley; but he wants immortal bread. You take a pound of candles to that dark shanty. They want the light that springs from the throne of God, and you cannot take it because you have it not in your own heart. You know that the flight of an arrow depends very much upon the strength of the bow, and I have to tell you that the best bow that was ever made was made out of the cross of Christ; and when religion takes a soul and puts it on that, and pulls it back and lets it fly, every time it brings down a Saul or a Goliath. There are people here tonight of high social position, and large means, and cultured minds, who, if they would come into the kingdom of God, would set the city on fire with religious awakening. Oh, hear you not the 1,500,000 voices of those who in these two cities are dying in their sins? They want light. They want bread. They want Christ. They want heaven. Oh that the Lord would make you tonight a flaming evangel. As for myself, I have sworn before high heaven that I will preach this Gospel as well as I can, in all its fulness, until every fiber of my body, and every faculty of my mind, and every passion of my soul are exhausted. I ask no higher honor than that of dying for Him who died for me. But we all have a work to do. I cannot do your work, nor can you do my work. God points us out the place where we are to serve, and yet are there not people in this house who are thirty, forty, fifty, and sixty years of age, and yet have not begun the great work for which they were created? With every worldly equipment, "one thing thou lackest."

Again, you lack *the element of personal safety*. Where are those people who associated with you twenty years ago? Walk down the street where you were in business fifteen years ago, and see how all the signs have changed. Where are the people gone? How many of them are landed in eternity I cannot say, but many, many. A few days ago I went to the village of my boyhood. The houses were all changed. I passed one house in which once resided a man who had lived an earnest, useful life, and he is in glory now. In the next house a miser lived.

He devoured widows' houses, and spent his whole life in trying to make the world worse and worse. And he is gone—the good man and the miser are both gone to the same place. Ah, did they go to the same place. No, infinite absurdity to suppose them both in the same place. If the miser had a harp, what tune did he play on it? Oh, my friends, I commend to you this religion as the only personal safety. When you die, where are you going? When we leave all these scenes, upon what scenes will we enter? When we were on shipboard, and we all felt that we must go to the bottom, was I right in saying to one next me: "I wonder if we will reach heaven if we do go down tonight"? Was I wise or unwise in asking that question? I tell you that man is a fool who never thinks of the great future. If you pay money, you take a receipt. If you buy land, you record the deed. Why? Because everything is so uncertain, you want it down in black and white, you say. For a house and lot twenty-five feet front by one hundred feet deep, all security; but for a soul, vast as eternity, nothing, nothing! If some man or woman, standing in some of these aisles, should drop down, where would you go? Which is your destiny? Suppose a man is prepared for the future world, what difference does it make to him whether he goes to his home tonight or goes into glory? Only this difference; if he dies he is better off. Where he had one joy on earth, he will have a million in heaven. Where he has a small sphere here, he will have grand sphere there. Perhaps it would cost you sixty, or one hundred, or one hundred and fifty dollars to have your physical life insured, and yet free of charge, tonight, I offer you insurance on your immortal life, payable, not at your decease, but now, and tomorrow, and every day, and always. My hope in Christ is not so bright as many Christian's, I know; but I would not give it up for the whole universe, in one cash payment, if it were offered me. It has been so much comfort to me in time of trouble, it has been so much strength to me when the world has abused me, it has been so much rest to me when I have been perplexed, and it is around my heart such an encasement of satisfaction

and blessedness that I can stand here before God, and say: Take away my health, take away my life, take everything rather than rob me of this hope, this plain, simple hope which I have in Jesus Christ my Lord. I must have this robe when the last chill strikes through me. I must have this light when all other lights go out in the blast that comes up from the cold Jordan. I must have this sword with which to fight my way through all those foes on my way heavenward. When I was in London I saw there the wonderful armor of Henry VIII and Edward III. And yet I have to tell you that there is nothing in chain mail or brass plate, or gauntlet, or halberd, that makes a man so safe as the armor in which the Lord God clothes His dear children. Oh, there is a safety in religion. You will ride down all your foes. Look out for that man who has the strength of the Lord God with him. In olden times the horsemen used to ride into battle with lifted lances, and the enemy fled the fields. The Lord on the white horse of victory, and with lifted lance of Divine strength, rides into the battle, and down goes the spiritual foe, while the victor shouts the triumph through the Lord Jesus Christ. As a matter of personal safety, my dear friends, you must have this religion.

I apply my subject to several classes of people before me. First, to that great multitude of young people in this house tonight. Some of these young men are in boarding-houses. They have but few social advantages. They think that no one cares for their souls. Many of them are on small salaries, and they are cramped and bothered perpetually, and sometimes their heart fails them. Young man, tonight, at your bedroom door on the third floor, you will hear a knocking. It will be the hand of Jesus Christ, the young man's friend, saying: "Oh, young man, let me come in; I will help thee, I will comfort thee, I will deliver thee." Take the Bible out of the trunk, if it has been hidden away. If you have not the courage to lay it on the shelf or table, take that Bible that was given to you by some loved one, take it out of the trunk and lay it down on the bottom of the chair, then kneel down beside it, and read and pray, and

pray and read, until all your disturbance is gone, and you feel that peace which neither earth nor hell can rob you of. Thy father's God, thy mother's God, waits for thee, O young man. "Escape for thy life!" Escape now! "One thing thou lackest!"

But I apply this subject to the aged—not many here—not many in any assemblage. People do not live to get old. That is the general rule. Here and there an aged man in the house. I tell you the truth. You have lived long enough in this world to know that it cannot satisfy an immortal nature. I must talk to you more reverently than I do to these other people of my own age. We are told to rise up and do honor to the hoary head and to those who have seen long years; and so I must speak with reverence, while at the same time I speak with great plainness. Oh, father of the weary step, oh, mother, bent down under the ailments of life, has thy God ever forsaken thee? Through all these years, who has been your best friend? Seventy years of mercies! Seventy years of food and clothing! Oh, how many bright mornings! How many glorious evening hours you have seen! Oh, father, mother, God has been very good to you. Do you feel it? Some of you have children and grandchildren; the former cheered your young life, the latter twine your gray locks in their tiny fingers. Has all the goodness that God has been making pass before you since long before I was born—has all that goodness produced no change in your feelings, and must it be said of you, notwithstanding all this: "One thing thou lackest"?

Oh, if you could only feel the hand of Christ smoothing the cares out of wrinkled faces. Oh, if you could only feel the arm of Christ steadying your tottering steps. I lift my voice loud enough to break through the deafness of the ear while I cry out: "One thing thou lackest." It was an importunate appeal a young man made in a prayer-meeting when he rose up and said: "Do pray for my old father. He is seventy years of age and he don't love Christ." That father passed a few more steps on in life and then he went down. He never gave any intimation that he had chosen Jesus. It is a very hard thing for an

old man to become a Christian. I know it is. It is so hard a thing that it cannot be done by any human work; but God Almighty can do it by His omnipotent grace; He can bring you at the eleventh hour—at half-past eleven—at one minute of twelve He can bring you to the peace and the joys of the Glorious Gospel. **X**

I must make application of this subject, also, *to those who are prospered*. Have you, my friends, found that dollars and cents are no permanent consolation to the soul? Have you in this world ten thousand, twenty thousand, thirty thousand dollars? Have you no treasures in heaven? Is an embroidered pillow all that you want to put your dying head on? You have heard people all last week talk about earthly values. Hear a plain man talk tonight about the heavenly. Do you not know it will be worse for you, oh prospered man, if you reject Christ, and reject him finally—that it will be worse for you than those who had it hard in this world, because the contrast will make the discomfiture so much more appalling? As the hart bounds for the water brooks, as the roe speeds down the hillside, speed thou to Christ tonight. “Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain lest thou be consumed!”

I must make my application to another class of persons—*the poor*. When you cannot pay your rent when it is due, have you nobody but the landlord to talk to? When the flour has gone out of the barrel, and you have not ten cents with which to go to the bakery, and your children are tugging at your dress for something to eat, have you nothing but the world’s charities to appeal to? When winter comes, and there is no coal, and the ash barrels have no more cinders, who takes care of you? Have you nobody but the overseer of the poor? But I preach to you a poor man’s Christ. If you do not have in the winter blankets enough to cover you in the night, I want to tell you of Him who had not where to lay His head. If you lie on the bare floor, I want to tell you of Him who had for a pillow a hard cross, and whose foot bath was the streaming

blood of His own heart. Oh, you poor man! Oh, you poor woman! Jesus understands your case altogether. Talk it right out to him tonight. Get down on your floor and say: "Lord Jesus Christ, thou wast poor and I am poor. Help me. Thou art rich now, and bring me up to thy riches!" Do you think God would cast you off? Will He? You might as well think that a mother would take the child that feeds on her breast and dash its life out as to think that God would put aside roughly those who have fled to Him for pity and compassion. Aye, the prophet says: "A woman may forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb, but I will not forget thee."

If you have ever been on the sea, you have been surprised in the first voyage to find there are so few sails in sight. Sometimes you go along two, three, four, five, six, and seven days, and do not see a single sail; but when a vessel does come in sight, the sea glasses are lifted to the eye, the vessel is watched, and if it come very near, then the captain, through the trumpet, cries loudly across the water: "Whither bound?" So you and I meet on this sea of life. We come and we go. Some of us have never met before. Some of us will never meet again. But I hail you across the sea, and with reference to the last great day, and with reference to the two great worlds, I cry across the water: "Whither bound? Whither bound? For the eternal heaven, or for the eternal hell?" Will you live with Christ in glory, or be banished away from Him? I know what service that craft was made for, but hast thou thrown overboard the compass? Is there no helm to guide it? Is the ship at the mercy of the tempest? Is there no gun of distress booming through the storm? With priceless treasures—with treasures aboard worth more than all the Indies—wilt thou never come up out of the trough of that sea? Oh, Lord God, lay hold of that man! Son of God, if thou wert ever needed anywhere, thou art needed here. There are so many sins to be pardoned. There are so many wounds to be healed. There are so many souls to be saved or lost. Help, Jesus! Help, Holy Ghost! Help, ministering angels from the

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throne! Help, all sweet memories of the past! Help, all prayers for our future deliverance! Oh that now, in this the accepted time and the day of salvation, you would hear the voice of mercy and live. Taste and see that the Lord is gracious. In the closing hour of the blessed Sabbath, when everything in the house is so favorable, when everything is so still, when God is so loving, and heaven is so near, drop your sins, and take Jesus. Do not cheat yourself out of heaven. Do not do that. God forbid that at the last, when it is too late to correct the mistake, a voice should rise from the pillow, or drop from the throne, uttering just four words—four dismal, annihilating words: "One thing thou lackest!"

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We have all been guilty of the mightiest felony of the universe, for we have robbed God—robbed Him of our time, robbed Him of our talents, robbed Him of our services.—TALMAGE.

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14. THE THREE CROSSES

And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.—LUKE 23:33.

JUST OUTSIDE OF JERUSALEM IS A SWELL OF GROUND, TOWARD which a crowd are ascending; for it is the day of execution. What a mighty assemblage! Some for curiosity to hear what the malefactors will say, and to see how they will act. The three persons to be executed are already there. Some of the spectators are vile of lip and bloody of cheek. Some look up with revenge, hardly able to keep their hands off the sufferers. Some tear their own hair in a frenzy of grief. Some stand in silent horror. Some break out into uncontrollable weeping. Some clap their hands in delight that the offenders are to be punished at last. The soldiers, with drawn swords, drive back the mob, which press on so hard. There is fear that the proceedings may be interrupted. Let the German Legion, now stationed at Jerusalem, on horseback, dash along the line, and force back the surging multitude. "Back with you!" is the cry. "Have you never seen a man die before?"

Three crosses in a row. An upright piece and two transverse pieces—one on the top, on which the hands are nailed, and one at the middle, on which the victim sat. Three trees just planted, yet bearing fruit—the one at the right bearing poison, and the one at the left bitter aloes; the one in the middle, apples of love. Norway pine and tropical orange and Lebanon cedar

would not make so strange a grove as this orchard of Calvary. Stand, and give a look at the three crosses. Just look at the one on the right. Its victim dies scoffing. More tremendous than his physical anguish is his scorn and hatred of Him on the middle cross. This one on the right twists half around on the spikes to hiss at the one on the middle. If the scoffer could get one hand loose, and He were within reach, he would smite the middle sufferer in the face. He hates Him with perfect hatred. I think he wishes he were down on the ground, that he might spear Him. He envies the mechanics who, with their nails, have nailed Him fast. Amid the settling darkness, and louder than the crash of the rocks, I hear him jeer out these words; "Ah! ah! you poor wretch, I knew you were an impostor! You pretended to be a God, and yet you let these German legions master you." It was in some such hate that Voltaire, in his death hour, because he thought he saw Christ in his bedroom, got up on his elbow, and cried out: "Crush that wretch!"

What had the middle cross done to arouse up this right-hand cross? Nothing. Oh, the enmity of the natural heart against Christ! The world likes a sentimental Christ or a philanthropic Christ: but a Christ who comes to snatch men from their sins, away with Him! On this right-hand cross, I see typified the unbelief of the world. Men say: "Back with Him from the heart. I will not let Him take my sins. If He will die, let Him die for Himself, not for me." There has always been a war between this right-hand cross and the middle cross, and wherever there is an unbelieving heart, there the fight goes on. Oh, if, when that dying malefactor perished, the faithlessness of man had perished, then that tree which yields poison would not have budded and blossomed for all the world. Look up into that disturbed countenance of the sufferer, and see what a ghastly thing it is to reject Christ. Behold in that awful face, in that pitiful look, in that unblessed death hour, the stings of the sinner's departure. What a plunge into darkness! Standing high upon the cross on the top of the hill, so that all the world may look at him, he says: "Here I go out of a miserable

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life into a wretched eternity! One! Two! Three! Listen to the crash of the fall, all ye ages!" So Hobbes, dying after he had seventy years in which to prepare for eternity, said: "Were I master of all the world, I would give it all to live one day longer." Sir Francis Newport, hovering over the brink, cried out: "Wretch that I am, whither shall I fly from this breast? What will become of me? Oh that I were to lie upon the fire that never is quenched, a thousand years, to purchase the favor of God and to be reconciled to Him again! Oh, eternity! Oh, eternity! Who can discover the abyss of eternity? Who can paraphrase these words: forever and forever? Oh, the insufferable pangs of hell!"

That right-hand cross—thousands have perished on it, yea, in worse agonies. For what is physical pain compared with remorse at the last that life has been wasted, and only a fleeting moment stands between the soul and its everlasting overthrow? Oh, God, let me die anywhere rather than at the foot of that right-hand cross. Let not one drop of that blood fall upon my cheek. Rend not my ear with that cry. I see it now as never before—the loathsomeness and horror of my unbelief. That dying malefactor was not so much to blame as I. Christianity was not established, and perhaps not until that day had that man heard the Christ. But after Christ has stood almost nineteen centuries, working the wonders of His grace, you reject Him. That right-hand cross, with its long beam, overshadows all the earth. It is planted in the heart of the race. When the time comes, the Spirit of God shall, with its ax, hew down that right-hand cross, until it shall fall at the foot of that middle cross, and unbelief, the railing malefactor of the world, shall perish from all our hearts. Away from me, thou spirit of unbelief! I hate thee! With this sword of God I thrust thee back and thrust thee through. Down to hell; down, most accursed monster of the earth, and talk to the millions thou hast already damned. Talk no longer to these sons of God, these heirs of heaven.

"If thou be the Son of God." Was there any "if" about it?

Tell me, thou star, that in robe of light did run to point out His birthplace. Tell me, thou sea, that didst put thy hand over thy lip when He bid thee be still. Tell me, ye dead who got up to see Him die. Tell me, thou sun in mid-heaven, who for Him didst pull down over thy face the veil of darkness. Tell me, ye lepers, who were cleansed; ye dead, who were raised, is He the Son of God? Aye, aye! responds the universe. The flowers breathe it—the stars chime it—the redeemed celebrate it—the angels rise up on their thrones to announce it. And yet on that miserable malefactor's "if" millions shall be wrecked for all eternity. That little "if" is the little insect which has enough venom in its sting to cause the death of the soul. No "if" about it. I know it. *Ecce Deus!* I feel it thoroughly—through every muscle of the body, and through every faculty of my mind, and through every energy of my soul. Living, I will preach it; dying, I will pillow my head upon its consolations. Jesus the God!

Away, then, from this right-hand cross. The red berries of the forest are apt to be poisonous, and around this tree of carnage grow the red, poisonous berries of which millions have tasted and died. I can see no use for this right-hand cross, except it be used as a lever with which to upturn the unbelief of the world. Here from the right-hand cross I go to the left. Pass clear to the other side. That victim also twists himself upon the nails to look at the center cross—yet not to scoff. It is to worship. He, too, would like to get his hand loose, not to smite, but to deliver the sufferer of the middle cross. He cries to the railer cursing on the other side: "Silence! between us is innocence in agony. We suffer for our crimes. Silence!"

Oh, ye people, be not afraid. Bitter herbs are sometimes a tonic for the body, and the bitter aloes that grow on this tree shall give strength and life to thy soul. This left-hand cross is a *repenting* cross. As men who have been nearly drowned tell us that in one moment, while they were under the water, their whole life passed before them, so I suppose that in one moment the dying malefactor thought over all his past life. Of

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that night when he went into an unguarded door and took the silver, the gold, the jewels, and as the sleeper stirred he put a knife through his heart. Of that day when, in the lonely pass, he met the wayfarer, and, regardless of the cries, and prayers, and tears, and struggles of his victim, flung the mangled corpse into the dust of the highway, or heaped upon it the stones. He says: "Oh, I am a guilty wretch. I deserve this. There is no need of my cursing. That will not stop the pain. There is no need of blaspheming Christ, for He has done me no wrong; and yet I cannot die so. The tortures of my body are outdone by the tortures of my soul. The past is a scene of misdoing. The present a crucifixion. The future an everlasting undoing. Come back, thou hiding mid-day sun! Kiss my cheek with one bright ray of comfort. What! no help from above—no help from beneath? Then I must turn to my companion in sorrow, the one on the middle cross. I have heard that He knows how to help a man when he is in trouble. I have heard that He can cure the wounded. I have heard how He can pardon the sinner. Surely, in all His wanderings up and down the earth He never saw one more in need of His forgiveness. Wilt Thou look for the moment away from Thy own pangs to pity me? Lord, it is not to have my hands relieved or my feet taken from the torture. I can stand all this; but oh, my sins! my sins! my sins! they pierce me through and through. They tell me I must die forever. They will push me out into the darkness unless Thou wilt help. I confess it all. Hear the cry of the dying thief. Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom. I ask no great things. I seek for no throne in heaven—no chariot to take me to the skies; but just think of me when this day's horrors have passed. Think of me a little—of me, the one now hanging at Thy side; when the shout of heavenly welcome takes Thee back into glory, Thou wilt not forget me, wilt Thou? Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom—only just remember me."

Likewise must we repent. You say: "I have stolen nothing." I reply: We have all been guilty of the mightiest felony of the

universe, for we have robbed God—robbed Him of our time, robbed Him of our talents, robbed Him of our services. Suppose you send a man west as an agent of your firm, and every month you pay him his salary, and at the end of ten years you find out that he has been serving another firm, but taking your salary; would you not at once condemn him as dishonest? God sent us into this world to serve Him. He has given us wages all the time. One half of us have been serving another master. When a man is convicted of treason, he is brought out; a regiment confronts him, and the command is given: "Attention, company! Take aim! Fire!" And the man falls with a hundred bullets through his heart. There come times in a man's history when the Lord calls up the troop of his iniquities, and at God's command they pour into him a concentrated volley of torture. You say: "I don't feel myself to be a sinner." That may be. Walk along by the cliffs and you see sunlight and flowers at the mouth of the cave, and a chandelier of stalactite near the opening of the cave; but take a torch and go in, and before you have gone far you see the flashing eye of a wild beast, or hear the hiss of a serpent. So the world seems in the sunlight of worldliness; but as I wave the torch of God's truth, and go down into the deep cavern of the heart—alas! for the bristling horrors and the rattling fangs.

Have you ever noticed the climax in this passage of Scripture: "The heart is deceitful"? That seems enough. But the passage goes on and says: "The heart is deceitful *above all things!*" Will you not say that is enough? But the passage goes further and says: "The heart is deceitful *above all things* AND DESPERATELY WICKED." If we could see the true condition of the unpardoned before God, what wringing of hands there would be, what a thousand-voiced shriek of supplication and despair! But you are a sinner, a sinner. I speak not to the person who sits next to you, but to you. You are a sinner. All the transgressions of a lifetime have been gathered up into an avalanche. At any moment it may slip from the cliffs and crush

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you forever. May the Lord Almighty, by His grace, help us to repent of our sins while repentance is possible.

This left-hand cross was a believing cross. There was no guesswork in that prayer; no "if" in that supplication. The left-hand cross flung itself at the foot of the middle cross, expecting mercy. Faith is only just opening the hand to take what Christ offers us. The work is all done, the bridge is built strong enough for all of us to walk over. Tap not at the door of God's mercy with the tip of your fingers; but as a warrior, with gauntleted fists, beats at the castle gate, so, with all the aroused energies of our souls, let us pound at the gate of heaven. That gate is locked. You go to it with a bunch of keys. You try philosophy: that will not open it. You try good works: that will not open it. A large door generally has a ponderous key. I take the Cross and place the foot of it in the socket of the lock, and by the two arms of the Cross I turn the lock and the door opens.

This left-hand cross was a *pardoning* cross. The crosses were only two or three yards apart. It did not take long for Christ to hear. Christ might have turned away, and said: How darest thou speak to me. I am the Lord of heaven and earth. I have seen your violence. When you struck down that man in the darkness, I saw you. You are getting a just reward—die in darkness—die forever. But Jesus said not so; but rather: "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." As much as to say: "I see you there; don't worry. I will not only bear my cross, but help you with yours."

Forthwith the left-hand cross becomes the abode of contentment. The pillow of the malefactor, soaked in blood, becomes like the crimson upholstery of a king's couch. When the body became still, and the surgeons feeling the pulse said one to another: "He is dead," the last mark of pain had gone from his face. Peace had smoothed his forehead; peace closed his eyes; peace closed his lips. Now you see why there were two transverse pieces on the cross, for it has become a ladder into the skies. That dying head is easy which has under it the

promise: "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Ye whose lips have been filled with blasphemy, ye whose hands for many years have wrought unrighteousness, ye who have companioned with the unclean, ye who have scaled every height of transgression, and fathomed every depth, and passed every extreme of iniquity—mercy! mercy!

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

I have shown you the right-hand cross and the left-hand cross. Now come to the middle cross. We stood at the one and found it yielded poison. We stood at the other and found it yielded bitter aloes. Come now to the middle cross, and shake down apples of love. Uncover your head. You never saw so tender a scene as this. You may have seen father, or mother, or companion, or child die, but never so affecting a scene as this. The railing thief looked from one way and saw only the right side of Christ's face. The penitent thief looked from the other way and saw the left side of Christ's face. But where you sit, in the full blaze of Gospel, you see Christ's full face.

It was a *suffering* cross. If the weapons of torture had gone only through the fatty portions of the body, the torture would not have been so great, but they went through the hands, and feet, and temples; the most sensitive portions. It was not only the spear that went into His side, but the sins of all the race—a thousand spears—plunge after plunge, deeper and deeper, until the silence and composure that before characterized Him gave way to a groan, through which rumbled the sorrows of time and the woes of eternity. Human hate had done its worst, and hell had hurled its sharpest javelin, and devils had vented their hottest rage when, with every nerve of His body in torture, and every fiber of His heart in excruciation, He cried out: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

It was a *vicarious* cross—the right-hand cross suffered for

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itself; the left-hand cross for itself; but the middle cross for you. When a king was dying, a young man cried: "Pour my blood into his veins, that he die not." The veins of the young man were tapped, and the blood transferred; so that the king lived, but the young man died. Christ saw the race perishing. He cried: "Pour my blood into their veins, that they die not."

My hand is free now because Christ's was crushed. My brow is painless now because Christ's was torn. My soul escapes because Christ's was bound. I gain heaven because Christ for me endured the horrors of hell. When the Swiss, many years ago, were contending against their enemies standing in solid phalanx, they knew not how to break their ranks; but one of their heroes rushed out in front of his regiment and shouted: "Make way for liberty!" The weapons of the enemy were plunged into his heart, but while they were slaying him their ranks, of course, were broken, and through that gap the Swiss marched to victory. Christ saw all the powers of darkness assailing men. He cried out: "Make way for the redemption of the world." All the weapons of infernal wrath struck Him, but as they struck Him our race marched out free.

To this middle cross, my dying hearers, look, that your souls may live. I showed you the right-hand cross in order that you might see what an awful thing it is to be unbelieving. I showed you the left-hand cross that you might see what it is to repent. Now I show you the middle cross that you may see what Christ has done to save your soul. Poets have sung its praise, and sculptors have attempted to commemorate it in marble, and martyrs have clung to it in the fire, and Christians dying quietly in their beds leaned their heads against it. May all our souls embrace it with an ecstasy of affection. Lay hold of that cross, Oh, dying sinner. Everything else will fail you. Without a strong grip of that you perish. Put your hand on that and you are safe, though a world swing from beneath your feet. Oh that I might engrave on your souls ineffaceably the three crosses, and that if in your waking moments you will not heed, then that in your dream tonight

you might see on the hill back of Jerusalem the three spectacles—the right-hand cross, showing unbelief and dying without Christ—the left-hand, showing what it is to be pardoned—while the central cross pours upon your soul the sunburst of heaven as it says: “By all these wounds I plead for thy heart. I have loved thee with an everlasting love. Rivers cannot quench it. The floods cannot drown it!”

While you look the right-hand cross will fade out of sight, and then the left will be gone. Nothing will remain but the middle cross, and even that in your dream will begin to change until it becomes a throne, and the worn face of Calvary will become radiant with gladness; and instead of the mad mob at the foot of the cross will be a multitude kneeling. And you and I will be among them. God grant it.

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As long as you are ashamed to come in the door, and in the sight of the whole world, gazing at you and scoffing at you, if need be, you will never find the peace and pardon of the Gospel. There is no such thing as "hide and seek" in religion. You cannot drive through the gate of pardon with a coach and four. . . —TALMAGE.



15. THE RINGING OF THE OLD BELL



Strive to enter in at the strait gate.—LUKE 13:24.

YOU KNOW THAT THE ANCIENT CITIES WERE SURROUNDED BY HIGH walls for the purpose of defense against enemies. In these walls there were large gates, which were kept open during the daytime; but at nightfall, the gates were closed. Sometimes after nightfall a man, having been belated on his journey, would come up with his camel, and finding the main gate closed, would go to the small gate, the strait gate, the narrow gate—and drive his camel through that gate. But it was with difficulty that he got through at all, the gate was so low and so narrow; but by pushing, and crowding, and urging on, he could get through. Now, Christ, in allusion to that, is depicting the difficulty with which men get into the gate of pardon and heaven. He says: “Strive to enter in at the strait gate”—the narrow gate, the small gate—implying that it would be a push, and a tug, and a struggle to get in at all.

I propose, so far as God may help me—and I pray for His blessed Spirit—to show you what are the obstacles in the way of your salvation, and how you ought to crowd in between them.

I first remark that *it is pride* that chokes up the gate of salvation. There may be no bluster, no banter, no braggadocio about the man—there may be no supercilious toss of the head

—there may be no pomposity in the gait or manner—there may be no ostentation of apparel; and yet, the first moment that Christ comes up to any soul and demands its surrender, that moment there flashes up a pride in the human heart that is amazing. To take pardon as a charity, to acknowledge one's self to be a spiritual pauper, to come down on the level with other transgressors—that is a demand that stings the soul into haughtiness and rebellion. Those of us who have entered into life remember it well. There was a time when we felt that our reputation for manhood depended upon hiding the fact that we were serious about our soul. We gathered up all our energies of body, mind, and spirit, in one determination at self-control. We said to ourselves: Others may show emotion, we will not show any. Others may weep over sin, we won't. Others may cry for pardon, we will utter no such cry as that." Too proud to do it. Oh, this infernal pride has kept thousands of souls out of heaven, and it is what is keeping many of you out of heaven. Depend upon it, Oh, seeking soul, just as long as you are ashamed to be found seeking for Christ, just as long as you are ashamed to pray, just as long as you are ashamed to show any anxiety about your immortal spirit and its redemption—just so long you will fail in all search for pardon and peace, and heaven. Suppose you had a check on a bank, and instead of presenting it in the daytime, you should crawl up at night through the cellar into the main counting-room, you would be arrested as a robber. If you said: "I have simply come in to present this check," the teller would say: You have no business to come this way, or to come now. Come between ten and three o'clock. Come in at the front door." Now, I want to tell you, my dear brother, that there is no subterranean way of getting the pardon of Christ. As long as you are ashamed to come in the door, and in sight of the whole world, gazing at you and scoffing at you, if need be, you will never find the peace and pardon of the Gospel. There is no such thing as "hide and seek" in religion. You cannot drive through the gate of pardon with a coach and four. It

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is a narrow gate; and yet those of us who are followers of Jesus Christ look back to our experience, and remember that it was that pride of our soul that kept us back so long; and it was not until that pride was humbled before God that our sins were pardoned, and the light of God's throne streamed upon our vision.

Again, there are *especial sins* that keep some people out of the gate of heaven. Almost every one has a darling transgression. With one, it is this sort of sin. With another, it is some other sort of transgression. With this man, it is the wine-cup. With another, it is salacious desire. With another, it is a bitter hostility to some person. And you come to the man and talk about his soul, but he finds no peace, and the darkness hovers month after month. You say within yourself: "What is the matter with that man? Why can't he find peace?" Ah, he has not told you the whole secret. There is someone he hates with an unutterable hatred, and as long as you have a hatred for anyone on earth, you will never find Jesus Christ.

And yet there are men who say: "If I have to forgive my neighbor—that man who did me such outrageous wrong—I won't come at all. I'll die first!" They run their ship on the rock of eternal destruction rather than throw a swine's trough overboard or set their sail by God's compass. It is that one sin that is going to hobble them for eternity. Rather than have it taken out, they let that cancer eat on and eat on into the vitals of their immortal nature; and I have to tell all those who are seeking God, you must give up sin or give up heaven.

Repent, the voice celestial cries,
Nor longer dare delay;
The wretch that scorns the mandate dies,
And meets a fiery day.

Again, *intense worldliness* keeps many people out of heaven. Men are afraid that the chariot of the Gospel will run over their worldly business and kill it, and, therefore, they stay

away. They say: "I can't afford to be a Christian," and they go gathering money. Though they may have a competency, they rake up money, and hoard it, and hide it, and clutch it with a dying miser's grip—not satisfied with what they have attained, until after a while remorse will melt all that glittering stuff, and pour it molten into an iron bowl, and press it to the lips of the soul-suicide, compelling it to drink the excruciating draught to the bottom! Oh, it is worldliness, worldliness, that keeps many out of heaven. The gate of life is blocked up with hogsheads and cotton bales. These people measure their immortality with a yard-stick. They weigh eternity with the steelyards. They beat the life out of their soul with the iron bar of a show-window. They give away their key to the gate of heaven, and take in preference the key that opens the earthly warehouse, and are very well satisfied with the exchange. On Saturday night they square their accounts with the world, but are on the way to eternal bankruptcy and everlasting imprisonment for debt. They put their worldly valuables in an iron safe—a fire-proof safe—while they expose their souls to perils in which they must lie down and burn forever! Oh, this accursed worldliness, how long it has kept some of you away from your best interests!

Now, I have frankly told you the obstacles in the way of your getting into heaven, and yet I am here to tell you that they may be overcome, that you may crowd through between them; and, to repeat the words of Christ in your hearing: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate."

There are thousands of souls here that can say: "I want to be a Christian—what shall I do?" There are those here who suppose that there is a long land that they must travel before they come into the peace of the Gospel. They think that they must weep a great while over sin, that they must pass a great many sleepless nights, that they must keep on agonizing and praying weeks and months, and that then, as a sort of reward for what they have been doing, the Lord will bestow His pardon. Oh, no. There is no Gospel in that. When a man

goes to college he enters the freshman class; from there he goes to the sophomore class; from there to the junior class; from there to the senior class. Then he graduates with the diploma. But it is just reversed in this school of Christ. The man gets his diploma of pardon signed in the blood of the Cross at the beginning, or he never gets it at all. All your tears over sin will not save you. All your sleepless nights will not save you. All your long-continued anxiety about your soul will not save you. Nothing will save you but the laying hold of Christ. That is the first step, that is the second step, that is the third step, that is the last step. You say: "What do you mean by laying hold of Christ?" I mean having faith in Him. "Oh," you say, "I know nothing about these technicalities." I am not talking technicalities. You have trust in your best earthly friend. Perhaps you have trust and confidence in your partner in business. Now, I do not ask you for anything extraordinary. I simply ask that you take that trust which you have in men and put it in Christ. Nothing more. And if your friend in whom you trust is worthy of your trust, I ask you if the Lord Jesus Christ, who died in agony and blood for your redemption, is not worthy of just as much, to say nothing of having any more trust in Him?

"But how am I to get that faith?" Through prayer. "Oh," says someone, "I pray; I pray morning and night." Do you? Or do you merely *say* your prayers? What is prayer? Is it an indifferent process of the soul? Oh, no. Prayer is taking the gates of heaven by storm. It is besieging the throne of God. It is a red-hot utterance. You are crossing a stream on a plank. The plank rocks. Your friend gets on the shore. You say: "Give me your hand. Help me across." The thrusting out of that hand, and your request—is that prayer? Oh, no. But I will tell you what prayer is. You are on the steamship *Melville*, bound for Port Royal. The darkness comes down on the sea, and with one great wave the bows of the vessel are knocked in. On a piece of the ship you float along hour after hour. Just after day dawns, a boat from the shore is searching the

wreckage and picking up the lost; but they seem not to see you. Your life is almost gone. You know that if you cannot attract the attention of the boatmen, you are lost. You cry: "Look this way! Help! Help!"

That is prayer. Feeling that you are gone without the Lord's rescue. Have you ever offered such a prayer as that? Have you contracted all the energies of body, mind, and soul, in one struggle for Christ's pardon and salvation? If you have, then you have prayed; but if you have not, you have not. Here are many who are wishing they were Christians, but they do not pray. I can tell by the way they talk about it they do not really pray.

In addition to this, you must search the Bible as for your life. It is an old book. Some of you, perhaps, think it is obsolete; but you must search that book as for your life, if you are going to find the way to heaven. Now, there are two ways of reading the Bible. One is as an intellectuality. The other is as a heart-experience. It is a beautiful poem, and you read it as you do Tennyson. It is a fine statement of principles of law, and you read it as you do Blackstone. It is a fine mental discipline, and you read it as you do Dugald Stewart, or Sir William Hamilton, or William Reed. But the Holy Spirit in some fortunate hour comes to your heart. You open that Bible. Something says to your soul: "It is now heaven or hell with you." How you read it then! All your soul goes out toward it. You feel: "If I don't find pardon and light through the instructions of this Book, I will never find them at all." With all the concentrated energy of your soul you read it.

There is an old sea captain who has not been on the water for twenty years. He is sitting in his home, and his grandchild is playing at his feet with the chart, and the sea-glass, and the compass—very beautiful playthings. The old captain has no use for them, so he lets his grandchild have them. But while grandfather looks down and sees the compass, and the sea-glass, and the chart, his mind goes back to the time when he handled those things under very different circumstances. He

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thinks of the euroclydon* that came down on the sea, and the time when he saw the froth of destruction on the mouth of the wave, and the sky swinging back its mantle of darkness to strike with sword of fire, and it seemed as if they must all perish. Then how the captain examined the compass! Oh, then how his finger trembled over the chart. In the one case it is a child's toy; in the other, it is shipwreck or rescue. So there are men who come to read this Bible, this glorious chart. It is very beautiful to look over, and they say: "There is a rock, and here is a rock, and there is a lighthouse, and here is the Gulf Stream of God's mercy." But, after a while, the Holy Spirit comes upon the soul. The man says: "It is high time now I found out my latitude and longitude. Where am I?" And the storm howls through the heart. The man says: "What is to become of me? Shall I go down, or shall I go up?" How he reads the Bible then! How he looks at the chart then—at this rock, at that rock, at that lighthouse, at that promontory! In the one case, he ran his intellectual finger across the page and examined it as a curiosity. In the other case, he examined it with reference to his immortal rescue. Do you read the Bible in that way? Some of you do. Within the past five, ten, twenty days, that Book has appeared to you a new Book, and you have bowed before God. You read it on your knees; and while you were there a light from the throne struck the page, and you had an overwhelming interview with the Almighty.

I will illustrate my meaning in another way: You are passing down Fulton Street, and looking in a photographer's window, you see some very fine pictures there. You say: "That picture of a man or child is as fine a work of art as I ever looked at; that is well done. That is really one of the finest galleries in this street." But tomorrow word comes to you that your brother, who has been many years in China, or India, or Russia, has just died, and the letter strikes you like a thunderbolt. You go to an old drawer and you take out a

* A northeast wind of the Mediterranean.

photograph of that brother. At the first glance at the features all your boyhood memories come back, and your soul melts within you. You can look no more at the picture for your weeping. You say: "He is gone. Yes, he is gone. How natural that is. How I did love him! How we loved each other! Gone!" Ah, that is the difference in reading the Bible. In the one case you take up the photograph of Christ by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and say: "It is very beautiful. This is really a fine a fine work of art. Why, how self-sacrificing He was! Beautiful picture!" But in some favored hour you take up this Book and you say: "That is Jesus, who died for my soul. That is Jesus, my brother. Oh, He is the sweetest among ten thousand. He is the one altogether lovely." You feel like kissing the Book. "Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus!" you say now. It is not a cold photograph now, is it? Oh, how near it does come to your soul! Do you look at the Bible in that way? Is Jesus a stranger to you, or is He a brother? You know very well, then, what I mean by reading the Bible with an earnest spirit and reading it in a cold, critical spirit. If you are not seeking for Christ through the earnest prayer that I spoke of, and through the earnest reading of the Bible that I described, you are not really seeking for Him at all, and you might as well give it up. If you kept on in that way for fifty years you would not find heaven. I am preaching this sermon tonight because I see what a farce men make of seeking God. It is a mere indefinite wish. Now, they think they would like to be Christians. Now they think they would not.

The finger of scorn makes them tremble. The first laugh of a deriding companion makes them give up every serious impression. It is the store first, it is the shop first, it is the world first. It is Christ last, it is heaven last. Oh, what infernal sorcery hath betwilted them, that about things which perish they are so active, and about the things that last forever they are so passive. Oh, hammer of God's Word, break that rock. Oh, Holy Spirit, breathe on the corpse of death

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until bone shall come to bone, and sinew to sinew, and the nostril throb, and the heart beat, and the eyes open on the wonders of a Saviour's love. "Come to Jesus"—what an old song. Some one described Christians as being "the-come-to-Jesus people." That is what they have described Christians to be. I am one of them. Come to Jesus, oh, thou wandering soul! "Ah," you say, "father and mother won't let me come. They don't believe in these things. They don't want me to come." Oh, father, mother, come yourselves, and bring your children with you. Has it come to this, that in our prayer meeting there were sons and daughters that arose and said: "Pray for my father, pray for my mother!" Has it come to this, that instead of parents bringing their children to Christ, as in olden time, it is now children bringing their parents to Christ? Come this day, weary with your sin. How long have you been carrying that burden? Five years, ten years, twenty years, thirty years—aye, there are some who have grown gray in sin; fifty and sixty years you have been carrying this burden. Do you not get tired of it? Would you not like this hour to put down your burdens at the feet of my Lord? Then take the invitation to "come to Jesus," and come now. Will you come? Join hands together. Husband and wife, come together. Parents and children, brothers and sisters, come together. Jesus waits to receive you. His locks wet with the dews of the night, He has been knocking at the door of thy soul, saying: "Open unto me. Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Will you receive Him? For this will these Christian men and women pray as though they never prayed before? Oh, ye aged men, near your last account, ye aged men soon to pass over the river and be with the Lord, give us one more prayer before you go. "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof." Let parents pray that their sons and daughters, born once in the quietness of their happy home, may be born again by the altars of God. And these impenitent souls that have never prayed before, will they not now begin to

T. DE WITT TALMAGE

strive, and seek, and weep, and pray, until this long disquietude of their soul is hushed, and the Church of God extends its hands of congratulation toward you, and the ransomed before the throne wake the song of jubilee?

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Every word is packed full of truth. Every sentence is double-barreled. Every paragraph is like an old banyan tree, with a hundred roots and a hundred branches. . . . There has never been a pearl-diver who could gather up one half of the treasures in any verse. . . .

—TALMAGE.

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16. THE BIBLE IS RIGHT



The statutes of the Lord are right.—PSALM 19:8.

OLD BOOKS GO OUT OF DATE. WHEN THEY WERE WRITTEN, THEY discussed questions which were being discussed; they struck at wrongs which had long ago ceased, or advocated institutions which excite not our interest. Were they books of history, the facts had been gathered from the imperfect mass, better classified and more lucidly presented. Were they books of poetry, they were interlocked with wild mythologies, which have gone up from the face of the earth like mists at sunrise. Were they books of morals, civilization will not sit at the feet of barbarism, neither do we want Sappho, Pythagoras, and Tully to teach us morals. What do the masses of people care now for the pathos of Simonides, or the sarcasm of Menander, or the gracefulness of Philemon, or the wit of Aristophanes? Even the old books we have left, with a few exceptions, have but very little effect upon our times. Books are human; they have a time to be born, they are fondled, they grow in strength, they have a middle-life of usefulness; then comes old age, they totter, and they die. Many of the national libraries are merely the cemeteries of dead books. Some of them lived flagitious lives, and died deaths of ignominy. Some were virtuous, and accomplished a glorious mission. Some went into the ashes through inquisitorial fires. Some found their funeral pile in sacked and plundered cities. Some were neglected and died as foundlings at the door of science. Ever and anon there

comes into your possession an old book, its author forgotten and its usefulness done, and with leathern lips it seems to say: "I wish I were dead." Monuments have been raised over poets and philanthropists. Would that some tall shaft might be erected in honor of the world's buried books. The world's authors would make pilgrimage thereto and poetry and literature, and science, and religion would consecrate it with their tears.

Not so with one old book. It started in the world's infancy. It grew under theocracy and monarchy. It withstood storms of fire. It grew under prophet's mantle and under the fisherman's coat of the apostles. In Rome, and Ephesus, and Jerusalem, and Patmos. Tyranny issued edicts against it, and infidelity put out the tongue, and Mohammedanism from its mosques hurled its anathemas, but the old Bible lived. It crossed the British Channel, and was greeted by Wyclif and James I. It crossed the Atlantic and struck Plymouth Rock, until like that of Horeb it gushed with blessedness. Churches and asylums have gathered all along its way, ringing their bells, and stretching out their hands of blessing; and every Sabbath there are ten thousand heralds of the Cross with their hands on this open, grand, free, old English Bible. But it will not have accomplished its mission until it has climbed the icy mountains of Greenland, until it has gone over the granite cliffs of China, until it has thrown its glow amid the Australian mines, until it has scattered its gems among the diamond districts of Brazil, and all thrones shall be gathered into one throne, and all crowns by the fires of revolution shall be melted into one crown, and this Book shall at the very gate of heaven have waved in the ransomed empires—not until then will this glorious Bible have accomplished its mission.

In carrying out, then, the idea of my text—"The statutes of the Lord are right"—I shall show you that the Bible is right in authentication, that it is right in style, that it is right in doctrine, that it is right in its effects. Can you doubt the authenticity of the Scriptures? There is not so much evidence

that Walter Scott wrote "The Lady of the Lake," not so much evidence that Shakespeare wrote "Hamlet," not so much evidence that John Milton wrote "Paradise Lost," as there is evidence that the Lord God Almighty, by the hands of the prophets, evangelists, and apostles, wrote this Book. Suppose a book now to be written came in conflict with a great many things, and was written by bad men or impostors, how long would such a book stand? It would be scouted by everybody. And I say, if that Bible had been an imposition—if it had not been written by the men who said they wrote it—if it had been a mere collection of falsehoods, do you not suppose that it would have been immediately rejected by the people? If Job, and Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and Paul, and Peter, and John were impostors, they would have been scouted by generations and nations. If that Book has come down through fires of centuries without a scar, it is because there is nothing in it destructible. How near have they come to destroying the Bible? When they began their opposition, there were two or three thousand copies of it. Now there are two hundred million, so far as I can calculate. These Bible truths, notwithstanding all the opposition, have gone into all languages—into the philosophic Greek, the flowing Italian, the graceful German, the passionate French, the picturesque Indian, and the exhaustless Anglo-Saxon. Under the painter's pencil, the birth, and the crucifixion, and the resurrection glow on the walls of palaces; or under the engraver's knife speak from the mantel of the mountain cabin; while stones, touched by the sculptor's chisel, start up into preaching apostles and ascending martyrs. Now, do you not suppose, if that Book had been an imposition and a falsehood, it would have gone down under these ceaseless fires of opposition?

Further, suppose that there was a great pestilence going over the earth, and hundreds of thousands of men were dying of that pestilence, and someone should find a medicine that cured ten thousand people, would not everybody acknowledge that that must be a good medicine? Why, someone would say:

“Do you deny it? There have been ten thousand people cured by it.” I simply state the fact that there have been hundreds of thousands of Christian men and women who say they have felt the truthfulness of that Book, and its power in their souls. It has cured them of the worst leprosy that ever came down on our earth, namely, the leprosy of sin; and if I can point you to multitudes who say they have felt the power of that cure, are you not reasonable enough to acknowledge the fact that there must be some power in the medicine? Will you take the evidence of millions of patients who have been cured; or will you take the evidence of the skeptic who stands aloof and confesses that he never took the medicine? The Bible intimates that there was a city called Petra, built out of solid rock. Infidelity scoffed at it. “Where is your city of Petra?” Buckhardt and Laborde went forth in their explorations, and they came upon that very city. The mountains stand around like giants guarding the tomb where the city is buried. They find a street in that city six miles long, where once flashed imperial pomp, and which echoed with the laughter of light-hearted mirth on its way to the theater. On temples, fashioned out of colored stones—some of which have blushed into the crimson of the rose, and some of which have darkened into the blue of the sky, and some of which have paled into the whiteness of the lily—aye, on column, and pediment, and entablature, and statuary, God writes the truth of that Bible. The Bible says that Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire and brimstone. “Absurd.” Infidels, year after year, said: “It is positively absurd that they could have been destroyed by brimstone. There is nothing in the elements to cause such a shower of death as that.” Lieutenant Lynch—I think he was the first man who went out on the discovery, but he has been followed by many others—Lieutenant Lynch went out in exploration, and came to the Dead Sea, which, by a convulsion of nature, has overflowed the place where the cities once stood. He sank his fathoming line, and brought up from the bottom of the

Dead Sea great masses of sulphur, remnants of that very tempest that swept Sodom and Gomorrah to ruin. Who was right—the Bible that announced the destruction of those cities, or the skeptics who for ages scoffed at it?

The Bible says there was a city called Nineveh, and that it was three days' journey around it, and that it should be destroyed by fire and water. "Absurd," cried out hundreds of voices for many years, "no such a city was ever built that it would take you three days' journey to go around. Besides, it could not be destroyed by fire and water; they are antagonistic elements." But Layard, Botta, Bonomi, and Keith go out, and by their explorations they find that city of Nineveh, and they tell us that by their own experiment it is three days' journey around (according to the old estimate of a day's journey), and that it was literally destroyed by fire and by water—two antagonistic elements—a part of the city having been inundated by the river Tigris (the brick material in those times being dried clay instead of burned); while in other parts they find the remains of the fire in heaps of charcoal that have been excavated, and in the calcined slabs of gypsum. Who was right, the Bible or infidelity?

Moses intimated that they had vineyards in Egypt. "Absurd," cried hundreds of voices, "you can't raise grapes in Egypt; or, if you can, it is a very great exception that you can raise them." But the traveler goes down, and in the underground vaults of Eilithya he finds painted on the wall all the process of tending the vines and treading out the grapes. It is all there, familiarly sketched by people who evidently knew all about it, and saw it all about them every day; and in those underground vaults there are vases still incrustated with the settlings of the wine. You see the vine *did* grow in Egypt, whether it grows there *now* or not.

Thus you see, while God wrote the Bible, at the same time He wrote this commentary, "The statutes of the Lord are right," on leaves of rock and shell, bound in clasps of metal,

lying on mountain tables, and in the jeweled vase of the sea. In authenticity and in genuiness the statutes of the Lord are right.

Again, the Bible is *right* in style. I know there are a great many people who think it is merely a collection of genealogical tables and dry facts. That is because they do not know how to read the Book. You take up the most interesting novel that was ever written, and if you commence at the four hundredth page today, and tomorrow at the three hundredth, and the next day at the first page, how much sense or interest would you gather from it? Yet that is the very process to which the Bible is subjected every day. An angel from heaven, reading the Bible in that way, could not understand it. The Bible has a door by which to enter and a door by which to go out. Genesis is the door to go in and Revelation the door to go out. These Epistles of Paul the Apostle are merely letters written, folded up, and sent by postmen to the different churches. Do you read other letters the way you read Paul's letters? Suppose you get a business letter, and you know that in it there are important financial propositions, do you read the last page first, and then one line of the third page, and another of the second, and another of the first? No. You begin with "Dear Sir," and end with "Yours truly." Now, here is a letter written from the throne of God to our lost world; it is full of magnificent hopes and propositions, and we dip in here and there and we know nothing about it. Besides that, people read the Bible when they cannot do anything else. It is a dark day, and they do not feel well, and they do not go to business, and after lounging about a while they pick up the Bible—their mind refuses to enjoy the truth. Or they come home weary from the store or shop, and they feel, if they do not say, it is a dull book. While the Bible is to be read on stormy days, and while your head aches, it is also to be read in the sunshine, and when your nerves, like harp-strings, thrum the song of health. While your vision is clear walk in this

paradise of truth; and while your mental appetite is good pluck these clusters of grace.

I am fascinated with the conciseness of this book. Every word is packed full of truth. Every sentence is double-barreled. Every paragraph is like an old banyan tree, with a hundred roots and a hundred branches. It is a great arch; pull out one stone and it all comes down. There has never been a pearl-diver who could gather up one half of the treasures in any verse. John Halsebach, of Vienna, for twenty-one years, every Sabbath expounded to his congregation the first chapter of the book of Isaiah, and yet did not get through with it. Nine-tenths of all the good literature of this age is merely the Bible diluted.

I am also amazed at the variety of this Book. Mind you, not contradiction or collision, but variety. Just as in the song you have the basso and alto, and soprano and tenor—they are not in collision with each other, but come in to make up the harmony—so it is in this Book there are different parts of this great song of redemption. The prophet comes and takes one part, and the patriarch another part, and the evangelist another part, and the apostles another part, and yet they all come into the grand harmony—the song of “Moses and the Lamb.” If God had inspired men of the same temperament to write this Book it might have been monotonous; but David, and Isaiah, and Peter, and Job, and Ezekiel, and Paul, and John, were men of different temperaments, and so, when God inspired them to write, they wrote in their own style. God prepared the Book for all classes of people. For instance, little children would read the Bible, and God knew that, so He allows Matthew and Luke to write sweet stories about Christ with the doctors of the law, and Christ at the well, and Christ at the cross, so that any little child can understand them. Then God knew that the aged people would want to read the Book, and so He allows Solomon to compact a world of wisdom in that book of Proverbs. God knew that the historian would want to read it, and so He allows Moses to give the plain

statements of the Pentateuch. God knew that the poet would want to read it, and so He allows Job to picture the heavens as a curtain; and Isaiah, the mountains as weighed in a balance, and the waters as held in the hollow of the Omnipotent hand. And God touched David, until in the latter part of the Psalms, he gathers a great choir standing in galleries above each other—beasts and men in the first gallery; above them, hills and mountains; above them, fire and hail and tempest; above them, sun, and moon, and stars of light; and then, on the highest gallery, arrays the hosts of angels; and then, standing before this great choir, reaching from the depths of earth to the heights of heaven, like the leader of a great orchestra, he lifts his hands, crying: "Praise ye the Lord. Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord," and all earthly creatures in their song, and mountains with their waving cedars, and tempests in their thunder and rattling hail, and stars on all their trembling harps of light, and angels on their thrones, respond in magnificent acclaim: "Praise ye the Lord. Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord." God knew that the pensive and complaining world would want to read it, and so he inspires Jeremiah to write: "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears." God knew that the lovers of the wild, romantic, and the strange would want to read it, so he lets Ezekiel write of mysterious rolls, and winged creatures, and flying wheels of fire. God prepared it for all zones—for the arctic and the tropics, as well as for the temperate zone. Cold-blooded Greenlanders would find much to interest them, and the tanned inhabitants at the equator would find his passionate nature boil with the vehemence of heavenly truth. The Arabian would read it on his dromedary, and the Laplander seated on the swift sled, and the herdman of Holland guarding the cattle in the grass, and the Swiss girl reclining amid Alpine crags. Oh, when I see that the Bible is suited in style, exactly suited to all ages, to all conditions, to all lands, I cannot help repeating the conclusion of my text: "The statutes of the Lord are right."

I remark again, the Bible is *right in its doctrines*. Man a sinner, Christ a Saviour—the two doctrines. Man must come down—his pride, his self-righteousness, his worldliness. Christ, the Anointed, must go up. If it had not been for the setting forth of the atonement, Moses would never have described the creation, prophets would not have predicted, apostles would not have preached. It seems to me as if Jesus, in the Bible, were standing on a platform in a great amphitheater, and as if the prophets were behind Him, throwing light forward on His sacred person; and as if the apostles and evangelists stood before Him, like footlights throwing up their light into His blessed countenance; and then as if all the earth and heaven were the applauding auditory. The Bible speaks of Pisgah and Carmel, and Sinai, but makes all mountains bow down to Calvary. The flocks led over the Judean hills were emblems of “the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world,” and the lion leaping out of its lair was an emblem of “the lion of Judah’s tribe.” I will, in my next breath, recite to you the most wonderful sentence ever written: “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” No wonder that when Jesus was born in Bethlehem heaven sympathized with earth, and a wave of joy dashed clear over the battlements and dripped upon the shepherds in the words: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” In my next sentence every word weighs a ton. “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Show me any other book with such a doctrine—so high, so deep, so vast.

Again, the Bible is *right in its effects*. I do not care where you put the Bible, it just suits the place. You put it in the hand of a man seriously concerned about his soul. I see people often giving to the serious soul this and that book. It may be very well; but there is no book like the Bible. He reads the commandments, and pleads to the indictment “Guilty.” He takes up the Psalms of David and says: “They just describe my feel-

ings." He flies to good works. Paul starts him out of that by the announcement: "A man is not justified by works." He falls back in his discouragement. The Bible starts him up with the sentence: "Remember Lot's wife. Grieve not the Spirit. Flee the wrath to come." Then the man, in despair, begins to cry out: "What shall I do? Where shall I go?" and a voice reaches him, saying: "Come unto me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Take this Bible, and place it in the hands of men in trouble. Is there anybody here in trouble? Ah! I might better ask, are there any here who have never been in trouble? Put this Bible in the hands of the troubled. You find that as some of the best berries grow on the sharpest thorns, so some of the sweetest consolations of the Gospel grow on the most stinging afflictions. You thought that death had grasped your child. Oh, no. It was only the heavenly Shepherd taking a lamb out of the cold. Christ bent over you as you held the child in your lap and putting His arms gently around the little one said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." Put the Bible in the school. Palsied be the hand that would take the Bible from the college and the school. Educate only a man's head and you make him an infidel. Educate only a man's heart and you make him a fanatic. Educate them both together and you have the noblest work of God. An educated mind without moral principles is a ship without a helm, a rushing train without brakes or reversing rod to control the speed. Put the Bible in the family. There it lies on the table, an unlimited power. Polygamy and unscriptural divorce are prohibited. Parents are kind and faithful, children polite and obedient. Domestic sorrows lessened by being divided, joys increased by being multiplied. Oh, father, oh, mother, take down that long-neglected Bible and read it yourselves and let your children read it. Put the Bible on the train and on shipboard, till all parts of this land and all other lands shall have its illumination. This hour there rises the yell of heathen worship and in the face of this day's sun smokes the blood of human sacrifice. Give them the Bible. Unbind that wife from the funeral pyre, for

THE BIBLE IS RIGHT

no other sacrifice is needed, since the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.

I am preaching this sermon because there are so many who would have you believe that the Bible is an outlandish book and obsolete. It is fresher and more intense than any book that yesterday came out of your great publishing houses. Make it your guide in life and your pillow in death.

After the battle of Richmond, a dead soldier was found with his hand lying on an open Bible. The summer insects had eaten the flesh from the hand, but the skeleton finger lay on these words: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Yes, this book will become in your last days, when you turn away from all other books, a solace for your soul. Perhaps it will be your mother's Bible, perhaps the one given you on your wedding day, its cover now worn out, and its leaves faded with age; but its bright promises will flash upon the opening gates of heaven.

How precious is the Book divine
By inspiration given;
Bright as a lamp its doctrines shine
To guide our souls to heaven.

This lamp, through all the tedious night
Of life shall guide our way,
Till we behold the clearer light
Of an eternal day.

How many people there are in our time who are very anxious that after their death they shall be buried with their feet toward the east, and not at all anxious that during their whole life they should face in the right direction so that they shall come up in the resurrection of the just however they are buried. How many there are chiefly anxious that a minister of the Gospel shall come in the line of apostolic succession, not caring so much whether he comes from the Apostle Paul or the Apostle Judas. They have a way of measuring a gnat until it is larger than a camel. . . .—TALMAGE.

17. GNATS AND CAMELS

Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.—
MATTHEW 23:24.

A PROVERB IS COMPACT WISDOM, KNOWLEDGE IN CHUNKS, A LIBRARY in a sentence, the electricity of many clouds discharged in one bolt, a river put through a mill race. When Christ quotes the proverb of the text, He means to set forth the ludicrous behavior of those who make a great bluster about small sins and have no appreciation of great ones.

In my text a small insect and a large quadruped are brought into comparison—a gnat and a camel. You have in a museum or on a desert seen the latter, a great awkward, sprawling creature, with back two stories high, and stomach having a collection of reservoirs for desert travel, an animal forbidden to the Jews as food, and in many literatures entitled “the ship of the desert.” The gnat spoken of in the text is in the grub form. It is born in pool or pond, after a few weeks becomes a chrysalis, and then after a few days, becomes the gnat as we recognize it. But the insect spoken of in the text is in its very smallest shape, and it yet inhabits the water—for my text is a misprint and ought to read “strain *out* a gnat.”

My text shows you the greatest of inconsistencies. A man after long observation suspects that in a cup of water he is about to drink there is a grub or the grandparent of a gnat. He gets a sieve or strainer. He takes the water and pours it through the sieve in the broad light. He says, “I would rather

do anything almost than drink this water until this larva be extirpated." This water is brought under inquisition. The experiment is successful. The water rushes through the sieve and leaves against the side of the sieve the grub or gnat. Then the man carefully removes the insect and drinks the water in placidity. But going out one day, and hungry, he devours a "ship of the desert," the camel, which the Jews were forbidden to eat. The gastronomer has no compunctions of conscience. He suffers from no indigestion. He puts the lower jaw under the camel's forefoot, and his upper jaw over the hump of the camel's back, and gives one swallow and the camel disappears forever. He strained out a gnat and swallowed a camel.

While Christ's audience were yet smiling at the appositeness and wit of His illustration—for smile they did in church, unless they were too stupid to understand the hyperbole—Christ practically said to them, "That is you." Punctilious about small things, reckless about affairs of great magnitude. No subject ever withered under a surgeon's knife more bitterly than did the Pharisees under Christ's scalpel of truth. As an anatomist will take a human body to pieces and put the pieces under a microscope for examination, so Christ finds His way to the heart of the dead Pharisee and cuts it out and puts it under the glass for all generations to examine. Those Pharisees thought that Christ would flatter them and compliment them, and how they must have writhed under the red-hot words as He said: "Ye fools, ye whited sepulchers, ye blind guides which strain out a gnat and swallow a camel."

There are in our day a great many gnats strained out and a great many camels swallowed, and it is the object of this sermon to sketch a few persons who are extensively engaged in that business.

First, I remark that all those ministers of the Gospel are photographed in the text who are very scrupulous about the conventionalities of religion, but put no particular stress upon matters of vast importance. Church services ought to be grave and solemn. There is no room for frivolity in religious convo-

cation. But there are illustrations, and there are hyperboles like that of Christ in the text that will irradiate with smiles any intelligent audience. There are men like those blind guides of the text who advocate only those things which have a tendency to draw the corners of the mouth up, and these men will go to installations and to presbyteries and to conferences and to associations, their pockets full of fine sieves to strain out the gnats, while in their own churches at home every Sunday there are fifty people sound asleep. They make their churches a great dormitory, and their somniferous sermons are a cradle, and the drawled-out hymns a lullaby, while some wakeful soul in a pew with her fan keeps the flies off unconscious persons near by. Now, I say it is worse to sleep in church than to smile in church, for the latter implies at least attention, while the former implies the indifference of the hearers and the stupidity of the speaker. In old age, or from physical infirmity, or from long watching with the sick, drowsiness will sometimes overpower one; but when a minister of the Gospel looks out on an audience and finds healthy and intelligent people struggling with drowsiness, it is time for him to give out the doxology or pronounce the benediction. The great fault of church services today is not too much vivacity, but too much somnolence. The one is an irritating gnat that may be easily strained out; the other is a great, sprawling and sleepy-eyed camel of the dry desert. In all our Sabbath schools, in all our Bible classes, in all our pulpits we need to brighten up our religious message with such Christ-like vivacity as we find in the text.

I take down from my library the biographies of ministers and writers of past ages, inspired and uninspired, who have done the most to bring souls to Jesus Christ, and I find that, without a single exception, they consecrated their wit and their humor to Christ. Elijah used it when he advised the Baalites, when they could not make their god respond, telling them to call louder, as their god might be sound asleep or gone a-hunting. Job used it when he said to his conceited comforters, "Wisdom will die with you." Christ not only said it in the text, but

when He ironically complimented the putrefied Pharisees, saying, "The whole need not a physician," and when by one word He described the cunning of Herod, saying: "Go ye, and tell that fox." Matthew Henry's commentaries from the first page to the last coruscated with humor as summer clouds with heat lightning. John Bunyan's writings are as full of humor as they are of saving truth, and there is not an aged man here who has ever read *Pilgrim's Progress* who does not remember that while reading it he smiled as often as he wept. Chrysostom, George Herbert, Robert South, John Wesley, George Whitefield, Jeremy Taylor, Rowland Hill, Nettleton, Charles G. Finney, and all the men of the past who greatly advanced the kingdom of God consecrated their wit and their humor to the cause of Christ. So it has been in all the ages, and I say to these young theological students who crowd in these services Sabbath by Sabbath, sharpen your wits as keen as scimitars, and then take them into this holy war.

It is a very short bridge between a smile and a tear, a suspension bridge from eye to lip, and it is soon crossed over, and a smile is sometimes just as sacred as a tear. There is as much religion, and I think a little more, in a spring morning than in a starless midnight. Religious work without any humor or wit in it is a banquet with a side of beef, and that raw, and no condiments, and no dessert succeeding. People will not sit down to such a banquet. By all means remove all frivolity and all bathos and all lightness and all vulgarity—strain them out through the sieve of holy discrimination; but, on the other hand, beware of that monster which overshadows the Christian Church today, conventionality, coming up from the Great Desert of Ecclesiasticism, having on its back a hump of sanctimonious gloom, and vehemently refuse to swallow that camel.

Oh, how particular a great many people are about the infinitesimals while they are quite reckless about the magnitudes. What did Christ say? Did He not excoriate the people in His time who were so careful to wash their hands before a meal but did not wash their hearts? It is a bad thing to have unclean

hands; it is a worse thing to have an unclean heart. How many people there are in our time who are very anxious that after their death they shall be buried with their feet toward the east, and not at all anxious that during their whole life they should face in the right direction so that they shall come up in the resurrection of the just whichever way they are buried. How many there are chiefly anxious that a minister of the Gospel shall come in the line of apostolic succession, not caring so much whether he comes from Apostle Paul or Apostle Judas. They have a way of measuring a gnat until it is larger than a camel.

Again, my subject photographs all those who are abhorrent of small sins while they are reckless in regard to magnificent thefts. You will find many a man who, while he is so careful that he would not take a yard of cloth or a spool of cotton from the counter without paying for it, and who if a bank cashier should make a mistake and send in a roll of bills five dollars too much would dispatch a messenger in hot haste to return the surplus, yet who will go into a stock company in which after a while he gets control of the stock, and then water the stock and make \$100,000 appear like \$200,000. He stole only \$100,000 by the operation. Many of the men of fortune made their wealth in that way. On the evening of the very day when he watered the stock, such a man will find a wharf-rat stealing a paper from the basement doorway, and will go out and catch the urchin by the collar, and twist the collar so tightly the poor fellow cannot say that it was thirst for knowledge that led him to the dishonest act, but grip the collar tighter and tighter, saying, "I have been looking for you a long while; you stole my paper four or five times, didn't you, you miserable wretch?" And then the old stock gambler, with a voice they can hear three blocks, will cry out: "Police, police!" That evening the same man will kneel with his family in prayers and thank God for the prosperity of the day, then kiss his children good-night with an air which seems to say, "I hope you will all grow up to be as good as your father!" Prisons for sins insect in size, but

palaces for crimes the size of a camel. No mercy for small sins, but great leniency for great iniquity. A poor boy slyly takes from the basket of a market woman a choke pear—saving someone else from the cholera—and you smother him in the horrible atmosphere of a jail or prison, while his cousin, who has been skilful enough to steal \$50,000 from the city, you will make a candidate for the legislature!

There is a great deal of uneasiness and nervousness now among some people in our time who have gotten unrighteous fortunes, a great deal of nervousness about dynamite. I tell them that God will put under their unrighteous fortunes something more explosive than dynamite, the earthquake of His omnipotent indignation. It is time that we learn in America that sin is not excusable in proportion as it declares large dividends and has outriders in equipage. Many a man is riding to perdition, postilion ahead and lackey behind. To steal one copy of a newspaper is a gnat; to steal many thousands of dollars is a camel. There is many a fruit dealer who would not consent to steal a basket of peaches from a neighbor's stall, but who would not scruple to depress the fruit market; and as long as I can remember we have heard every summer that the peach crop of Maryland is a failure, and by the time the crop comes in the misrepresentation makes a difference of millions of dollars. A man who would not steal one peach basket steals fifty thousand peach baskets. Go into the Mercantile Library, in the reading-rooms, and see the newspaper reports of the crops from all parts of the country, and their phraseology is very much the same, and the same men wrote them, methodically and infamously carrying out the huge lying about the grain crop from year to year and for a score of years. After a while there will be a corner in the wheat market, and men who had contempt for a petty theft will burglarize the wheat bin of a nation and steal from the American corn-crib. And in this hot weather some of the men will sit in churches and in reformatory institutions trying to strain out the small gnats of scoundrelism, while in their grain elevators and in their storehouses

they are fattening huge camels which they expect after a while to swallow. Society has to be entirely reconstructed on this subject.

I know in our time the tendency is to charge religious frauds upon good men. They say, "Oh, what a class of frauds you have in the Church of God in this day," and when an elder of a church, or a deacon, or a minister of the Gospel, or a superintendent of a Sabbath school turns out to be a defaulter, what display heads there are in many of the newspapers. Great primer type. Five-line pica. "Another Saint Absconded," "Clerical Scoundrelism," "Religion at a Discount," "Shame on the Churches," while there are a thousand scoundrels outside the church to one inside the church, and the misbehavior of those who never see the inside of a church is so great it is enough to tempt a man to become a Christian to get out of their company. But in all circles, religious and irreligious, the tendency is to excuse sin in proportion as it is mammoth. Even John Milton in his "Paradise Lost," while he condemns Satan, gives such a grand description of him you have hard work to suppress your admiration. Oh, this straining out of small sins like gnats, and this gulping down great iniquities like camels.

This subject does not give the picture of one or two persons, but is a gallery in which thousands of people may see their likenesses. For instance, all those people who, while they would not rob their neighbor of a farthing, appropriate the money and the treasure of the public. A man has a house to sell, and he tells his customer it is worth \$20,000. Next day the assessor comes around and the owner says it is worth \$15,000. Careful to pay their passage from Liverpool to New York, yet smuggling in their trunk ten silk dresses from Paris and a half dozen watches from Geneva, Switzerland, telling the Custom House officer on the wharf, "There is nothing in that trunk but wearing apparel," and putting a five-dollar gold piece in his hand to punctuate the statement.

Described in the text are all those who are particular never to break the law of grammar, and who want all their language

an elegant specimen of syntax, straining out all the inaccuracies of speech with a fine sieve of literary criticism, while through their conversation go slander and innuendo and profanity and falsehood larger than a whole caravan of camels, when they might better fracture every law of the language and shock their intellectual taste. Better let every verb seek in vain for its nominative, and every noun for its government, and every preposition lose its way in the sentence, and adjectives and participles and pronouns get into a grand riot worthy of the Fourth Ward on election day than to commit a moral inaccuracy. Better swallow a thousand gnats than one camel.

Also described in the text are those who are very much alarmed about the small faults of others, and have no alarm about their own great transgressions. There are in every community and in every church watch-dogs who feel called upon to keep their eyes on others and growl. They are full of suspicions. They wonder if that man is not dishonest, if that man is not unclean, if there is not something wrong about the other man. They are always the first to hear of anything wrong. Vultures are always the first to smell carrion. They are self-appointed detectives. I lay this down as a rule without any exception, that those people who have the most faults themselves are most merciless in watching others. From head to foot they are full of jealousies and hypercriticisms. They spend their life in hunting for muskrats and mud turtles instead of hunting for Rocky Mountain eagles, always for something mean instead of something grand. They look at their neighbors' imperfections through a microscope, and look at their own imperfections through a telescope upside down. Twenty faults of their own do not hurt them so much as one fault of somebody else. Their neighbors' imperfections are like gnats and they strain them out; their own imperfections are like camels and they swallow them.

But lest more might think they escape the scrutiny of the text, I have to tell you that we all come under the divine satire when we make the questions of time more prominent than

the questions of eternity. Come now, let us all go into the confessional. Are not all tempted to make the question, Where shall I live now? greater than the question, Where shall I live forever? How shall I get more dollars here? is greater than the question, How shall I lay up treasures in heaven? the question, How shall I pay my debts to man? greater than the question, How shall I meet my obligations to God? the question, How shall I gain the world? greater than the question, What if I lose my soul? the question, Why did God let sin come into the world? greater than the question, How shall I get it extirpated from my nature? the question, What shall I do with the twenty or forty or seventy years of my earthly existence? greater than the question, What shall I do with the millions of cycles of my post-terrestrial existence? Time, how small it is! Eternity, how vast it is! The former is more insignificant in comparison with the latter than is a gnat compared with a camel. We dodged the text. We said, "That doesn't mean me, and that doesn't mean me," and with a ruinous benevolence we are giving the whole sermon away.

But let us all surrender to the charge. What an ado about things here. What poor preparation for a great eternity. As though a minnow were larger than a behemoth, as though a swallow took wider circuit than an albatross, as though a nettle were taller than a Lebanon cedar, as though a gnat were greater than a camel, as though a minute were longer than a century, as though time were higher, deeper, broader than eternity. So the text which flashed with the lightning of wit as Christ uttered it is followed by the crashing thunders of awful catastrophe to those who make the questions of time greater than the questions of the future, the oncoming, over-shadowing future. O eternity, eternity, eternity!

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Will you and I have any scars to show?—TALMAGE.

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18. THE CROSS! THE CROSS!

Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.—LUKE 14:27.

THE CROSS WAS A GIBBET ON WHICH CRIMINALS WERE PUT TO death. It was sometimes made in the shape of the letter T, sometimes in the shape of the letter X, sometimes in the shape of the letter I—a simple upright; sometimes two cross pieces against the perpendicular bar, so that upon the lower cross piece the criminal partly sat. But whatever the style of cross, it was always disgraceful and always agonizing. When Darius conquered Babylon, he put two hundred captives to death on the cross. When Alexander conquered Tyre, he put two thousand captives to death on the cross. So it was just an ordinary mode of punishment.

But in all the forest of crosses on the hills and in the valleys of the earth there is one cross that attracts more attention than any other. It is no higher than the others, it is not made out of different wood, there is nothing peculiar in the notch at which the two pieces are joined, and as to the scene, they witnessed crucifixions every few weeks, so that I see a reckless man walking about the hill and kicking carelessly aside a skull, and wondering who the villain was that had so flat and misshapen a head; and here is another skull, and there on the hillside is another skull. Indeed, the Bible says it was “a place of skulls.” But about the victim on one of these crosses all ages are crying, “Who is he? Was he a man? Was he a God? Was he

man and God?" Through the darkness of that gloomy day I come close up enough to the cross to see who it is. It is Jesus. How did He come there? Had He come up on the top of the hill to look off upon the beautiful landscape, or upon a brilliant sunset? No. He came there ill and exhausted. People sometimes wonder why Christ expired so quickly on the cross, in six or seven hours, while other victims had been on the cross for forty-eight hours before life became extinct. I will tell you the reason. He was exhausted when He came there. He had been scourged. We are horrified at the cruelties of the whipping-post, but those cruelties were mercy as compared with the scourging of Jesus Christ. Two or three Sundays ago, I incidentally mentioned a picture which I saw at Antwerp, a picture made by Rubens—Rubens' picture of the scourging of Jesus Christ. I had only time to just mention the picture. I had not time to say much about it. It was the most overmastering picture I ever looked at, or ever expect to see. As the long-frocked official opened the door that hid the picture, there He was—Christ with back bent and bared. The flagellator stood with upper teeth clenched over the lower lip, as though to give violence to the blows. There were the swollen shoulders of Christ. There were the black and blue ridges, denied even the relief of bleeding. There was the flesh adhering to the whips as they were lifted. There were the marks where the knots in the whips gouged out the flesh. There stood the persecutor, with his foot on the calf of the leg of the Saviour, balancing himself. Oh, the furious and hellish look on those faces, grinning vengeance against the Son of God. The picture seized me, it overwhelmed me; it seemed as if it would kill me. I do not think I could have looked at it five minutes and have lived. But that, my friends, was before Christ had started for Calvary. That was only the whipping.

Are you ready for your journey to the cross? The carpenters have split the timber into two pieces. They are heavy and they are long pieces, for one of them must be fastened deep down in the earth lest the struggling of the victim upset the struc-

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ture. They put this timber on the shoulder of Christ very gradually, first, to see whether He can stand it, and after they find He can stand it, they put the whole weight on Him. Forward, now, to Calvary. The hooting and the yelling mob follow on. Under the weight of the cross, Christ being weary and sick, stumbles and falls, and they jerk at His robe indignant that He should have stumbled and fallen, and they cry: "Get up, get up!" Christ, putting one hand on the ground and the other hand on the cross, rises, looking into the face of Mary, His mother, for sympathy; but they tell her to stand back, it is no place for a woman—"Stand back and stop this crying." Christ moves on with His burden on his shoulders, and a boy passes along with Him, a boy holding a mallet and a few nails. I wonder what they are for. Christ moves on until the burden is so great that He staggers and falls flat into the dust and faints dead away, and a ruffian puts his foot on Him and shakes Him as he would a dead dog, while another ruffian looks down at Him wondering whether He has fainted away, or whether He is only pretending to faint away, and with jeer and contempt indescribable says: "Fainted, have you? Fainted! Get up, get on!"

Now, they have arrived at the foot of the hill. Off with His clothes. Shall that loathsome mob look upon the unrobed body of Christ? Yes. The commanding officers say: "Unfasten the girdle, take off the coat, strip Him." The work is done. But bring back the coat, for here are the gamblers tossing coin on the ground, saying: "Who shall have the coat?" One ruffian says: "I have it, I have it—it is mine!" He rolls it up and puts it under his arm, or he examines it to see what fabric it is made of. Then they put the cross on the ground, and they stretch Christ on it, and four or five men hold Him down while they drive the spikes home, at every thump a groan, a groan!

Alas! alas! the hour passes on and the time comes when they must crucify Him. Christ has only one garment left now, a cap, a cap of thorns. No danger that it will fall off, for the sharp

edges have punctured the temples, and it is sure and fast. One ruffian takes hold of one end of the short beam of the cross, and another ruffian takes hold of the other end of the short beam of the cross, and another ruffian puts his arms around the waist of Christ, and another ruffian takes hold of the end of the long beam of the cross, and altogether they move on until they come to the hole dug in the earth, where they plunge it down with its burden of woe. It is not the picture of a Christ, it is not the statue of Christ you sometimes see in a Roman Catholic cathedral; it is the body of a bleeding, living, dying Christ. They sometimes say He had five wounds, but they have counted wrong. Two wounds for the hands, two wounds for the feet, one wound for the side, they say—five wounds. No, they have missed the worst, and they have missed the most. Did you ever see the bramble out of which that crown of thorns was made? I saw one on a Brooklyn ferryboat, in the hands of a man who had just returned from Palestine, a bramble just like that out of which the crown of thorns was made. Oh, how cruel and how stubborn were the thorns. And when that cap of thorns was put on Christ and was pressed down on Him there were, not five wounds, but ten, twenty, thirty—I cannot count them.

There were three or four things lacking that made that scene worse. First, there was the lack of water. The climate was hot; fever, inflammation, nervous prostration, gangrene had seized Him, and He terribly wanted water. His wounds were worse than gunshot fractures, and yet no water. A Turk, in the thirteenth century, was crucified on the banks of a river so that the sight of the water might tantalize him. And, oh, how His thirst must have tantalized Christ as He thought of the Euphrates and the Jordan and the Amazon and all the fountains of earth and heaven poured out of His own hand. They offered Him an intoxicating draught made out of wine and myrrh, but He declined it. He wanted to die sober. No water. Then, my friends, there was the lack of light. Darkness always increases trouble. I never shall forget a night on the steamer *Greece*, in mid-

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Atlantic, every moment expecting it to go down. All the lights in the cabin were out. The captain came crawling in on his hands and knees, for he could not stand upright, so violently was the vessel pitching, and he cried out: "Light up, light up!" The steward said: "We can't light up; the candles are gone and the holders are gone." The captain said: "I can't help that; light up!" The storm was awful when the lights were burning, worse when the lights went out. Then there was the lack of faithful nurses. When you are ill, it is pleasant to have the head bathed and hands and feet rubbed. Look at the hands and feet of Christ, look at the face of Christ. There were women there who had cared for the sick, but none of them might come up near enough to help. There was Christ's mother, but she might not come up near enough to help. They said: "Stand back, stand back; this is no place for you." The high priests and the soldiers wanted it their own way; they had it their own way.

The hours pass on, and it is twelve o'clock of the Saviour's suffering, and it is one o'clock, and it is two o'clock, and it is almost three o'clock. Take a last look at that suffering face, wan and pinched, the purple lips drawn back against the teeth, the eyes red with weeping and sunken as though grief had pushed them back, blackness under the lower lids, the whole body drooping and shivering with the last chill, the breath growing feebler and feebler and feebler and feebler, until He gives one long, deep, last sigh. He is dead! Oh, my soul, He is dead! Can you tell why? Was He a fanatic dying for a principle that did not amount to anything? Was He a man infatuated? No, to save your soul from sin, and mine, and make eternal life possible He died. There had to be a substitute for sin. Who shall it be? "Let it be me," said Christ, "let it be me."

You understand the meaning of that word substitution. You were drafted for the last war; someone took your place, marched your march, suffered your wounds and died at Gettysburg. Christ comes to us while we are fighting our battle with sin and death and hell, and He is our Substitute. He marches our march, fights our battle, suffers our wounds, and dies our

death. Substitution! Substitution! How do you feel in regard to that scene described in the text, and in the region around about it? Are your sympathies aroused? or are you so dead in sin, and so abandoned by reason of your transgressions that you can look upon all that tearless and unmoved? No, no! there are a thousand people here this morning who can say in the depths of their soul, "No, no, no! if Jesus endured that, and all that for me, I ought to love Him, I must love Him, I will love Him, I do love Him. Here, Lord, I give myself to Thee: it is all that I can do."

But how are you going to test your love and earnestness? My text gives a test. It says that while Christ carried a cross for you, you must be willing to carry a cross for Christ. "Well," you say, "I never could understand that. There are no crosses to be carried in this land; those persecutions have passed, and in all the land there is no one to be crucified, and yet in the pulpit and in the prayer meetings you all keep talking about carrying a cross. "What do you mean, sir?" I mean this, that is a cross which Christ calls you to carry which is unpleasant and hard. "Oh," you say, "after hearing the story of this Christ and all that He has endured for me, I am ready to do anything for Him. Just tell me what I have to do, and I'll do it. I am ready to carry any cross." Suppose I should ask you at the close of a religious service to rise up announcing yourself on the Lord's side—could you do it? "Oh, no," you say, "I have a shrinking and sensitive nature, and it would be impossible for me to rise before a large assemblage and announce myself on the Lord's side." Just as I feared. You cannot stand that cross. The first one that is offered you, you reject. Christ carried a mountain, Christ carried a Himalaya, Christ carried a world for you, and you cannot lift an ounce for Him. But here is a man whose cross will be to announce among his business associates tomorrow morning on the Exchange that he has begun a new life, that while he wants to be faithful in his worldly duties, he is living for another world, and he ought to advise all his associates, so far as he can influence them, to begin with him the

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Christian life. Could you do that, my brother? "Oh, no," you say, "not just that. I think religion is religion, and business is business, and it would be impossible for me to recommend the Christian religion in places of worldly business." Just as I feared. There is a second cross offered you, and you cannot carry it. Christ lifted a mountain for you; you cannot lift an ounce for Him. There is someone whose cross will be to present religion in the home circle. Would you dare to kneel down and pray if your brother and sister were looking at you? Could you ask a blessing at the tea-table? Could you take the Bible and gather your family around you, and read of Christ and heaven and your immortal soul? Could you then kneel and pray for a blessing on your household? "Oh," you say, "not exactly that. I couldn't quite do that, because I have a very quick temper, and if I professed religion and tried to talk religion in my household, and then after that I should lose my temper they would scoff at me and say: 'You are a pretty Christian!'" So you are cowed down and their sarcasm keeps you out of heaven and away from Christ, when, under God, you ought to take your whole family into the kingdom. Christ lifted a mountain, lifted a world for you; you cannot lift an ounce for Him. I see how it is; you want to be favorable to religion, you want to support Christian institutions, you like to be associated with those who love Jesus Christ; but as to taking a positive step you cannot—you cannot, and my text, like a gate of a hundred bolts, bars you from peace on earth and glory in heaven.

There are hundreds of men and women here brave enough in other things in life who simply for the lack of manliness and womanliness stay away from God. They dare not say: "Forever and forever, Lord Jesus, I take Thee. Thou hast redeemed me by Thy blood; here is my immortal spirit. Listen, all my friends. Listen, all the world." They are lurking round about the kingdom of God—they are lurking round about it, expecting to crawl in some time when nobody is looking, forgetful of the tremendous words of my text: "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."

An officer of a neighboring church told me that he was in a store in New York—just happened in—where there were many clerks, and a man came in and said to a young man standing behind the counter: "Are you the young man that arose the other night in the Brooklyn Tabernacle and asked for prayers?" Without any flush of cheek, he replied, "I am. I haven't always done right, and I have been quite bad; but since I rose for prayers, I think I am better than I was." It was only his way of announcing that he had started for the higher life. God will not cast out a man who is brave enough to take a step ahead like that.

I tell you these things because, my dear friends, I want to show you how light the cross is that we have to carry compared with that which Christ carried for us. You have not had the flesh torn off for Christ's sake in carrying your cross; He fainted dead away under His cross. You have not carried the cross until it fetched the blood; under His there was a pool of blood that splashed the horses' fetlocks. You have friends to sympathize with you in carrying the cross; Christ trod the wine-press of God's wrath alone, alone! The cross that you and I ought to carry represents only a few days or a few years of trial; the cross that Christ carried for us had compressed into it the agonies of eternity.

Someone has come here today whom you have not observed. He did not come through the front door; He did not come down any of these aisles; yet I know He is here. He is from the East. He comes with blistered foot, and with broken heart, and cheeks red, not with health, but with blood from the temples. I take hold of His coat and I say: "It does not seem to fit Thee." "No," He says, "it is not mine; it is borrowed; it does not belong to me now. For my vesture did they cast lots." And I say to Him, "Thine eyes are red as though from loss of sleep." He says: "Yes, the Son of man, had not where to lay his head." And I touch the log on His back, and I say: "Why carriest Thou this?" "Ah," He says, "that is a cross I carry for thee and for the sins of the whole world. That is a cross. Fall into line,

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march on with me in this procession, take your smaller crosses and your lighter burdens, and join me in this march to heaven." And we join that procession with our smaller crosses and our lighter burdens, and Christ looks back and He sees some are halting because they cannot endure the shame, or bear the burden, and with a voice which has in it majesty and omnipotence, He cries until all the earth trembles: "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple." Oh, my brethren, my sisters—for I do not speak professionally, I speak as a brother would speak to a brother or sister—my brother, can you not bear a cross if at last you can wear a crown?

Come now, let us divide off. Who is on the Lord's side? Who is ready to turn his back on the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world? A Roman emperor said to a Greek architect: "You build me a coliseum, a grand coliseum, and if it suits me I will crown you in the presence of all the people, and I will make a great day of festival on your account." The Greek architect did his work, did it magnificently, planned the building, looked after its construction. The building was done. The day for opening arrived. In the coliseum were the emperor and the Greek architect. The emperor rose amid the plaudits of a vast assembly, and said: "We have gathered here today to open this coliseum and to honor the Greek architect. It is a great day for the Roman Empire. Let this building be prosperous, and let honor be put upon the Greek architect. We must have a festival today. Bring out those Christians and let us have them put to death at the mouths of the lions." The Christians were put into the center of the amphitheater. Their destruction was to be a great celebration. Then the lions, hungry and three-fourths starved, were let out from their dens in the side of the amphitheater, and they came forth with mighty springs to destroy and rend the Christians, and all the galleries shouted, "Huzza, huzza! Long live the emperor!" Then the Greek architect arose in one of the galleries and shouted, until in the vast assemblage all heard him: "I too

am a Christian!" and they seized him in their fury and flung him to the wild beasts, until his body, bleeding and dead, was tumbled over and over again in the dust of the amphitheater. Could you have done that for Christ? Could you, in a vast assemblage, all of whom hated Christ, have said: "I am a Christian," or, "I want to be a Christian"? Would you have had the ten-thousandth part of the enthusiasm and the courage of the Greek architect? Nay, I ask you another question: Would you in an assembly where nearly all are Christians—in an assemblage a vast multitude of whom love Christ and are willing to live, and, if need be, to die for Him—would you dare to say, "I am a Christian," or "I want to be a Christian"? Would you say in the presence of the friends of Christ today as much as the Greek architect said in the presence of the enemies of Christ? Oh, are there not multitudes here who are ready to say: "Let the world look on, let all the galleries of earth and heaven and hell look on, I take Christ this day. Come applause or abuse, come sickness or health, come life or death, Christ now, Christ forever."

I wonder if at the close of the sermon I asked all those who wanted to be for Christ to rise up—I wonder if there would be a great multitude to rise up, and yet I will not put the test. Let each one in his own soul answer the test. Are you for Christ, or are you against Him? The destinies of eternity tremble in the balance. It seems as if the last day had come and we were gathered for the reckoning. "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him." What I say to the impenitent I say this morning to all Christians. What are you doing for Christ? What are you bearing for Christ?

Oh, Christian man, oh, Christian woman, have you any scars to show in this conflict? When a war is over, the heroes have scars to show. One hero rolls back his sleeve and shows a gunshot fracture, or he pulls down the collar and shows where he was wounded in the neck. Another man says: "I have never had the use of my limbs since I was wounded at that great battle." When the last day comes, when all our

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battles are over, will we have any wounds for Christ? Some have wounds for sin, wounds for the devil, wounds gotten in fighting on the wrong side. Have we wounds that we can show—wounds gotten in the battle for Christ and for the truth? On that resurrection day Christ will have plenty of scars to show. Christ will stand there and show the scars on His brow, the scars on His hands, and the scars on His feet, and He will pull aside the robe of His royalty and show the scar on His side, and all heaven will break down with emotion and gratitude in one great sob, and then in one great hosanna. Will you and I have any scars to show? On that day there will be Ignatius showing the mark of the paws and teeth of the lion that struck him down in the coliseum. There will be glorious John Huss showing just where on his foot the flames began on that day when his soul took wing from flame and soared up from Constance. There will be Hugh McNeil, ready to point to the mark on his neck where the ax struck him. There will be McMillan and Campbell and Freeman, the American missionaries, who, with their wives and children, were put to death in the awful massacre at Cawnpore, showing the place where the daggers of the Sepoys struck them. There will be the Waldensians, showing where their limbs were broken on the day when the Piedmontese soldiery pitched them over the rocks. Will you and I have any wounds to show? Have we fought any battles for Christ? When I ask for teachers, will there not out of this Bible class come a hundred men and women who will say: "I can no longer be merely a recipient of truth; I must proclaim it. Woe unto me if I preach not this Gospel somewhere to somebody. I can no longer stand here or sit here receiving from other teachers the truth of this Gospel when I must be a flaming evangelist." Oh that we might all be enlisted for Christ, that we might all be willing to suffer for Christ, that we might all bear a cross for Christ.

When the Scottish chieftains wanted to raise an army, they would make a wooden cross, and then set it on fire and carry it with other crosses they had through the mountains, through

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the highlands, and among the people, and as they waved the cross the people would gather to the standard to fight for Scotland. So today, I come out with the cross of the Son of God. It is a flaming cross, flaming with suffering, flaming with triumph, flaming with glory. I carry it out among all the people. Who will be on the Lord's side? Who will gather to the standard of Emmanuel? A cross, a cross, a cross! "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."

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The same Christ who fed the five thousand will feed all the world's hunger. The same Christ who cured Bartimæus will illumine all blindness. The same Christ who made the dumb speak will put on every tongue a hosanna. . . .—TALMAGE.

19. THE POPULAR CHRIST

Unto him shall the gathering of the people be.—GENESIS 49:10.

THROUGH A SUPERNATURAL LENS, OR WHAT I MIGHT CALL A prophescope, dying Jacob looks down the corridor of the centuries until he sees Christ the center of all popular attraction and the greatest being in all the world, everywhere so acknowledged. It was not always so. The world tried hard to put Him down and to put Him out. In the year 1200, while excavating for antiquities fifty-three miles northeast of Rome, a copper plate tablet was found containing the death warrant of the Lord Jesus Christ, reading in this wise: "In the year 17 of the Empire of Tiberius Cæsar, and on the 25th of March, I, Pontius Pilate, Governor of the Prætores, condemn Jesus of Nazareth to die on the cross between two thieves, Quintius Cornelius to lead him forth to the place of execution." That death warrant was signed by several names. First, by Daniel, Pharisee rabbi; second, by Johannes, rabbi; third, by Raphael; fourth, by Capet, a private citizen. This capital punishment was executed according to law. The name of the thief crucified on the right-hand side of Christ was Dismas; the name of the thief crucified on the left-hand side of Christ was Gestes. Pontius Pilate, describing the tragedy, says the whole world lighted candles from noon until night.

Thirty-three years of maltreatment. They ascribed His birth to bastardy, and His death to excruciation. A wall of the city, built about those times, and recently exposed by archæologists,

shows a caricature of Jesus Christ, evidencing the contempt in which He was held by many in His day—that caricature on the wall representing a cross and a donkey nailed to it, and under it the inscription: “This is the Christ whom the people worship.” But I rejoice that that day is gone by, and that Christ is coming out from under the world’s abuse. The most popular name on earth today is the name of Christ. Where He had one friend Christ has a thousand friends. The scoffers have become the worshippers. Of the twenty most celebrated infidels in Great Britain in our day, sixteen have come back to Christ, trying to undo the blatant mischief of their lives—sixteen out of the twenty. Every man who writes a letter, or signs a document, wittingly or unwittingly honors Jesus Christ. We date everything as B.C. or as A.D. B.C., before Christ—A.D., *anno domini*, in the year of our Lord. All the ages of history on the pivot of the upright beam of the cross of the Son of God, B.C., A.D. I do not care what you call Him—whether Conqueror, or King, or Morning Star, or Sun of Righteousness, or Balm of Gilead, or Lebanon Cedar, or Brother, or Friend, or take the name used in the verse from which I take my text, and call Him Shiloh, which means His Son, or the Tranquilator, or the Peacemaker, Shiloh. I only want this morning to tell you that “unto him shall be the gathering of the people.”

In the first place, the people are gathered around Christ *for pardon*. No sensible man or healthfully ambitious man is satisfied with his past life. A fool may think he is all right. A sensible man knows he is not. I do not care who the thoughtful man is, the review of his lifetime behavior before God and man gives to him no especial satisfaction. “Oh,” he says, “there have been so many things I have done I ought not to have done, there have been so many things I have said I ought never to have said, there have been so many things I have written I ought never to have written, there have been so many things I have thought I ought never to have thought, I must, somehow, get things readjusted, I must, somehow, have the

past reconstructed; there are days and months and years which cry out against me in horrible vociferation." Ah! my brother, Christ adjusts the past by obliterating it. He does not erase the record of our misdoing with a dash of ink from a register's pen, but, lifting His right hand crushed red at the palm, He puts it against His bleeding brow, and then against His pierced side, and with the crimson accumulation of all these wounds He rubs out the accusatory chapter, He blots out our iniquities. Oh, men anxious about the future, you had better be anxious about the past. I put it not at the end of my sermon, I put it at the front; mercy and pardon through Shiloh, the sin-pardoning Christ.

"Oh," says some man, "I have for forty years been as bad as I could be, and is there any mercy for me?" Mercy for you. "Oh," says someone here, "I had a grand ancestry, the holiest of fathers, and the tenderest of mothers, and for my perfidy there is no excuse; do you think there is any mercy for me?" Mercy for you. "But," says another man, "I fear I have committed what they call 'the unpardonable sin,' and the Bible says if a man commit that sin he is to be forgiven neither in this world nor in the world to come; do you think there is any mercy for me?" The fact that you have any solicitude about the matter at all proves positively that you have not committed the unpardonable sin. Mercy for you. Oh, the grace of God which bringeth salvation. The grace of God!

Let us take the surveyor's chain and try to measure God's mercy through Jesus Christ. Let one surveyor take that chain and go to the north, and another surveyor take that chain and go to the south, and another surveyor take that chain and go to the east, and another surveyor take that chain and go to the west, and then make report of the square miles of that vast kingdom of God's mercy. Ah! you will have to wait to all eternity for the report of that measurement. It cannot be measured. Paul tried to climb the height of it and he went height over height, mountain above mountain, then sank down in discouragement and gave it up, for he saw Sierra Nevadas

beyond and Matterhorn beyond, and waving his hand back to us in the plain, he says: "Past finding out—unsearchable, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence."

You notice that nearly all the sinners mentioned as pardoned in the Bible were great sinners. David, a great sinner. Paul, a great sinner. Rahab, a great sinner. Magdalen, a great sinner. The prodigal son, a great sinner. The world easily understood how Christ could pardon a half-and-half sinner; but what the world wants to be persuaded of is that Christ will forgive the worst sinner, the hardest sinner, the oldest sinner, the most inexcusable sinner. To this sin-pardoning Shiloh let all the gathering of the people be.

But I remark again, the people will gather around Christ *as a sympathizer*. Oh, we all want sympathy. I hear people talk as though they were independent of it. None of us could live without sympathy. At this season of the year we come home from our summer absence and perhaps we leave some of our family away until the cool weather is established, and how lonely the house seems until they all get home. But, alas! for those who never come home. Sometimes it seems as if it must be impossible. What, will the feet never again come over the threshold? Will they never again sit with us at the table? Will they never again kneel with us at family prayer? Shall we never again look into their sunny faces? Shall we never again on earth take counsel with them for our work? Alas! who can stand under these griefs?

Oh, Christ, Thou canst do more for a bereft soul than anyone else. It is He that stands beside us to tell of the resurrection. It is He that comes to bid peace. It is He that comes to tell us of future reunion. It is He that comes to us and breathes into us the spirit of submission until we can look up from the wreck and ruin of our brightest expectations and say, "Father, not my will, but thine be done." Oh, yes, ye who are bereft, some of you have gone through the deep waters of trouble—ye anguish-bitten, come into this refuge. The roll of those who come for relief to Christ is larger and larger. Unto

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this Shiloh of omnipotent sympathy the gathering of the people shall be. Oh that Christ would stand by all these empty cradles and all these desolated homesteads and all these broken hearts, and persuade us it is well. The world cannot offer you any help at such a time. Suppose the world comes and offers you money. You would rather live on a crust in a cellar and have your departed loved ones with you than live in palatial surroundings and they away. Suppose the world offers you its honors to console you. What is the Presidency to Abraham Lincoln when little Willie lies dead in the White House? Perhaps the world comes and says: "Time will cure it all." Ah, there are griefs that have raged on for thirty years and are raging yet. And yet hundreds have been comforted, thousands have been comforted, millions have been comforted, and Christ has done the work. Oh, what you want is sympathy.

The world's heart of sympathy beats very irregularly. Plenty of sympathy when we do not want it, and often, when we are in appalling need of it, no sympathy. There are multitudes of people dying for sympathy. Sympathy in their work, sympathy in their fatigues, sympathy in their bereavements, sympathy in their financial losses, sympathy in their physical ailments, sympathy in their spiritual anxieties, sympathy in the time of declining years. Wide, deep, high, everlasting, almighty sympathy. We must have it, and Christ has it. Christ is it; that is the cord with which He is going to draw all nations to Him. At the story of punishment man's eye flashes and his teeth set and his fist clenches and he prepares to do battle, even though it be against the heavens, but what heart is so hard but that it will succumb to the story of compassion? Even a man's sympathy is pleasant and helpful. In some hour of weakness what it is to have a brawny man stand beside us and promise to see us through, what courage it gives to our heart and what strength it gives to our arm. Still mightier is a woman's sympathy. Let him tell the story who, when all his fortunes were gone and all the world was against him, came home and found in that home a wife who could

write on the top of the empty flour barrel: "The Lord will provide," or write on the door of the empty wardrobe: "Consider the lilies of the field; if God so clothe the grass of the field, will He not clothe us and ours?" Or let that young man tell the story who has gone the whole round of dissipation. The shadow of Blackwell's Island is upon him, and even his father says: "Be off—never come home again." The young man finds still his mother's arm outreached for him, and how she will stand at the gate of the prison to whisper consolation, or get down on her knees before the governor begging for pardon, hoping on for her vagrant boy after all others are hopeless. Or let her tell the story who under *villainous allurements* and impatient of parental restraint has wandered off from a home of which she was the idol into the murky midnight of abandonment, away from God, and farther away, until some time she is tossed on the beach of that early home a mere splinter of a wreck. Who will pity her now? Who will gather those disheveled locks into her lap? Who will wash off the blood from the gashed forehead? Who will tell her of that Christ who came to save the lost? Who will put that weary head on the clean white pillow and watch through the day and watch through the night until the hoarse voice of the sufferer becomes the whisper, and the whisper becomes only a faint motion of the lips, and the faint motion of the lips is exchanged for a silent look, and the cut feet are still, and the weary eyes are still, and the frenzied heart is still, and all is still? Who will have compassion on her when no others have compassion? Mother! Mother!

Oh, there is something beautiful in sympathy, in manly sympathy, wifely sympathy, motherly sympathy, yea, and neighborly sympathy. Why was it that our city was aroused with excitement last week when a little child was kidnapped on one of our streets? Why were whole columns of the newspapers filled with the story of a little child? It was because we are all one in sympathy, and parents said: "How if it had been my Lizzie? How if it had been my Mary? How if it had been my

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Maud? How if it had been my child? How if there had been one unoccupied pillow in our trundle bed tonight? How if my little one, bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh, were tonight carried captive into some den of vagabonds never to come back to me? How if it had been my sorrow looking out of the window, watching and waiting, that sorrow worse than death?" Then, when they found her, why did we declare the news all through the households, and everybody that knew how to pray say: "Thank God!"? Because we are all one, bound by one great golden chain of sympathy. Oh, yes, but I have to tell you that if you will add up all neighborly, manly, wifely, motherly sympathy, it will be found only a poor starveling thing compared with the sympathy of our great Shiloh who has held in His lap the sorrows of the ages and who is ready to nurse on His holy heart the woes of all who will come to Him. Oh, what a God, what a Saviour we have!

But in larger vision see the nations in some kind of trouble ever since the world was derailed and hurled down the embankments. The demon of sin came to this world, but other demons have gone through other worlds. The demon of conflagration, the demon of volcanic disturbance, the demon of destruction. La Place says he saw one world in the northern hemisphere sixteen months burning. Tycho Brahe said he saw another world burning. A French astronomer says that in three hundred years fifteen hundred worlds have disappeared. I do not see why infidels find it so hard to believe that two worlds stopped in Joshua's time, when the astronomers tell us that fifteen hundred worlds have stopped. Even the moon is a world in ruins. Stellar, lunar, solar catastrophes innumerable! But it seems as if the worst sorrows have been reserved for our world. By one toss of the world at Trinboro, of 12,000 inhabitants only twenty-six people escaped. By one shake of the world at Lisbon, in five minutes 60,000 perished and 200,000 before the earth stopped rocking. A mountain falls in Switzerland, burying the village of Goldau. A mountain falls in Italy in the night when 2,000 people are asleep and they never arouse.

By a convulsion of the earth Japan broken off from China! By a convulsion of the earth the Caribbean islands broken off from America! Three islands near the mouth of the Ganges, with 340,000 inhabitants—a great surge of the sea breaks over them and 214,000 perish that day. Alas! alas, for our poor world!

It has been recently discovered that a whole continent has sunk, a continent that connected Europe and America*—part of the inhabitants of that continent going to Europe, part coming to America over the table lands of Mexico, up through the valleys of the Mississippi, and we are finding now the remains of their mounds and cities in Mexico, in Colorado and the table lands of the west. It is a matter of demonstration that a whole continent has gone down, the Azores off the coast of Spain only the highest mountain of that sunken continent. Plato described that continent, its grandeur, the multitude of its inhabitants, its splendor and its awful destruction, and the world thought it was a romance; but archæologists have found out its history and the English and the German and the American fleets have gone forth with archæologists, and the *Challenger* and the *Dolphin* and the *Gazelle* have dropped anchor, and in deep sea soundings have found the contour of that sunken continent and given us a map of it. The Australian archipelago only the mountain tops of another sunken continent!

Oh, there is trouble marked on the rocks, on the sky, on the sea, on the flora and the fauna. Astronomical trouble, geological trouble, oceanic trouble, political trouble, social trouble, domestic trouble, and standing in the presence of all those stupendous devastations, I ask if I am not right in saying that the great want of this age and all the ages is Divine sympathy and omnipotent comfort. They are found, not in the Brahma of the Hindus, or in the Allah of the Mohammedan, but in the Christ unto whom shall the gathering of the people be. Other worlds may fall, but this Morning Star will never

* The theory of that day.

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be blotted from the heavens. The earth may quake, but this Rock of Ages will never be shaken from its foundation. The same Christ who fed the five thousand will feed all the world's hunger. The same Christ who cured Bartimæus will illumine all blindness. The same Christ who made the dumb speak will put on every tongue a hosanna. The same Christ who awoke Lazarus from the dead will yet rally all the pious dead in glorious resurrection. "I know that my Redeemer liveth," and that "to him shall the gathering of the people be."

Ah! my friends, when Christ starts thoroughly and quickly to lift this miserable wreck of a sunken world, it will not take Him long to lift it. I have thought that this particular age in which we live may be given up to discoveries and inventions by which through quick and instantaneous communication all cities and all communities and all lands will be brought together, and that then in another period perhaps these inventions, which have now been used for worldly purposes, will be brought out for Gospel invitation, and some great prophet of the Lord will come and snatch the mysterious, sublime, and miraculous telephone from the hand of commerce, and, all lands and kingdoms connected by a wondrous wire, this prophet of the Lord may through telephonic communication in an instant announce to all nations pardon and sympathy and life through Jesus Christ; and then putting the wondrous tube to the ear of the Lord's prophet, the response shall come back, "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ His only begotten Son." You and I may not live to see the day. I think those of us who are over forty years of age can hardly expect to see the day. I expect that before that time our bodies will be sound asleep in the hammocks of the old Gospel ship as it goes sailing on. But Christ will wake us up in time to see the achievement. We who have sweated in the hot harvest field will be at the door of the garden when the sheaves come in. That work, for which in this world we toiled and wept and struggled and wore ourselves out shall not come to consummation and we be

oblivious of the achievement. We will be allowed to come out and shake hands with the victors. We who toiled in the earlier battles will have just as much right to rejoice as those who reddened their feet in the last Armageddon. Ah! yes, those who could only give a cupful of cold water in the name of a disciple, those who could only scrape a handful of lint for a wounded soldier, those who could only administer to old age in its decrepitude, those who could only coax a poor waif of the street to go back home to her God, those who could only lift a little child in the arms of Christ, will have as much right to take part in the ovation to the Lord Jesus Christ as Chrysostom. It will be your victory and mine as well as Christ's. He the conqueror, we shouting in His train. Christ the victor will pick out the humblest of His disciples in the crowd, and turning half around on the white horse of victory He shall point her out for approval by the multitude as He says: "She did what she could." Then putting His hand on the head of some man who by his industry made one talent do the work of ten, He will say, "Thou has been faithful over a few things—I will make thee ruler over ten cities." Two different theories about the fulfillment of this promise.

There are people who think Christ will come in person and sit on a throne. Perhaps He may. I should like to see the scarred feet going up the stairs of a palace in which all the glories of the Alhambra and St. Mark's and the Winter Palace are gathered. I should like to see the world pay Christ in love for what it did to Him in maltreatment. I should like to be one of the grooms of the chargers, holding the stirrup as the King mounts. Oh, what a glorious time it would be on earth if Christ would break through the heavens and right here where He has suffered and died have this prophecy fulfilled: "Unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

But failing in that, I bargain to meet you at the ponderous gate of heaven on the day when our Lord comes back. Garlands of all nations on His brow—of the bronzed nations of the south and the pallid nations of the north—Europe, Asia,

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Africa, North and South America, and the other continents that may rise meantime from the sea to take the places of their sunken predecessors. Arch of Trajan, Arch of Titus, Arch of Triumph in the Champs Elysées, all too poor to welcome this King of kings, and Lord of lords, and Conqueror of conquerors in His august arrival. Turn out all heaven to meet Him. Hang all along the route the flags of earthly dominion, whether decorated with crescent, or star, or eagle, or lion, or coronet. Hang out heaven's brightest banner, with its one star of Bethlehem and the blood-striped cross. I hear the procession now. Hark! the tramp of feet, the rumbling of wheels, the shouts of the riders. Ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands. Put up in heaven's library right beside the completed volume of the world's ruin the completed volume of Shiloh's triumph. The old promise struggling through the ages fulfilled at last, "Unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

While everlasting ages roll,
Eternal love shall feast their soul,
And scenes of bliss forever new
Rise in succession to their view.

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We do not work in this world; we are only getting ready to work. We are apprentices, and have not served our time out. We are students, and have not got our diplomas. . . .—TALMAGE.

20. WHAT IS YOUR LIFE?

What is your life?—JAMES 4:14.

While several hundred persons were gathered in the parlors of the Central Baptist Church, Syracuse, on the evening of the 23rd of June, the floor suddenly gave way, precipitating people and furniture into the room below, and pulling the ceiling and timbers down upon them. Fourteen persons were killed outright, or have since died, and nearly one hundred more were injured, about twenty of them severely. The floor having given way in the center, the hapless victims were crowded into a V-shaped vortex, amid broken timbers, plastering, and furniture, and many who were unhurt were in imminent danger of suffocation. The pastor, Rev. George T. Dowling, and his wife, went down with the rest, but both escaped with scarcely any injuries. The occasion of the gathering was a festival by the ladies of the church, and a "Little Old Folks' Concert" by the children.

SUCH IS THE BRIEF NEWSPAPER EPITOME OF A TERRIBLE CALAMITY which has lately befallen a Christian community in the State of New York.

This day seems oppressive to me with solemnities. About to come up through the "Narrows" of New York harbor is a vessel bringing all that remains on earth of the pleasure party that went out on the 14th of last May, on Lake Geneva, Switzerland. Of the three young men who perished there, only one body has been reclaimed, and parental arms from our city are stretched out to receive it. Welcome back to thy native shores, oh, loved one, though thou comest asleep! Welcome, though it be amid a rain of tears and the snapping of heart-

strings! Remorseless lake, give back thy dead! We would have them pillowed in our cemeteries.

While meditating upon these things, there comes a more startling and overpowering cry from the central city of our own state. Many whom we knew were in that catastrophe. And now the call from New York harbor, louder than the dash of the wave, and the call from Syracuse, louder than the crackling of the timbers, unite with the call of my text in demanding, "What is your life?"

The anatomist, with knife and skilful analysis, has sought to find out the secret hiding-place of the principle of life; but there is a barred gateway that he cannot enter. No satisfactory definition has ever been given of what life is. In complete swoon, when all muscular action of the heart has stopped, and the brain lies dormant, life may still exist, and, rallying its scattered forces, march on to threescore and ten. But I have a lamp in the light of which I can give an intelligent answer to this question; and so, leaving the anatomist to his curious, fascinating, and sublime investigation, I come in the light of the Word of God to answer the question: "What is your life?"

There may be now and then in our existence a staccato passage; but, for the most part, our days and years pass in a sort of monotone. We rise in the morning, we breakfast, we go to our daily occupation, we dine, we shake hands, we eat our evening meal, we sleep; and Tuesday is a copy of Monday, and Wednesday is an echo of Tuesday. If you are forty years of age, then you have passed fourteen thousand six hundred days, and yet, without the use of memorandum, you cannot give me an account of fifty of them. Our days pass on with even pace, so that we seldom estimate what we are, what we have been, and what we will be. Oh that this morning this solemn and overwhelming providence in a sister city might come to our ears, and give startling emphasis to this interlocutory of the apostle: "What is your life?"

In answering this question of my text, I reply, in the first place, our life is a test. If you buy goods, you very soon want

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to find out whether they are really worth what you paid for them. Every new ship must make a trial trip. If you bring a man into some important position, and there is a crisis where his behavior will either make or break you, you say: "Now I will have a chance to find out what he is." Well, every man is on his trial trip. Men, angels, and devils are finding out what is in you, what you are worth, and what your weaknesses are. No man liveth to himself. Every word you speak, every action you perform, has a thousand echoes. Earth, and heaven, and hell are gazing on your behavior, and you are on trial. You are watching me, to see whether I am faithful or unfaithful; I am watching you, to see whether you are faithful or unfaithful; and each one of us is going now through the solemn, unmistakable, tremendous test.

I reply still further to the question of my text, that *our life is an apprenticeship*. A man works at a trade four or five years, or he studies for a profession six or ten years, and then he enters what he considers his chief mission. But, my brethren, our entire life on earth is an apprenticeship. Not until death do we begin our chief employment. This world is not our principal workshop. All the inhabitants of heaven are busy forever. The Bible says they rest neither day nor night. If to carry on the little business of this world it requires so many hands, and feet, and minds, who can estimate how many activities will be required to carry on the enterprises of heaven? When our little world is finished and burned up, is the whole universe to stop business? Because one thread and needle store in a back alley fails, is all the commerce of a metropolis arrested? Oh, no. In heaven there will be no sleeping, no idling. That Christian woman who feeds the sick pauper in the back street will be a queen over an infinite realm of light, and joy, and glory. And that Christian man who can hardly make his way to church on crutches will be a ministering spirit, flying to one of the farthest outposts of God's dominion. We do not work in this world; we are only getting ready to work. We are apprentices, and have not served our time out. We are stu-

dents, and have not got our diplomas. **Death is to be graduation.** It will be commencement day.

I go on and answer the question of my text, by saying that our life is a conflict. If you have never tried to control your passions, if you have never tried to subdue your temper, if you have never tried to rouse yourselves up to a better manhood or womanhood, you cannot know what I mean. But if you have attempted to live a holy life, and to be better and to do better, then you sympathize with the Apostle Paul when he represented our life on earth as a war with the world, a war with the flesh, a war with the devil. In addition to the struggle you have within, you have had a thousand outside battles. Sometimes it has been against poverty, against physical distresses, against bad social position, against an unhappy family name. In one case it has been one thing, and in another case it has been another thing; and with many of you, up to this point, it has been a hand-to-hand fight, and so it will be even unto the end. There is no tent for peaceful encampment but the grave. Life is a conflict, the Bible announces it. Life is a conflict: so your own experience affirms it.

Must I be carried to the skies,
 On flowery beds of ease,
 While others fought to win the prize
 And sailed through bloody seas?

Again, I answer the question of the text by saying that *our life on earth is a prophecy*. By that I mean that what we are in this world we will be in the world to come, only on a larger scale. If a hero here, a hero there. If a cheat here, a cheat there. If a Christian here, a Christian there. I know sometimes there are marvelous changes in the last hour of life, and that the dying thief, repenting goes to paradise; but that is the exception. The probability is, my brethren, that what you are in the present you will be in the future—what you now are you will always be, only with wider range. The prophecy is, if you now love that which is unclean and unrighteous, you

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will always love it. If your highest joy is in God, and your chief ambition to be like Him, you are on your way to grandeurs that no dream ever was bright enough to depict. I judge from the blossoms what the fruit is going to be when it sets. He that is filthy shall be filthy still, and he that is holy shall be holy still. On banks of celestial joy walks the consecrated Alfred Cookman. In dungeons of starless night sits John Wilkes Booth.

I reply further to the question of my text, "What is your life?" by saying that our life is a preparation. If we are going on a long journey, we want some time to get ready. We must have extra apparel. We want our guidebook. Our comfort on the journey will depend very much upon what we start with. If we are going among blood-thirsty savages we must take knife and pistol. God has started us on a journey that will have no terminus, and, once started, we never come back. Are we getting ready? Are we armed? That question you hear to-day; but if I should utter it an hour from now you might not hear it. Life is a preparation. If you have any weapons to sharpen, you had better sharpen them now. If you have any lamps to light, you had better light them now. When death once shuts the door of the sepulcher, the angel of repentance never opens it. "As the tree falleth, so it must lie." So far as I can tell your case, your great need is to get rid of your sins. I know of only one way to do it. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin; and though you may this morning count yourself the worst sinner, you may, by the grace of God, become the best saint. "Where sin abounded, grace shall much more abound."

Again, I answer this question of my text by saying *our life is a great uncertainty*. Nobody steps out of life as he expects to. Though a man may have been sick for thirty years he is surprised at last when he goes. And though you may have known someone in invalidism for a quarter of a century, when you hear he has departed, you throw up your hands and say: "Is it possible?" We can make no calculation about the future.

The world is full of temptation and of peril. We do not know how our children will turn out. We do not know what we ourselves might be tempted to do. We resolve on one thing, we do another. Our associations change. Our plans change. We change. And life is such a complete uncertainty, that I would not want to live one hour without the grace of God, and I very certainly would not want to die without it. Blessed be God, I feel under my feet, this morning, a rock firmer than the everlasting hills. That keeps me hopeful and confident. No overbearing autocrat sits on the throne of the universe. My Father is king; and the mountains may depart, and the hills be removed, but His goodness, and His kindness, and His grace, never, never. In this Christian hope I have indulged for about twenty-two years; and while I should be sorry to know that there is anyone in this house more unworthy than I have been, still, I can tell you that I know enough of this religion to recommend it everywhere, and always, and to say that the kindest, gentlest, the grandest friend a man ever had is Jesus. I know Him. I believe in Him. I have put all my hope on Him. He has never betrayed me. He will never betray you; and the best thing that you can do now is this moment to surrender yourselves to Him for time and for eternity. But do not take my experience. It is comparatively brief. There are some, as you look over the audience, who have frost on the brow—ask them what they think of Jesus? Ask them whether He ever betrayed them. In what dark hour? By what grave? In what sickness? Ah, these old people can tell you a better story than I can of how in sickness Christ was their best physician, and how—when they came to give the last kiss to the cold lips that never might speak again, and to stand on the verge of a grave deep enough to bury all—they found Jesus the Comforter, and that this morning their brightest anticipation of the future is the presence of Him whom, having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

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There never was a better illustration of the uncertainty of life than we find in the disaster of our sister city. Some of you think of Syracuse only as a depot through which you pass on the way west. Some of you, who know it better, know it to be one of the most industrious and busiest cities on the continent. It is the Golden Gate between the East and the West. Through its heart rolls the tide of a nation's life, beating hard with the motion of the great lakes on the one side and the ocean on the other. Its convention halls are filled with popular assemblages that have come there to decide great questions of philanthropy or politics. On either bank of this rushing stream of life are mansions, counting-rooms, stores, shops—hives where the voices of busy men hum while they gather in the honey of wealth. Feet shuffling, anvils ringing, bridges rumbling, printing presses rattling. Illumined lyceum, and literary club, and churches lighted for week-night services, and houses swarming with fashionable levee. But it does not appear to me especially in that light. When I think of Syracuse I think of it as the place of beautiful homes, and warm sympathies, and ardent friendships, and blessed associations. Among the happiest years of my ministry were those spent in that city, and the sorrow comes from there to my heart today. The young pastor of that church, the son of the leading minister of his denomination in this country, had only a few months ago gone to his new field; and last Tuesday night, surrounded by his congregation, in a merry festival, everything going pleasantly and profitably on, with a sudden crash that I have not the heart to depict, many were ushered into the eternal world, and more were taken out half dead. Awful wreck of youth and old age, of bride and bridegroom, of the distinguished and the unknown. That city today is frantic with grief, and already the long processions have gone out to Oaklands, that beautiful cemetery where I have helped to put down some of my very best friends. It is a good place to sleep in. Oh, men and women who know how to pray, pray for those broken hearts. Oh, men

and women who have had troubles of your own, cry unto God for that groaning city—for companions bereft, for parents suddenly made childless, for homes where father and mother will never come, for the pastor of that church, that he may come forth from this anguish of soul newly set apart and ordained by the "laying on of hands" of this calamity. Issuing from such a scene, he will be mightily in earnest now, and his cry will ring through the city: "What is your life?" But while we pray for them, let us also pray for ourselves. Be ye also ready. Risk not one moment away from Christ. For all the unregenerate and unpardoned there is not one hour of safety between this and the judgment day, and after that there will be a tumbling in of eternal calamities. Your first, your second, your hundredth, your thousandth, your last want is a heart changed by the almighty grace of God. Oh! get it now. Bow your head on the back of the seat in front of you, and be quick in surrendering yourselves to Jesus. He is mighty to save, and He would just as lief do it now as any time. I do not think that cowardice is a characteristic of my nature, and yet I tell you plainly that I would not dare to walk down the street, or cross the ferry, were it not for a hope in Christ that whatever happens to my body my immortal soul shall go free. Why, the air is so full of perils, flying this way, flying that way, flying before your face, flying behind your back, flying within, flying without, that we need God's promises hovering over us like a canopy, and marshalled all around us like an armed host.

Standing as we do at the beginning of a season when there is more sickness than at other times in the year, and when many of us will be exposed to additional perils by travel, I thought it better for me to cry out with an emphasis deepened by the calamity in the west, asking you, "What is your life?" Is it a test? Make a successful experiment. Is it an apprenticeship? Make it an industrious one. Is it a conflict? Fight a brave fight. Is it a prophecy? Let it foretell glorious results. Is it a preparation? Make sure work. Is it an uncertainty? Get a Divine insurance. You say: "I will do this, I will do that. I

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will go into this city, and I will get gain." Whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow, for "what is your life?" "It is even as a vapor that appeareth for a little season, and then vanisheth away."

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*Eminent Christian character is only gained by the Jordanic passage;
no man just happened to get good. . . .*

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21. THE JORDANIC PASSAGE

And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.—JOSHUA 3:17.

WASHINGTON PASSED THE DELAWARE WHEN CROSSING WAS pronounced impossible, but he did it by boat. Xerxes crossed the Hellespont with two millions of men, but he did it by bridge. The Israelites crossed the Red Sea; but the same orchestra that celebrated the deliverance of the one army sounded the strangulation of the other. This Jordanic passage differs from all. There was no sacrifice of human life—not so much as the loss of a linchpin. The vanguard of the host, made up of priests, advanced until they put their foot at the brim of the river, when immediately the streets of Jerusalem were no more dry than the bed of that river. It was as if all the water had been drawn off, and then the dampness had been soaked up with a sponge, and then by a towel the road had been wiped dry. Yonder goes a great army of Israelites, the hosts in uniform; following them the wives, the children, the flocks, the herds. The people look up at the crystalline wall of the Jordan as they pass, and think what an awful disaster would come to them if, before they got to the opposite bank of that Ajalon wall, that wall should follow them; and the thought makes the mothers hug their children close to their hearts as they swiften their pace. Quick, now; get them all up on the banks, the

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Christian goes over dry-shod on coral beds, and flowers of heaven, and paths of pearl.

Oh, could we make our doubts remove,
Those gloomy doubts that rise,
And view the Canaan that we love
With unbeckoned eyes!

Could we but climb where Moses stood,
And view the landscape o'er,
Not Jordan's stream, nor death's cold flood
Could fright us from the shore.

Again, this Jordanic passage teaches me the completeness of everything that God does. When God put an invisible dam across Jordan, and it was hollowed, it would have been natural, you would have supposed, for the water to have overflowed the region all aroundabout, and that great devastation would have taken place. But when God put the dam in front of the river, He put a dam on the other side of the river, so that, according to the text, the water halted and reared and stood there, and did not overflow the surrounding country. Oh, the completeness of everything that God does!

One would have thought that, if the waters of Jordan had dropped until they were only two or three feet deep, the Israelites might have marched through it, and have come up on the other bank with their clothes saturated and their garments like those of men coming ashore from shipwreck, and that would have been as wonderful a deliverance as it was; but God does something better than that. When the priests' feet touched the waters of Jordan and they were drawn off, they might have thought there would have been a bed of mud and slime through which the army would pass. Draw off the water of the Hudson or the Connecticut, and there would be a good many days, and perhaps many weeks, before the sediment would dry up; and yet here, in an instant, immediately, God provides a path through the depths of Jordan; it is so dry that the passengers

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don't get even their feet damp. Oh, the completeness of everything that God does! Does He make a universe?—it is a perfect clock, running ever since it was wound up, the fixed stars the pivot, the constellations the intermoving wheels, and ponderous laws, the weights, and a mighty swinging pendulum, the stars in the great dome of night, striking the midnight, and the sun, with brazen tongue, tolling the hour of noon, while this comet-wheel has pointed out a chain of laws which cannot be overcome; the thistledown falling before the schoolboy's breath, perfected by the same law that perfects the sun and the planets. The rose bush in your window is governed by the same principle that governs the great upper universe on which the stars are ripening fruits, on which God will one day put His hand and shake down—a perfect universe. No astronomy has ever proposed an amendment.

If God makes a Bible, it is a complete Bible. Standing amid the dreadful and delightful truths, you seem to be in the midst of an orchestra where the wailings over sins, and the rejoicings over pardon, and the martial strains of victory make the chorus like an anthem of eternity. This Book seems to you the ocean of truth, on every wave of which Christ walks—sometimes in the darkness of prophecy, again in the splendors with which He walks on Galilee. In this Book, apostle answers to prophet, Paul to Isaiah, Revelation to Genesis—glorious light, turning midnight sorrow into the midnight joy, dispersing every fog in the conflict and every tempest. Take this Book: it is the kiss of God on the face of lost man. Perfect Bible, complete Bible! No man has ever proposed any improvement.

God provided a Saviour: He is a complete Saviour—God-man—Divinity and humanity united in the same person. He set up the starry pillars of the universe and the towers of light. He planned the cedars and the heavenly Lebanon. He struck out of the rock the rivers of life, singing under the trees, singing under the eternities. He quarried the sardonyx and crystal, and the topaz of the heavenly wall. He put down the jasper for the foundation, and heaped up the amethyst for the capital, and

swung the twelve gates which are twelve pearls. In one instant He thought out a universe; and yet He became a child crying for His mother. Omnipotence sheathed in the muscle and flesh of a child's arm; Omniscience strung in the optic nerve of a child's eye; infinite love abiding in a child's heart; a great God appearing in the form of a child one year old, five years old, fifteen years old. While all the heavens were ascribing to Him glory and honor and power on earth, men said, "Who is this fellow?" While all the heavenly hosts, with folded wing about their faces, bowed down before Him, crying, "Holy, holy!" on earth they denounced Him as a blasphemer and a sot. Rocked in a boat on Gennesaret, and yet He it is that jerked the lightning from the storm-cloud, and dismasted Lebanon of its forests, and holds the five oceans on the tip of His finger, as a leaf holds the raindrop. Oh, the complete Saviour, rubbing His hand over the place where we have the pain until it soothes, and the stars of heaven the adorning gems of His right hand, holding us in His arms when we take our last view of our dead. Sitting down with us on the tombstone, and while we plant roses there He is planting consolation in our heart, every chapter a stalk, every verse a stem, every word a rose—a complete Saviour, a complete Bible, a complete universe, a complete Jordanic passage. Everything that God does is complete.

Again, I learn from this Jordanic passage that between us and every Canaan of success and prosperity there is a river that must be passed. "Oh, how I would like some of those grapes on the other side!" said some of the Israelites to Joshua. "Well," says Joshua, "if you want the grapes, why don't you cross over and get them?" There is a river of difficulty between us and everything that is worth having: that which costs nothing is worth nothing. God didn't intend this world for an easy parlor, through which we are to be drawn in a rocking-chair, but we are to work our passage, climb masts, fight battles, scale mountains, and ford rivers. God makes everything valuable difficult to get at for the same reason that He put the gold down in

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the mine, and the pearl clear down in the sea, to make us dig and dive for them. We acknowledge this principle in worldly things; oh that we were only wise enough to acknowledge it in religious things!

You have scores of illustrations under your own observation where men have had the hardest lot, and been trodden under foot, and yet after a while had ease. Now they have their homes blossoming and blooming with pictures, and carpets that make foreign looms laugh now embrace their feet; the summer winds lift the tapestry about the window gorgeous enough for a Turkish sultan; impatient steeds paw and neigh at the door, or move their forms with gilded harnesses, spangled with silver, and carriage moving through that sea of New York life, a very wave of beauty and splendor. Who is it? Why, it is a boy that came to New York with a dollar in his pocket, and all his estate slung over his shoulder in a cotton handkerchief. All that silver on the dining table is petrified sweat-drops; that beautiful dress is the faded calico over which God puts His hand of perfection, turning it to Turkish satin or Italian silk; those diamonds are the tears which suffering froze as they fell. Oh, there is a river of difficulty between us and every earthly achievement. You know that. You admit that.

You know this is so with regard to the acquisition of knowledge. The ancients used to say that Vulcan struck Jupiter on the head and the goddess of Wisdom jumped out, illustrating the truth that wisdom comes by hard knocks. There was a river of difficulty between Shakespeare the boy holding the horses at the door of the London theater and Shakespeare the great dramatist winning the applause of all audiences by his tragedies. There was a river between Benjamin Franklin, with a loaf of bread under his arm, walking down the streets of Philadelphia, and that same Benjamin Franklin the philosopher, just outside of Boston, flying a kite in the thunderstorm. An idler was cured of his bad habit by looking through his window, night after night, at a man who seemed sitting at his desk turning off one sheet of writing after another, until almost

the dawn of the morning. The man sitting there writing until morning was industrious Walter Scott; the man who looked at him through the window was Lockhart, his illustrious biographer afterward. Lord Mansfield, pursued by the press and by the populace, because of a certain line of duty, went on to discharge the duty; and while the mob was around him, demanding his life, he shook his fist in the face of the mob, and said, "Sirs, when one's last end comes, it cannot come too soon, if he falls in defense of law and the liberty of his country." And so, my friends, there is a tug, a tussle, a trial, a push, an anxiety, through which every man must go before he comes to worldly success and worldly achievement. You admit it. Now be wise enough to apply it in religion. Eminent Christian character is gained only by the Jordanic passage; no man just happened to get good.

Why does that man know so much about the Scriptures? He was studying the Bible while you were reading a novel. He was on fire with the sublimities of the Bible while you were sound asleep. By tug, tussle, pushing, and running in the Christian life that man got so strong for God; in a hundred Solferinos he learned how to fight; in a hundred shipwrecks he learned how to swim. Tears over sin, tears over Zion's desolation, tears over the impenitent, tears over the graves, are the Jordan which that man had passed. Sorrow stains the cheek, and fades the eye, and pales the brow, and singes the hand; there are mourning garments, and there are wardrobes, and there are deaths in every family record; all around are the relics of the dead.

The Christian has passed this Red Sea of trouble, and yet he thinks that there is a Jordan of death between him and heaven. He comes down to that Jordan of death, and thinks how many have been lost there. When Molyneux was exploring the Jordan in Palestine he had his boats all knocked to pieces in the rapids of that river. And there are a great many men who have gone down in the river of death; the Atlantic and Pacific have not swallowed so many. It is an awful thing

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to make shipwrecks on the rock of ruin; masts falling, hurricanes flying, death coming, groanings in the water, moanings in the wind, thunder in the sky, while God with the finger of the lightning writes all over the sky, "I will tread them in my wrath, and I will trample them in my fury."

The Christian comes down to this raging torrent, and he knows he must pass; and as he comes toward the time, his breath gets shorter; and his last breath leaves him as he steps into the stream, and no sooner does he touch the stream than it is parted, and he goes through dryshod, while all the waters wave their plumes, crying, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more weeping, and there shall be no more death.

Some of your children have already gone up the other bank. You let them down on this side of the bank; they will be on the other bank to help you up with supernatural strength. The other morning at my table, all my family present, I thought to myself how pleasant it would be if I could put all into a boat, and then go in with them, and we could pull across the river to the next world, and be there all together. No family parting, no gloomy obsequies; it wouldn't take five minutes to go from bank to bank, and then in that better world to be together forever.

Wouldn't it be pleasant for you to take all your family into that blessed country, if you could all go together? I remember my mother, in her dying hour, said to my father, "Father, wouldn't it be pleasant if we could all go together?" But we cannot all go together. We must go one by one, and we must be grateful if we get there at all. What a heaven it will be if we have all our families there, to look around and see all the children are present! You would rather have them all there, and you go with bare brow forever, than that one should be missing to complete the garlands of heaven for your coronal. The Lord God of Joshua give them a safe Jordanic passage.

Even children will go through dryshod. Those of us who

were brought up in the country remember, when the summer was coming on in our boyhood days, we always longed for the day when we were to go barefooted, and, after teasing our mothers in regard to it for a good while and they consented, we remember the delicious sensation of the cool grass when we put our uncovered foot on it. And the time will come when these shoes we wear now lest we be cut by the sharp places of this world shall be taken off, and with unshod foot we will step into the bed of the river, free from pain and fatigue so we will gain that last journey, when, with one foot in the bed of the river and the other foot on the other bank, we struggle upward. That will be heaven. Oh, I pray for all my dear people a safe Jordanic passage. That is what the dying Christian husband felt when he said, "How the candle flickers, Nellie! Put it out; I shall sleep well tonight, and wake in the morning."

One word of comfort on this subject for all the bereaved. You say our departed friends have not been submerged—have not been swamped in the waters: they have only crossed over. These Israelites were just as thoroughly alive on the western banks of the Jordan as they had been on the eastern banks of the Jordan; and our departed Christian friends have only crossed over—not sick, not dead, not exhausted, not extinguished, not blotted out, but with healthier respiration, and stouter pulses, and keener eyesight, and better prospects, crossed over, their sins, their physical and mental disquiet, all left clear this side, an eternally-flowing, impassable obstacle between them and all human and Satanic pursuit. Crossed over! Oh, in congratulation I shake hands with all the bereaved in the consideration that our departed Christian friends are safe.

Why was there so much joy in certain circles in New York when people heard from their friends who were on board the *City of Brussels*. It was thought that the vessel had gone to the bottom of the sea; and when the friends on this side heard that the steamer had arrived safely in Liverpool, had we

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not the right to congratulate the people in New York that their friends had got safely across? And is it not right this morning that I congratulate you that your departed friends are safe on the shore of heaven? Would you have them back again? Would you have those old parents back again? You know how hard it was sometimes for them to get their breath in the stifled atmosphere of the summer; would you have them back in this summer? Didn't they use their brain long enough? Would you have your children back again? Would you have them take the risks of temptations which throng every human pathway? Would you have them cross the Jordan three times in addition to having crossed it already, and cross it again to greet you now, and then cross back afterward? Certainly you would want to keep them forever out of heaven. If they had lived forty or fifty years apart, would they have been safe? Perhaps so, perhaps not.

Pause and weep, not for the freed from pain,
But that the sigh of love would bring them back again.

I ask a question, and there seems to come back the answer in heavenly echo. "What, will you never be sick again?" "Never sick again." "What, will you never be tired again?" "Never tired again." "What, will you never weep again?" "Never weep again." "What, will you never die again?" "Never die again." Oh, ye army of departed kindred, we hail you from bank to bank. Wait for us when the Jordan of death shall part for us. Come down and meet us half-way between the willow banks of earth and the palm groves of heaven. May our great High Priest go ahead of us, and with bruised feet touch the water, and then shall be fulfilled the word of my text, "All Israel went over on dry ground, until all the people were gone clear through Jordan."

If I ask what shall be the glad hymn of this morning, I think there would be a thousand voices that would choose the same hymn—the hymn that illumines so many death chambers—

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the hymn that has been the parting hymn in many an instance
—the old hymn:

On Jordan's stormy banks I stand,
And cast a wistful eye
To Canaan's fair and happy land,
Where my possessions lie.
Oh, the transporting, rapturous scene
That rises on my sight!
Sweet fields arrayed in living green,
And rivers of delight.

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