

STANDING ON FAITH

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Simpson's exploration of faith through biblical examples beginning with Abel's justifying faith, examining the nature of faith as trusting in God's Word and the blood of Christ for salvation and transformation.

17 Chapters

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Standing on Faith

1. THE DEFINITION OF FAITH

The eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews contains the most complete treatise on faith to be found in the Scriptures. It is introduced by a definition of faith, as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." This definition teaches us:

First, that faith is not hope, not a mere expectation of future things, but a present receiving of that which is promised in a real and substantial way. It is accepting, not expecting.

Secondly, that it is not sight, for it deals with things not seen. The region of the visible is not the realm of faith. When a thing is proved by demonstration, it is not a matter of faith, but of evidence. Faith asks no other evidences than God's Word and its own assurance. It is the evidence. It is not true to say that "seeing is believing." Faith believes where it cannot see; nay, believes what sight and evidence may even seem to contradict, if only God has said it.

When God said to Abraham, "I have made thee a father of many nations," there was no sign of it; indeed, the evidence of sight plainly contradicted it. But God said it, and Abraham believed, for faith "calleth the things that are not as though they were."

And so Abraham "considered not his own body, now dead," but "was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what He had promised He was able also to perform."

Thirdly, faith recognizes in every case an act of creation. It does not require any material to start with, for it believes in a God who can make all things out of nothing, and therefore it can step out upon the seeming void and find it full of the creations of His power.

In giving His greatest promises in the Old Testament, God reveals Himself as the Creator of that which He is promising. "Thus saith the Lord, the Maker of it, Call unto Me and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not." There may be no sign of it, no probability of it, no germ of it from which to start, but God is able to make it out of nothing by a word. He does so make it by the word which faith claims. He needs no protoplasm to build His magnificent edifices of worlds. "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." Into the soul that has no basis or remnant of goodness, but is dead in trespasses and sins, He can speak life and holiness. Into the body, whose constitution is exhausted and its springs of life run out, He can command health and strength. And so faith begins where human hopes and prospects end; "man's extremity is God's opportunity."

Now this faith, the apostle declares, is indispensable in order to please God. No wonder; anything less is to treat God as if He were unreal and unreliable, and is practical atheism. It is to make His Word less sure than a mere material fact of nature and perception of the senses; it is to trust God less than we trust His works.

The reason why God requires our absolute trust is very plain. The ruin of the human race came by discrediting and doubting God's word to our first parents. "Hath God said?" was the fountain of all sin. "God hath said" is the foundation, therefore, of our restoration. Only when we thus implicitly

believe His Word will we love and obey Him. And as unbelief stands in the foreground in the first picture of our fallen race, it leads the procession of the lost, in the closing scene in the tragedy of mankind. "The fearful and the unbelieving shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Let us "take heed, therefore, lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God."

Having given general principles respecting faith, the apostle next proceeds to illustrate them by a series examples from the Scriptures. The first seven are taken from the Book of Genesis and represent various aspects of faith in human life.

2. ABEL, OR JUSTIFYING FAITH

The two men who stand worshipping at the gate of Eden introduce us to the two races of mankind, believers and unbelievers.

The earthly man has far more culture, taste, and beauty in his religion. He brings the fruit of his toil, and the first and best of it. He brings the pure, sweet blossoms of spring, and the rich ripe fruits of summer, and perhaps his altar is festooned with rare beauty and taste, and contrasts most favorably with the rude mound of clay on which Abel offers the ghastly and revolting sacrifice of a bleeding, dying, consuming lamb.

But Cain's whole offering was a direct denial of all that God had said about His curse upon the ground and all its fruits, of the fact of sin and of the need of an atoning Saviour, which had been already typified in the coats of skins of Adam and Eve, and no doubt fully taught by God already. Abel's sacrifice was a simple and humble acknowledgment of all this, and a frank acceptance of God's way of pardon and acceptance.

The first act of faith is to believe what God says about sin. We do not need to try to work up a feeling about our sins. It is enough to believe that we are sinners because God says it. Abel did so. He took the sinner's place, and instantly he found the sinner's Savior. The publican did, and, lo, "he went down to his house justified." Cain would not see his sin, and the result was that he fell into deeper sin, and came at last to the other extreme where he had to cry, "My sin is greater than can be forgiven."

The devil's first trick is to get us to say, "I have not sinned." And then his last blow is to make us think, "My sin is too great to be forgiven." But humble faith accepts God's judgment upon itself, and escapes judgment.

An emperor of France was once leading a foreign king through the prisons of Toulon. As a special courtesy he said, "You can set any prisoner free you please." He spoke to several but found no one that seemed to deserve it. All were innocent, much-abused men. At last he found a sinner, a poor fellow, who could only say, "O Sire, I am an unworthy man, and am only thankful my punishment is not worse." At once he set him free, saying, "You are the only man I can find who has anything to have forgiven. You are pardoned by the emperor's commands." So the self-righteous miss the great salvation, and the lost are saved. Thus let us take the place of guilt and find pardon through faith in God's Word and the blood of Christ. He condemns in order that He may save. "He hath concluded all under sin, that He might have mercy upon all."

Abel's faith not only recognized the sin, but also the Divine provision for it by sacrifice. He did not look at his own character or his own works. It was his gifts that God testified to.

Two men go up to yonder bank cashier, both holding in their hand a piece of paper. The one is dressed in expensive style, and presents a gloved and jeweled hand. The other is a rough, unwashed workman. But the first is rejected with a polite bow, and the second receives a hundred

pounds over the counter. What is the difference? The one presented a worthless name; the other handed in a note endorsed by the president of the bank. And so the most virtuous moralist will be turned away from the gates of mercy, and the vilest sinner welcomed, if he presents the name of Jesus.

What shall we give to infinite purity and righteousness? JESUS. There is no other gift worthy for God to receive. And He has given Him to us for this very end, that we may give Him back as our substitute and satisfaction. And He has testified of this gift what He has said of no other, namely, that in Him He is well-pleased, and all who receive Him are "accepted in the Beloved." Shall we accept the testimony that God is satisfied with His Son? Shall we be satisfied with Him?

An old Scots carter told me once how he was converted. Riding along in his cart, he was crushed by the load of his sins, and the thought kept coming to him all the time -- "What shall I give to God to satisfy His claims?" And he thought of his reformation, his promises, his services, his tears, and everything he could, but all seemed to fail. At last something said, "Offer JESUS." He did so, and instantly his soul was filled with the sweet sense of acceptance and blessing.

A Scots evangelist tells his story. When he was a lad, his father was a shepherd. One morning a lamb was dead. Another lamb was also motherless. He asked his father to give the little orphan to the mother who had just lost her lamb. But she would not have it. He tried again and again, but she would only rebuff it. At last the father took the dead lamb, and removing its skin placed it on the living one. Instantly the mother welcomed it, and began to caress it and receive it as her own.

God covers us with the righteousness of Jesus, and loves us with the same love He bears to Him, seeing us only as in Him, and accepting us as His very sons and daughters for Jesus' sake.

Abel's faith "obtained witness that he was righteous." So we must not only accept the great atonement, but must also believe that we are accepted and justified. This does not merely mean that we are pardoned and exempted from judgment. It means that we are declared and counted righteous, utterly and forever justified, and placed in the same position as if we had never sinned -- nay, had kept all the commandments of God, just as Christ has done.

Now, we get this assurance only by faith. We simply believe the record that God has given of His Son; that He has given Him to us as our complete righteousness, and He is ours, just because we have accepted Him. We may weep and pray, but all will bring no rest until we simply believe that God has accepted us, justified is, and for ever loves us in Jesus; and, as dear George Muller puts it, counts each of us "His darling child." they who thus believe have peace with God, and know that they have eternal life.

The moment the soul accepts its justification and stands clear of the awful shadow of the curse, it springs at once into freedom, love, and power. The secret of weak love and strength is feeble faith. A doubt about our perfect acceptance will paralyze spiritual power. An Eastern artisan in the employ of a great prince suddenly became an unsteady workman. His exquisite jewelry was marred, and his hand refused to work with its old cunning. His king sent for him and asked the reason. He found that the man was hopelessly in debt, and was expecting every day to lose his wife and children as slaves for his indebtedness. The kind prince paid his debt, and in a moment all was right. The man's hand recovered its spring, and his work its beauty. His burden was gone, and he was free. So God sets us free to serve Him, and a full assurance of complete justification is

necessary to entire sanctification.

Dr. James, of Albany, the author of the remarkable volume, *Grace for Grace*, and one who was much used of God in personal dealings with burdened souls in all parts of the land, gave as his experience the statement that the greatest hindrance he found to the full acceptance of Christ as an indwelling and sanctifying presence, was the prevalence of vague ideas and imperfect assurance respecting the absolute and eternal acceptance in Christ on the part of those with whom he was called to deal.

Do we dare to believe that we are absolutely, utterly, eternally accepted in Jesus Christ, in the same sense as He is accepted, and righteous even as He is righteous, so that our very name before God and heaven is: "The Lord our righteousness"; His own very name of ineffable holiness (Jer. 23: 6) given to us (Jer. 33: 16), even as the bride bears the husband's name?

Now this all comes by a simple act of believing God's testimony. God declares it of us because we have accepted Christ's atonement, and we believe the declaration, and take the new place assigned us. The bride stands at that altar and believes the word spoken by the minister, and she fearlessly takes the place of a wife. The French soldier saves his emperor's life, and hears him say in gratitude, "Thank you, Captain," and answers, "Of which company, sir?" and steps at once to his new position. The sinner believes God's declaration, and "goes home to his house justified." "He that believeth not, hath made God a liar." There is one spot on earth covered evermore by the great sentence, "No condemnation." That spot is under the cross of Jesus. The moment we step there and claim the sentence, it is ours, and God cannot break His eternal Word.

A poor criminal stood before an Eastern king trembling for his life. A moment later his head was to be severed from his body. He asked for a drink of water. They brought it, but his hand trembled so that he could not drink. The king cried to him, "Don't be so alarmed; your life is safe till you drink the water." In a moment the glass was shattered on the pavement and the water untasted, and looking boldly up to the king, claimed his royal word. The king bitterly smiled, but said, "You have fairly won it, and I cannot break my word even to you; your life is safe."

Oh, if the word of a capricious king could shield a wicked man who trusted it, who will not fly for refuge to the Word of Salvation, where every soul may hide? He that believeth in Him is not condemned:

"O Thou, whose thoughts are brightest light,

Whose love runs always clear;

To whose kind wisdom sinning souls

Amid their sins are dear;

How Thou canst think so well of us,

And be the God Thou art,

Is darkness to my intellect,

But sunshine to my heart.

But Christ has made the mystery plain,
By love and grace divine;
My worthlessness is counted His,
His righteousness is mine.
And now accepted in His love,
Thy grace can reach to me;
Thou still canst be the God Thou art,
And love me e'en as He."

3. ENOCH, OR SANCTIFYING GRACE

In Enoch the human race reached its seventh generation. Seven is the Hebrew number of perfection, and the type, in this case of ideal humanity, both as respects character and destiny.

As respects his character, he was the first pattern of holiness since the Fall; and as respects his destiny, he was the first who rose above the curse of death, and gave pledge and promise, in his translation, as well as in his teaching, of the glorious immortality that awaits the people of God at the Second Coming of the Lord.

1. ENOCH'S CHARACTER.

Enoch's holy life is described by two sentences: "He pleased God" and "He walked with God." The divine pleasure or will is ever the standard of holiness. "I do always those things which please Him," was Christ's simple account of His own perfect and blameless character and life." That ye may walk worthy of God unto all pleasing," is the Apostle's prayer for believers. The very expression is infinitely tender and attractive, showing that God is willing to take real pleasure in our love and obedience, nay, even to delight Himself in the heartfelt and sincere attempts of His earthly Children to meet His approval. And on our part it intimates something more than mere obedience, righteousness, and rigid duty, and expresses the spontaneous love that wants to win His smile, and not merely escape His judgment.

There is a way of trying to fulfil the will of God which makes it like a wall of adamant and a bond of iron. But there is a sweeter way which recognizes it as the love of the Father, a gracious will adapted to our capacity and resources, and which the sincere and loving heart may be enabled to fulfil so as constantly to please Him. The little child in the A B C class at school may please her teacher as perfectly as the highest graduate, and yet she cannot even attempt the tasks of the higher class. But she is not expected to do so; she has only to meet the teacher's will from day to day, and that will is gauged by her progress and ability. So God's will for the humble believer is not a rigid abstract rule, nor does it demand the same obedience and service as He requires of angel and archangel; but it is a tender, gracious rule, adapted to our situation and growth, and unfolding from day to day into all the good pleasure of His goodness, as we are able to bear it.

To please God is the aim of the sanctified soul. He does not try to please the world, and perhaps he seems to others a very narrow, disagreeable and one-sided man. He does not live to please himself; and yet no other man has so much real pleasure, or so much after his own way; for, before making a choice or taking a step, he always waits to know God's pleasure, and by keeping his will in the line of God's will, he is not crossed and fretted as others are. His "ways are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths are peace." He has been blessedly delivered from the spirit of bondage, and lives perpetually in the glad sense of God's acceptance and love. To him have come the sweet words, "I have sworn that I never will be wroth with thee nor rebuke thee." The smile of God shines evermore on his path, and he lives in the land of Hephzibah, the land of which the Lord hath said, "My delight is in her."

"Thee to please and Thee to know,
Constitutes my bliss below,
Thee to see and Thee to love,
Constitutes my bliss above."

But how can we thus please God? Is it possible for sinful man ever to please God? Is it not true, that the best that man can do is as filthy rags, and that the holiest men have ever laid themselves lowest in the dust, and thrown themselves wholly upon the mercy and the grace of God? Yes, it is all true, and yet it is also true, that we may receive from God that with which we can please and even satisfy Him, so that we shall stand before Him without fault or blame. Ah, here is the mystery of godliness, of which Jesus is the wondrous solution.

There is but one man who ever perfectly pleased God. It is He of whom the Father said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And there is but one way by which we can perfectly please God, and that is by being so united to Him, and having Him so dwell in us, that He shall answer for us in everything, and we can present Him to God as our perfect offering and complete life. This is the secret of justification: we accept His blood and righteousness, and we are made "accepted in the Beloved."

And this is the secret of sanctification; we received Him as our inner life and holiness, "made unto us of God sanctification," and our holiness is no longer human but divine, no longer our filthy rags, but His seamless robe, and the Father is pleased with us even as He is with Him, and the wondrous prayer is fulfilled, "THAT THE LOVE WHEREWITH THOU HAST LOVED ME, MAY BE IN THEM, AND I IN THEM." It is because He is in us now that we are loved with the very same love, for we are now a part of Him:

"So dear, so very dear to God,
More dear I could not be,
The love wherewith He loves His Son,
That love He bears to me."

There is no other way of holiness that can ever reach God's high standard or man's low level of perfect helplessness. All else is human, this is divine. It is higher than the best that man can do, yet easier than the least of His own struggles. It is not an attainment, but an obtainment. It is not a task, but a gift. It is "Not I, but Christ that liveth in me." It is not our best, but "God's best."

Now all this is brought out with great beauty in the next expression, employed to describe Enoch's holiness. "He walked with God." His life was a personal companionship with God, not a self-contained and self-sustained righteousness. It was dependent on the divine fellowship, and was just as personal as our walk with Jesus now.

For the same Jesus came then to the future scene of His toil and suffering, and made Himself known; and He was the constant Companion of Enoch's life and walk. This is the secret of the Christian life, "the mystery hid from ages and generations, but now made manifest unto the saints,

CHRIST IN YOU, the hope of glory."

It is not a wonderful state or a marvelous experience, but a perfect union with Jesus, the living and perfect One. We do not merely receive grace, but the God of all grace; not merely holiness, but the Holy One; not merely power, but the Mighty One in the midst; not merely wisdom, but the companionship and counsel of the Wonderful Counselor. This is still the secret of divine holiness. It is union with Jesus, abiding in Jesus, dependence upon Jesus every moment and for everything. "Out of His fulness have all we received, even grace for grace." Our graces are just the transfer of His grace to us. As the transfer picture is laid upon the piece of silk and stamped into its texture with a hot iron, so the Holy Spirit takes the things of Christ and translates them with His burning touch into our life. Is it purity, we put on His purity; is it faith, we receive the faith of God; is it love, His love is shed abroad in our hearts, and herein is our love made perfect, "because as He is, so are we also in this world." Is it peace, "My peace I give unto you." Is it joy, "That My joy may remain in you and your joy may be full." Is it power, "All power is given unto ME, and, lo, I am with you always." And so it is all Christ's grace, and power, and personal presence.

It is not a wealthy friend, advancing a large sum to aid us in our business, but coming into it Himself, and giving us His partnership, His counsel, and His capital. And it is received by faith, as the free gift and finished work of our complete Savior. In one single act we renounce ourselves and all our sin and self-confidence, and take Him and His all-sufficiency for every future need. Henceforth our life is simply putting on Christ more fully from day to day, and ceasing from self. In that blessed moment of appropriating faith He gives Himself to us as our complete life, covering all our future need, and day by day we just enter into it step by step.

Not long ago an iron ship was set up on the Clyde in sections, screwed together, and launched, a complete vessel in every part. But this vessel was destined for Central Africa. Her future element was to be the Upper Congo. And so she was transported in sections, slowly and separately, to Stanley Pool, and there piece by piece set up and completed, according to the original plan. And now she is the missionary ship carrying the Gospel to the natives of the Dark Continent.

This may illustrate imperfectly what we mean by the transfer of our spiritual life from Christ. In Him we are now complete. Our whole character, the perfect pattern of the life, is now in Him in heaven, even as the little ship was planned, and prepared and completed on the Clyde.

But it must be wrought into us and transferred to our earthly life; and this is the Holy Spirit's work. He takes the gifts and graces of Christ and brings them into our life, as we need and receive them day by day, just as the sections of the vessel are reproduced in the distant continent, and thus we receive of His fulness grace for grace, His grace for our grace, His supply for our need, His strength for our strength, His body for our body, His spirit for our spirit, Himself "made unto us of God wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." But it is much more than mere abstract help and grace, much more even than the Holy Spirit bringing us strength and peace and purity. It is personal companionship with Jesus Himself. It is Christ dwelling in the heart and walking with us as

"A living, bright reality,

More dear, more intimately nigh

Than e'en the closest earthly tie."

An American gentleman once visited the saintly Albert Bengel. He was very desirous to hear him pray. So one night he lingered at his door, hoping to overhear his closing devotions. The rooms were adjoining and the doors ajar. The good man finished his studies, closed his books, knelt down for a moment and simply said, "Dear Lord Jesus, things are still the same between us," and then sweetly fell asleep. So close was his communion with his Lord that labor did not interrupt it, and prayer was not necessary to renew it. It was a ceaseless, almost unconscious presence, like the fragrance of the summer garden, or the presence of some dear one by our side whose presence we somehow feel, even though the busy hours pass by and not a word is exchanged:

"O blessed fellowship, divine,
O joy, supremely sweet;
Companionship with Jesus Christ,
Makes life with joy replete;
O wondrous grace, O joy sublime,
I've Jesus with me all the time."

2. ENOCH'S DESTINY.

And for such glorious living there is a worthy consummation. "Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him." He became the glorious pattern, not only of man's perfect spiritual life, but man's physical immortality and resurrection glory.

It is indeed doubtful, if those who fail to enter into the fulness of Christ's grace here shall know the completeness of His glory at His Second Coming. The summons to holiness is very closely linked with the warnings of the Advent, and the promise of the marriage feast.

"They that are with Him are called and chosen and faithful." "He that overcometh, shall sit down with Me on My throne." "Behold I come as a thief, blessed is he that keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame." "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready; and to her it was granted that she should be arrayed in fine raiment, clean and white; the fine raiment is the righteousness of the saints."

Let us take, and let us keep these garments, which are granted to all who will receive and wear them, and let us know the blessedness of these two walks:

"HE WALKED WITH GOD." "THEY SHALL WALK WITH ME IN WHITE, FOR THEY ARE WORTHY."

"'Tis so sweet to walk with Jesus,
Step by step, and day by day;
Stepping in His very footprints,
Walking with Him all the way.

Here a while we walk with Jesus,
But the time will not be long
Till the night shall change to morning,
And the sorrow into song.
Then, with all who walk with Jesus,
We shall walk with Him in white,
While He turns our grief to gladness,
And our darkness into light."

4. NOAH, OR SEPARATING FAITH

The great lesson of Noah's life is the necessity of separation from the world. By his faith, we are told, he condemned the world. He did not save it, although he tried to do so for one hundred and twenty years; but he, at least, bore witness against it, and left the world without excuse. When George Whitefield was asked by his roommate, in a country inn, what he had gained by leaving his bed and going down into the bar-room to warn men -- to be met only by mockery and scorn -- he answered, "I have gained a good conscience, and left them without excuse." So, our business is not always to save, but simply to be faithful witnesses.

The cause of the Deluge was that very thing which is bringing about the last apostasy, namely, the mingling of the Church and the world. God told His children at the beginning that there must be enmity between the two seeds, the woman's and the serpent's. He soon made the truth terribly plain in the deadly hate of Cain and the murder of Abel. In Seth's day the races were kept separate, for we read of Seth's family, "Then began men to call themselves by the name of the Lord "(marg.). But in the days of Noah the fatal compromise had begun. "The sons of God," or the godly race, saw "the daughters of men" -- no doubt, the seed of Cain -- "that they were fair," and, thinking only of their own earthly desire, and not of God's will, "they took them wives of all THEY CHOSE." The offspring of these unions was a race marked by splendid physical culture, but equally characterized by depravity and moral degradation. These giants in stature were monsters of wickedness, and their violence filled the earth with blood. The early geological specimens of the human race show a man of gigantic stature, and by his side lies a woman with her skull crushed in by a murderous blow; corresponding exactly with God's picture of primitive man.

This is the result of the devil's unholy alliance between the Church and the world. It is filling the Church once more, and it will bring another flood -- A FLOOD OF FIRE. Its forms are innumerable. The world invades the home, the sanctuary, the pulpit, the seminary, the whole fibre of modern religion. It is the devil's snare, and its evil touch is forbidden by God in urgent and reiterated warnings. When Balaam could not destroy Israel by his curse, he ensnared them by the world's fascinations. "Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world." "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you." "What fellowship hath light with darkness? What communion hath Christ with Belial? What fellowship hath he that believeth with an unbeliever?"

These are some of God's signals over the inviting archways of the forbidden land. And yet Christians walk coolly past them, and only awake to their danger when too late to return. Like the eagle that sat down on the frozen ground to feed upon its prey, and when it would have risen, found its great wings so frozen to the ice that it could never rise again, but perished beside its costly pleasure; like the ship that sailed so close to the current that it was impossible to stem the awful tide that drove it over the abyss -- so Christian men and women are trifling with forbidden things until they have neither heart nor strength to rise to their heavenly calling.

A Christian has no more business in the theater than Jesus had. A Christian mother has no more right to give her child's hand to an unbeliever, or a Christian minister to unite them in marriage, than to sell her into a Turkish harem. And yet, such ideas are considered obsolete and narrow; and not only does the membership of the Church patronize the broadest and most popular theaters, but the Sunday-school picnic and the religious entertainment are vying with the drama for popular attraction. All this is bringing in the latter days. The end is judgment. The only remedy is the faith and faithfulness of Noah. Never will the world be saved by compromise with it, but only by standing on God's level, and lifting men up to His side.

And we can only take this place of separation as we have Noah's faith. It was because Noah had found a better world that he let the old world go; and only they who have learned the value of the true treasure will throw the tinsel away. The raven will settle down upon the carrion feast of the world; but the dove will take the olive leaf as her pledge of a future world of peace and blessedness, and wait in the ark (until the evil days are past) for freedom and inheritance.

A gardener had a willow tree which he tried in vain to make symmetrical. It would send out all its branches to one side only, and in spite of pruning, it grew lopsided. At last he found the reason. There was a little subterranean stream running on that side of the tree, from which it drew its nourishment, and the tree grew toward the source of its life. He immediately changed his tactics. He stopped his pruning and dug a channel on the other side of the tree, diverting the water from its old course, and supplying it on the neglected side. And lo, ere another year had passed, the tree had wholly changed its form. It sent out roots below and branches above, toward the welcome waters, and grew symmetrical and beautiful without an effort. This is the secret of the great Husbandman, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above; set your affections on things above, and not on things upon the earth; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."

The Apostle Peter, in speaking of Noah, says a most singular thing about him. He says his household was "saved by water." Most persons would think they were saved from water. But it was not so. "The like figure wherewith, even baptism, both also now save us . . . by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The water of the Deluge, like baptism -- which is a similar figure -- was significant of our death and resurrection with Christ. Noah was saved from the flood of the world which had almost engulfed his family, by that other flood of water; and so we are saved from the world by the Cross of Jesus Christ, "by which the world is crucified unto us, and we unto the world." It is only as we really know in our spirit the meaning of that death, and let our spirit die with Him to all the old natural life of the flesh, and rise with a new nature, even His own, to a new inheritance, even His kingdom and His throne, that we can rise above the world. It can attack us no more. We are not of the world, even as He is not of the world.

As when the magnet, drawn through a box of earth mingled with iron filings, draws to it every particle of iron without an effort, so the heaven-born spirit springs to Christ, and the earthly neither knows nor cares for His call:

" Rivers to the ocean run,

Nor stay in all their course;

Fire, ascending seeks the sun—
Both speed them to their source.
So a soul that's born of God
Pants to see His glorious face,
Upward tends to His abode,
To rest in His embrace."

We need not go out of the world to be separated from it. The water spider makes its home beneath the surface of the pool, but no drop of water ever touches its soft and downy coat. From the upper world it takes down with it a globule of air, and anchors it under water -- a bubble of buoyant air which displaces the water; and in its center the spider makes its nest, living beneath the waves, but breathing the air of the upper world.

So can we be shut in by God's Holy Spirit, like an encompassing world of light and life, beneath the dark waves of the world and sin, but separated even from its touch in the secret of His Presence:

"Tell me not of earthly pleasures,
Tempt me not with sordid gain;
Mock me not with earth's illusions,
Vex me not with honors vain.
I am weaned from sinful idols;
I am henceforth not my own;
I have giv'n my heart to Jesus,
I belong to Him alone."

5. ABRAHAM, OR THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH

Abraham has been called "the Columbus of Faith." Not that he was the only one that has traversed the great and trackless wastes, but because he was the first. Moreover, so wide and comprehensive was the range of his faith, and its trials and triumphs, that he has been called by God Himself "the father of all them that believe."

His faith shines out in SEVEN rainbow-like hues of distinct and glorious luster.

1. FAITH OBEYING GOD'S COMMANDS. -- "By faith Abraham, when he was called, OBEYED." Faith, therefore, meets us in the very beginning as an act of obedience, and thus God regards it and enjoins it. It is not an option with us whether we shall believe God's word or not, but "This is His commandment, that we should believe on the Name of His Son, Jesus Christ."

This makes the act of faith at once most imperative, and yet most simple and easy. Imperative, because if He has commanded we have no choice; easy, because if He has commanded, He is responsible to carry us through and fulfil His promise to us. God is as much bound by His word as we are. Therefore, whenever faith can clearly know that He has spoken, all it has to do is to lay the whole responsibility on Him and go forward. "Hath He said, and shall He not do it; hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?"

2. FAITH TRUSTING GOD IN THE DARK. -- "He went forth, not knowing whither he went." That is the next stage. It is faith without sight. When we can see, it is not faith, but reasoning. In crossing the Atlantic, we see no path upon the sea or sign of the shore. And yet, day by day, we are marking our path upon the chart as exactly as if there had followed us a great chalk line upon the sea. And when we come within twenty miles of land we know where we are as exactly as if we had seen it all three thousand miles ahead. How have we measured and marked our course? Day by day our captain has taken his instruments, and looking up to the sky has fixed his course by the sun. He is sailing by dead reckoning, by the heavenly, not the earthly lights. So faith looks up and sails on, by God's great Sun, not seeing one shoreline or earthly lighthouse or path upon the way.

Faith sails by reckoning too. Often its steps seem to lead into utter uncertainty, and even darkness and disaster. But He opens the way, and often makes such midnight hours to be the very gates of day.

Once, in going down an Alpine path, the travelers found their way wholly closed. The little path down the mountain torrent suddenly ended in a vast ice cliff, under which the torrent plunged and disappeared. What were they to do? Suddenly the guide leaped into the stream and bade his companions follow. For a moment there was darkness and fear, then they were carried under the ice mountain, and a moment later flung on the banks of green in the valley of Chamonix. So faith has often to go right into the darkness, and find God and deliverance in what seems to be a veritable death-plunge. In many a step of faith the way seems to close up, and when all seems threatened with disaster, God delivers. The more fully God purposes to teach us faith, the more will He shut us up to Himself alone, and shut out of our view the human sources of help which He

holds at His command until we have learned to trust Him fully without either sight or sign.

3. FAITH BELIEVING GOD'S DEFINITE PROMISE. -- For a while Abraham had only God's general promise of guidance as he went on from day to day. But ere long the promise grows more specific, and at last it is clear and plain, a star of fixed magnitude upon the sky of his future, the promise of an inheritance and a child. Faith now changes from a simple trust in His wisdom and love to a specific expectation. And here he must stand and believe, and wait for God to fulfil. Here we, too, must follow him.

In this Abraham is our great forerunner, and our part is to follow in the steps of our father Abraham, and as we follow we shall find that all his steps were steps of faith. But Abraham's faith was not as yet perfected; and God had now to give him a startling object-lesson of what it really means to believe God. And so He does much more than talk to Abraham. He requires Abraham to meet Him and answer back by the actions of responsive faith. And so we see in the following verses the most dramatic picture of the steps of faith to be found in the Bible.

First, God gives Abraham the promise of future blessing. "I will make My covenant between thee and Me." Abraham meets this promise, and goes down upon his face before God to claim it. Then follows, secondly, the next tense of faith, which is the present tense. "As for Me, behold My covenant is with thee." The thing that God would do He now does. The thing that Abraham expected he now accepts and takes as a present fact. The future becomes the present tense, and faith becomes action. But there is still a third step of faith. "Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee." It is now the perfect tense. The thing that was promised was done, and is now finished. Action has become transaction, and has passed even beyond the present tense, and therefore Abraham must take the position of one who has passed through all these stages, and has actually received his yet unseen blessing. He must change his name and stand before the public and be laughed at and called a fool, an old man in his dotage, a dreamer, as his neighbors ask him the reason of the strange difference in his name, and he tells them that God has made him the father of many nations. Faith must be sealed by testimony, and testimony must be steeped in trial, shame, and many a waiting hour of trusting in the darkness.

But at length there comes a day of vindication, when the laugh is turned upon them, and little Isaac is called by the name "Laughter," because God has made Abraham to laugh instead of those who scorned his faith.

This, beloved, is the way in which we must meet El-Shaddai. We must not only take the promise for the future, but we must bring it into the present, and claim it as an immediate fact in this moment of our lives. Then we must translate it into the past, and take the position that it is an accomplished fact, and call it so, never ashamed to have men know that we believe our God and venture on calling the things that are not as though they were. This is the committal of faith. This is the place where so many fail to enter in, but this is the very ladder of blessing described in the 37th Psalm, where David says, "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He worketh. Rest in the Lord, be silent to God and wait patiently for Him, and He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light and thy judgment as the noonday."

4. FAITH NOT ONLY BELIEVING BUT CONFESSING ITS CONFIDENCE. -- Abraham no sooner believed the promise of his seed, than he had to change his name, as we have already seen, and take in the sight of all men, a name that literally signified his great and stupendous claim. Christ ever asks us, "Whom SAY YE that I am?" Faith must always set its seal to it that God is true, and "SAY of the Lord, He is my Helper."

Faith will die without confession; but a true and humble acknowledgment commits it and confirms it. If the healed demoniac had not gone home to his friends and put himself on record for Christ, he would probably have fallen; and if Simon Peter had fearlessly followed with Christ's little band he would not have denied Him. We must not merely believe, but we must even CALL the things that are not as though they were, and take the witness-stand for God in regard to all He has called us to.

5. FAITH YIELDING UP THE WORLD BECAUSE IT HAS A BETTER INHERITANCE. -- It was not long ere Lot, with his earthly spirit, began to contend for the best of the land. Abraham let him have it, and that same night God appeared to Abraham and told him it was all his own, Lot's portion as well as the rest, and it was not long ere even Lot had to look to Abraham to defend even the portion that he chose. The man of faith can let the present world go, because he knows he has a better; but even as he lets it go God tells him that all things are his because he is Christ's.

6. FAITH CONTENDING AGAINST THE DEVIL FOR ITS FULL INHERITANCE. -- Abraham would not contend with Lot for the best pastures, but when the Kings of the East invaded Canaan and set their foot on his inheritance, he rose up in the might of divine faith, and in the most chivalrous exploit of ancient times, defeated and drove them from the land, and rescued Lot and his family. Faith can fight as well as yield, but it always fights against the enemies of God, not against God's servants. God wants us to know and use the authority of faith, and say to this mountain, "Be thou removed and cast into the sea, and it shall obey."

7. FAITH BEARING THE SUPREME TEST, AND THEN ENTERING INTO REST AND RESURRECTION LIFE. -- At length the very promise he had received, claimed, and confessed, seems challenged. Isaac, the link of all the promise, must be given up. Was it then a mistake that in Isaac all the seed was to come? No, not for a second did he question. Isaac might even die, but God could not break His word. It must all come, even if Isaac was raised from the dead. This was really what Abraham looked for. It was his faith, therefore, not only his obedience and love that were tested. And it was because he believed that God would give Isaac back that he was able to give him up. So God would have us stand in the most trying hours, knowing that He cannot lie, and so fully trusting Him that we give up our very blessings to His hand, and our very promises to His keeping, knowing that He is faithful that promised. Such trials only bring out the richer preciousness and overcoming power of faith.

In the desert there is a flower which only blooms when the winds blow. Then amid the fiercest blasts there comes out on every stem a little star-like flower. So faith blossoms when the winds of trial blow the fiercest, and finds its very soil and nurture in the difficulties and testings of life. May the Lord so fill us with the faith of Abraham, that God can not only give, but give back, the Isaacs of His love, and lead us into the rest, the fulness, and the fruitage of the life of faith which made Abraham worthy to be called "the Friend of God."

6. ISAAC, OR THE PATIENCE OF FAITH

The life and character of Isaac is one of the quiet pictures of the Old Testament. He is not an actor in great or exciting events, but rather, he moves in a placid, passive sphere, acted upon rather than acting, and yielding and suffering rather than aggressive and strong.

And yet this gentle and shrinking man, more than any of the patriarchs, was the chosen type of Jesus Christ, and the example for us of the very hardest and highest thing in our Christian life, namely, the death of self and the love that suffers long and endures all things.

God has appointed our path to life through the gates of death. Some one has sung:

"Life evermore is fed by death

And joy by agony,

And that a rose may breathe its breath

Something must die."

The Great Master and Martyr said of Himself and us: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." Our Christian life is not the culture but the cutting down of the old plant, and the engrafting of a new nature born from above and rooted in Christ. Anything less than this must end in failure, and a far worse death. Of the old Adamic life it can be said, uncompromisingly, as the old general said of the opposing army, as riding down the ranks he pointed to their banners, and cried, "Soldiers, there is the enemy, if you don't kill them they'll kill you." There can be no compromise. The old man must die in us, or we will die with him for ever.

When God led His people out of Egypt He caused them, in symbol, to pass through four deaths. First, the Red Sea, the type of death to the world. Secondly, the Jordan, the type of death to the old wilderness life. Thirdly, Circumcision, the type of death to the flesh in its vital and self-propagating principle. Fourthly, Joshua's vision of the Captain of the Lord's Host and His absolute prostration at His feet, a type of death of our self-confidence in the work of God.

Now, this is the lesson of Isaac's life, the death of self, and the life of meekness, patience, and lowliness:

1. His first experience as a child was one of painful trial. He was the younger brother and rival of Ishmael, and was persecuted and scorned by him for his faith. At length Ishmael was cast out, and Isaac was delivered from that which was a type of the earthly and fleshly man.
2. But soon he must die in a much more radical way. We hear much of the obedient faith of Abraham, but do we think enough of the faith of Isaac in yielding up himself. That was a real death on Mount Moriah, the death of the will, and this is ever the real self which has to be slain. That scene was not only the foreshadowing of Christ's death, but also of yours and mine. Have you

died? Will you? It is not your vices, your tempers, your sins, but YOUR SELF.

3. We next see him in the same beautiful aspect in the yet deeper life of his heart, in the matter of his affections, in connection with his marriage. There is no part of our life which so influences our character and destiny and so tests our real consecration as the determination of our affections. Therefore, God has from the beginning made the most stringent provisions for the regulation and government of marriage. Knowing so well that the entangling of our hearts with unholy alliances will draw them away from Him, and our tenderest earthly ties must be linked with His love and blessing, He has strictly forbidden the intermarriage of His people with the wicked or worldly, and requires that their choice should be made in and for Him, and ever with His direction and approval.

It was the intermarriage of the sons of God with the daughters of men that brought about the corruption that preceded the Deluge. It was the intermarriage of the Israelites with the Canaanites that led them back to bondage in the days of the Judges. It was Solomon's marriage with heathen wives that corrupted his heart and destroyed his kingdom. And many a life has been blighted and separated from God by a selfish and worldly friendship, and many a consecration sealed and consummated in the sacrifice of an affection that could not be held in harmony with the will of God.

Many a sacrifice might have been saved by waiting to know God's will before making a choice. This was just what Isaac did. He put his will in abeyance to the will of God, and allowed God to choose for him the companion of his life and the mother of God's future Israel. It was a beautiful instance of self-renunciation, and it was honoured by God's most signal interposition in directing the instrument employed -- the faithful Eliezer. Eliezer stands in this, as his name signifies, as a type of the Holy Ghost, just as Abraham does of the Father. It is not meant that in a matter so delicate and important we are to submit our hearts and happiness to the decision of any man or woman, but committing our way and will to the Father, and holding our hearts subject to His choice, we are to ask and expect the Holy Ghost to guide us, and form all our attachments, friendships, and relationships only in and for Him. This is true self-renunciation, and the ties thus formed will be more strong, pure, and happy than mere earthly passion.

The affections enkindled by the Holy Ghost glow with the calm, deep strength of a divine love, and the gift dedicated to God will be made by God a tenfold blessing to the heart that consecrates it.

But this, let us remember, was the meekness not of nature but of faith. It was because Isaac trusted implicitly that he committed his happiness absolutely to God. We cannot commit our lives to God unless we trust Him to do better for us than we could for ourselves. So let us trust Him:

Our times are in Thy hand:

O God, we trust them there,

Our hearts, our lives, our all we leave

Entirely to Thy care.

Our times are in Thy hand,

Why should we doubt or fear?

A Father's hand will never cause

His child a needless tear."

4. We next see Isaac's faith and patience in relation to the trials of life. Famine first drives him from his home to take refuge with Abimelech, king of Gerar. Next his very wife is threatened with dishonor, and in an hour of weakness he repeats the sin of his father Abraham and denies her. God blesses him with great prosperity, but like many another rich man, the Philistines envied him, and at last asked him to leave them. Meekly and patiently he went away and left even the wells of water which he had opened in the valley. Again he opens the wells in the valley of Gerar which his father had dug, but the Philistines again strive with him and claim the wells, and again he yields and moves away. A third time he moves to a new home and digs again the wells which, to an Oriental, are more than food to us; and yet again contention vexes his patient spirit and compels him to move once more. The fourth time the wells are unmolested, and patience has its reward. The Philistines are subdued by a man they cannot quarrel with, and his enemies are killed with the sword of kindness, the wells of Esek and Sitnah recompensed in Rehoboth and Shebah. The Lord has made room for him and brought him into a large place, and soon his old enemies are coming to him requesting his alliance and declaring, "We saw certainly that the Lord was with thee, and we said, let there now be an oath betwixt us, and let us make a covenant with thee that thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace, and thou art now the blessed of the Lord." That is worth a hundred wells. Yes, consistency and meekness will win the day. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." This is the fruit of faith. It can trust the Lord to fight its battles and vindicate its innocence, and it can wait its time, through shame and loss and the triumph of wrong and pride. The men and women who fight so hard have no God to fight their battles, and no faith in Him for it. But let us who know His name put our trust in Him. Let us who know His love and faithfulness and power stand still and see the salvation of our God:

"Leave to His sovereign will

To choose and to command,

So shall thy soul with rapture know

How wise, how strong His hand."

5. Isaac's last trials were with his children. He was himself to blame for many of them. Had he believed as fully as his wife the divine promises and predictions that preceded their birth, he would have better known the will of God for them, and been saved the vain struggle he afterward had, to carry out his own preconceived ideas. Looking at the natural rather than the spiritual, he set his heart upon the first born, the bold, manly, generous Esau. Ah, Isaac, you must die once more to all the pride of earth, and all your ideas and preferences must be given up for God's will and word about your children. How many parents have died to the world in themselves but not in their offspring !How many plans and prospects they have that are not of God! How often God has to humiliate and disappoint them in the very objects of their idolatrous love or worldly compromise?

So Isaac had to see his plans shattered and hear the bitter cry of his eldest born, and give the covenant blessing to Jacob. But when he saw the divine will he struggled no more, he acquiesced at once, and added his own amen, "Yea, and he shall be blessed." Isaac had to die more than once, but when he did, he did it gloriously. He plunged right into the will of God and there was no

more about it. The trial did not soon end, but the obedience was complete. Esau continued to be a deep grief by his worldly marriages and earthly-minded life. Jacob went forth for more than a score of years, to see his face no more till both he and Esau gathered at his dying bed. The shadow of a deadly hate between the brothers filled his heart, no doubt, with keenest bitterness, but not once do we see a shadow upon his spirit.

Patience had its perfect work. He became in age as well as youth the type of the suffering Savior, the meek and lowly in heart, and the pattern of those graces which God burns into willing and waiting souls by fiery suffering, but which rank in the first and last places in the divine procession of love. "Love suffereth long and is kind, love beareth all things, love endureth all things."

"But what has all this to do with faith?" you ask. Ah, this is the work of faith. "How oft shall my brother trespass against me and I forgive him -- until seven times? I tell you, not until seven times but until seventy times seven." What was their answer? "Lord, increase our faith." Why did they not say, "Lord increase our love?" Because they saw that only stupendous faith could bring such love; only Christ's own love in us, received by faith, could thus triumph. And so the Apostle says to the Colossians, "Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all," -- what, work? No, but "unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness."

7. JACOB, OR THE DISCIPLINE OF FAITH

The most illustrious of all the patriarchs, the one who, humanly speaking, founded the Hebrew nation and gave his name for all time to Israel -- the literal progenitor of the tribes of God's chosen people -- was naturally the least noble and attractive of all the patriarchs, nay, was the meanest and most selfish of all the characters of the series. Twelve hundred years later the prophet Isaiah speaks of him as the "worm Jacob," and the figure well expresses the insinuating and undermining nature of the man. And yet, out of this wretched material God made His own great Prince, to show to poor sinners what grace can do with a sinful man, if willing to receive the divine discipline. Let us look at the five chapters of his history.

I. HIS CHOICE

Jacob chose the birthright and the blessing which it involved. He set his heart upon the covenant blessing of his race. Selfish, grasping, intriguing, he may have been, in the means that he took to accomplish his purpose, but nevertheless the one thing which eternally distinguishes him from the earth-born and earthly-minded Esau is this, that he appreciated and claimed, with every fibre of his being, the great, the one all embracing prize of God's covenant promise, which Esau on his part profanely despised and cheaply bartered away. Below and beyond all the other defects in Jacob's character, the eye of God saw this one thing, the preference, the choice of his will, for spiritual and divine things. And so Jacob represents the first germ of the spiritual nature in any soul, the determination of the will, the direction of the heart, the singleness of the purpose, the value which man may place on eternal things.

Here Esau is superficial, transient, sordid, earthly-minded, animal. His highest good is the present gratification; his horizon stretches only to the setting sun. His deepest desire and aspirations are the instincts, passions, wants of his animal or physical nature. He is impulsively generous, frank, and affectionate, but it is an animal instinct. He is the fleshly man. "Behold I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" That was the very time when faith would have looked out on the eternal profit, or claimed that, with such a promise, he should not die till the birthright covenant was fulfilled. But Jacob saw "the land that was very far off," and sprang to meet it; sold all that he had for the pearl of great price; and grasped with both hands the priceless blessing of which his fond mother had often told him, but whose full significance, so far, he could dimly comprehend. But this he knew, that it was linked with all the promises of God and all the hopes of his race.

God loved Jacob for this choice. It was the mightiest thing in his life. It is the mightiest thing in any life; a will that sees the heavenly prize, and gets its hand upon it to let it go no more forever, to claim it and hold at any cost the great inheritance. It was this same mighty will which afterward, at Peniel, held fast to the angel presence and cried, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." This is the very essence of faith -- to choose God, His promise, His inheritance, His blessing, and let heaven and earth pass away rather than relinquish the claim. It was of this Christ said to Mary, "She hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." It was of this He said to

the Syrophenician woman, "O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

Jacob's faith was not complete. Had it been so, he would not have begun to work out so cunningly his chosen destiny, but rather would have trusted God to do what He had promised before his birth. All this he had slowly and painfully to learn, so as to be saved from the scheming, supplanting, restless spirit of Jacob. But he had the germ, a single aim, a fixed will, and a perfect heart toward the covenant blessing, and God could well afford to hew and polish and cut away the rest.

As to Esau, there was nothing to prune and purify. The roots of his nature were all in the world. He had not one chord in common with the heart of God. He was, perhaps, handsome, generous, and large-hearted, but so is many a dumb creature that knows not God. A noble dog, a generous horse, a fond mother-bird are attractive too, but they are only animated clay, and for man to lift his eyes and heart no higher is to be lost for ever. The world is full of Esaus, fine fellows in their way, but "their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they mind earthly things."

2. HIS FIRST REVELATION

Jacob has chosen God, through his mother's teachings, no doubt: but he has not yet seen God for himself. The Most High has not yet spoken to his heart. He is a good deal like the soul that has given itself to Christ on simple faith and choice, but has not yet received any deep experimental sense of eternal things. But now the time has come for further knowledge. As often happens, it comes in the dark and trying hour. Separated, for the first time, from his home and his mother's tender love -- through the consequences of her artifice and his own -- he lays his head on a stony pillow, which might well represent the feelings of his heart; and so he goes to sleep. In his dreams the Lord meets him in His first revelation of covenant grace. A ladder set up on the earth, its top reaching to heaven, was the fitting figure of God's own high purpose. He, too, has set his ladder no lower than the skies, and God meets him at the top as the God of Abraham and Isaac, and gives him in covenant the promises he had claimed, pledging to him His constant presence until all His promised will is finished: "I am with thee in all places whither thou goest, for I will not leave thee until I have done all that I have spoken to thee of."

Jacob awakes with a solemn sense of God's immediate presence, and while his words express the deepest reverence and the same inflexible purpose, yet there is all the distance and the dread of the yet unsanctified heart. "How dreadful is this place," is the language of the soul that does not yet know its sonship. But he is a true servant, and knows henceforth that his choice is sealed, that the God of Abraham is his Lord, that the covenant blessing is now his own, and that the angels of God's providence are henceforth encompassing his path, and with ministries of constant blessing are ascending and descending the shining way.

For us the vision means more than Jacob saw. That ladder is the revelation of Jesus Christ as the Heavenly Way, through whom God becomes our Covenant Father, and all heaven's blessings are made our inheritance. Has our faith claimed the glorious revelation, and have our feet begun to climb the blessed ascent?

3. JACOB'S DEEPER REVELATION AND CONSECRATION AT PENIEL

More than twenty years have passed by, and Jacob has grown little, if any, in his spiritual life. He has been just like we all have been in the low plane of spiritual life with which we began and were so long content. He has allowed idolatry to be retained by his wives; he has continued to plot and scheme in order to outwit the crafty Laban; he has accumulated a fortune in herds and flocks, and perhaps his heart has begun to rest in the prosperity of his outward estate. But God lets new troubles gather around him, and as he goes back once more to his old Canaan home, the most terrible peril of his life confronts him. Esau with an armed band is coming to meet him, and all the treasured bitterness of a quarter of a century, no doubt, is waiting for the opportunity of terrible vengeance. It is the crisis of his life, and all his policy and shrewdness are insufficient to meet it. Still he does all that tact can do. He sends on a costly present to Esau, and separates his little band in the safest way he can contrive; and then, with a desolate sense of his utter helplessness, he falls at the feet of God. It is again with Jacob the midnight of life, and again it is the dawn of a brighter morning. The hour of despair becomes the hour of self-renunciation and divine victory. Alone with God at Jabbok's ford, he wrestles in all the strength of despair, and when his strength is gone, and he sinks under the withering touch of the angel's hand, he finds the secret of power, and exchanges his strength for God's omnipotence.

It was not that the mighty wrestlings of Jacob's prayer were wrong, or are wrong for us -- all things are born in the throes of travail -- but it was that he should learn that another than he was wrestling too. "There wrestled with him an angel." And when he yielded himself up to that presence in the submission of perfect trust, then came the fulness of God's working and God's victorious love. Ah! this is what we must learn -- that the secret of our deepest desires after God is His own preventing grace; the spring of our mightiest doing and praying must be His doing and praying in us, so that we shall ever say with Paul, "I also labor, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily." Jacob rises from that hour a new man. "Thy name shall no more be called Jacob, but ISRAEL shall be thy name, for as a prince hast thou had power with God and hast prevailed."

Jacob has not a word now to say about Esau, or the trouble that had almost distracted him before. God had not even mentioned it, and Jacob had lost all thought of it in another presence. He has God Himself now, and with Him he must have all things. Oh, when the soul reaches the heart of things in Him, all its cares and questions are fled. It is not even that He has spoken of them, but He Himself is the answer to them all. Perhaps the trouble was the occasion that brought us to Him; perhaps we came thinking of little else and with very little thought of Him, but we go away lost in a presence that bears us and our burden too. It is well to bring our difficulties, even the very least, to Him; for an aching finger is as good an occasion to know God as the vastest issue of life. But it is the Blessor and not the blessing; it is the Lord and not the deliverance, that is the real benediction. Oh how often has some commonplace thing, some trouble or difficulty that others might call simply secular, become a link to bind us forever to the very throne of God, and to form a chain of communication for infinite blessing! And, as a little bit of common glass is sufficient to reflect the full glory of the sun, so the smallest trifle has often had room in it for a whole heaven of God's love and help to come to us.

The trouble with Esau is all right. The brothers meet next day with tears and embraces of affection from spirits that God had touched while Jacob prayed. Could you have seen behind the curtains that night, you would have beheld a sleepless man in his Idumean tent, tossing on his bed as he reflects upon childhood's memories, and fights with bloody purpose of revenge; and you might

have said that it was the impulse of a generous nature that made him spring to his feet and resolve that by-gones should be by-gones, and ride forth to meet that forgiven brother with the traces of tears still on his rugged face. No! it was God, it was prayer, it was the law of faith that binds unseen all hearts to the touch of His hand, and the hands that touch His throne.

But this was the least part of it by far. Esau had soon come and gone, but Jacob's life is moving on, still moving upon the higher plane which began that night. Henceforth he was God's Israel, and fit to become the head of the chosen tribes. Now, how different God is to him; He is not now at the distant top of the ladder, but near at hand, in his very embrace, and encompassing all his future life with His presence and blessing.

4. THE DISCIPLINE OF TRIAL

Jacob has got his blessing. God now begins to burn it into him in the crucible of suffering. We never know the full meaning of trial until we fully know the Lord. And so Jacob's severest trials came after his consecration. First is the dishonor of his daughter Dinah, and the murder of the Shechemites by his wilful sons, thus involving him in future strife with the inhabitants of the land. This was not so much a trial as a punishment for his unjustifiable lingering on forbidden ground. God had sent him back to Canaan, and he had no business tarrying. We cannot remain upon the borders of an evil world without peril to us and our children. Immediately after this the command comes, with great and solemn emphasis: "Arise, and go up to Bethel and dwell there, and build an altar to the Lord!" "The house of God and the very gate of heaven " is henceforth to be his dwelling-place. And so, renewing his consecration and separating himself and his household from every doubtful thing, he goes back to the scene of his early blessing, and rears at once the tent and the altar to the God of Bethel. It was well he did not wait, for the great and bitter trials soon began which needed the refuge and support of the divine presence.

First, his beloved Rachel was torn from his side in the pangs of Benjamin's birth. Then Reuben committed an unnatural crime, and dishonored his father's name in a way which, on his dying bed, the old patriarch remembered with fatal emphasis. And then came the saddest, longest, darkest, strangest of all -- the loss of Joseph, Rachel's firstborn son. For a quarter of a century, perhaps, that weary trial dragged along, and not one ray of light fell on the blackness of his desolation. And then came the years of famine, the necessity for the journey to Egypt for corn, and, the last drop in the overflowing cup, the demand for little Benjamin, too. It was too much for the broken heart to bear, and he cried out in agony, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away; all these things are against me!" But even this drop must be drunk, and all he has on earth must be left in trust and complete abandonment in God's sole hands. And so he waits the issue.

It is enough. The cup is empty at last, and it shall be filled with "a joy so strangely sweet" that even Jacob's faith shall scarcely be able to believe it. To think that God could have for him, after these buried years, so great a joy -- not only Benjamin safe, but Joseph, too! Oh! it needed the sight of Joseph's wagons to convince him that it was true, and Jacob cried, "It is enough -- Joseph, my son, is yet alive."

5. THE TRIUMPH

First, all evil was overruled by God's great hand, and out of the darkest Providences he saw come blessing and honor to his child, joy to his own heart, teaching to his wild and wayward sons, and

salvation from famine for the whole world, and he could truly say, instead of "all these things are against me," "THE ANGEL WHICH REDEEMED ME FROM ALL EVIL, BLESS THE LADS." Secondly, Jacob himself had learned to be still at last. The eager doing spirit had got quieted, and with a sense of all it meant he could say in his death-bed benediction, "I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord."

Out of filthy rags, human skill loves to create the exquisite sheets that form our printed volumes, the illuminated card, the glowing picture, the letter of affection, the Sacred Bible. Out of the soiled and wrecked remnants of human worthlessness God is making the tablets on which He loves to write His character, His thoughts, and His own glorious image. So Jacob glorified the exceeding and marvelous grace of God. Let us trust Him, too; and in the ages to come He will show also the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness to us by Christ Jesus.

8. JOSEPH, OR FAITH'S VICTORY OVER SUFFERING AND WRONG

The lesson derived from Joseph's life is the victory of faith over suffering and wrong. Jacob's sufferings were the discipline which his own waywardness brought upon him; Joseph's were the sufferings of an innocent and noble spirit. The first were designed to teach us how divine grace can overrule suffering for our spiritual good; the second to show how divine love can deliver us from the most trying difficulties and overrule them for our own good, and the good of others.

Joseph's early visions were the foundation of his faith. He did not have, like Jacob, a divine prediction through his mother's lips, announcing his future life and place of covenant blessing. But to his young heart there came in the visions of the night the foreshadowing of his future greatness, and, with ingenuous soul, he accepted it and believed it. His faith was tested by the ridicule of his brethren, and even the grave surprise and questioning of his old father, but he kept it and confessed it, and the day came when he saw it all fulfilled.

To all who wait upon His will, the Master gives some word of faith for the future. Not now in dreams and visions, but in His Word and its bright illumination by the Spirit, does He draw aside the veil enough to give our faith a resting-place and an anchorage. So to Timothy, Paul speaks of "the prophecies that went before on thee that by means of them thou mightest war a good warfare." We must see the land before we can possess it.

It was this that carried David through his nine years of exile and persecution. It was this that sustained Paul through all his stormy vicissitudes; God had said, "Thou must see Rome," and he counted not his life dear unto himself that he might "finish his course with joy." And for each of us there is in life a destiny which God would have us claim and complete in faith and victory, and feel that if we trust Him He waits to carry us through. "Lift up thine eyes; all the land that thou seest, to thee will I give it."

The stern realities of life soon tested his ardent anticipations, and proved whether they were the dreams of an enthusiast or the outcome of faith in God. God will put our trust into the crucible, and all that is not founded on His will, will dissolve like snow. But in that hour the faith of God shines with a luster brighter and clearer because of the darkness and the trial. First came the cruel envy of his brethren, and their heartless crime, which sent him into banishment and slavery, and broke his father's heart with suspense and sorrow. Next came the base and false accusing of Potiphar's wife, and his languishing in prison for months, and perhaps years. Then came the neglect and desertion of his companion in bondage, whose deliverance he had foretold only to be forgotten and left to his fate.

If there be anything still more hard to bear it is unjust accusation and inability to prove one's innocence under the charge of atrocious crime. Such was his keen wound, and it was pierced to the quick by the desertion, at the last, of the very friend he had tried to help in their common distress. Under such circumstances any one of us would naturally have broken down completely and said, perhaps, "There is no use trying. The more one attempts to do right, the more he is

hindered." Of course he is. The devil does not try to hinder people who are going down. The law of gravitation only works against you when you ascend; it helps you downward. So does the law of sin and death. But shall we ask Satan's leave to be right and true and brave and victorious? Shall we get a passport from him before we walk through the gates of victory? Or shall we not rather count his fiercest challenge our best and most complimentary certificate, and say with one, "The highest evidence you can have that you are right is the devil's growl."

How did Joseph act under trial? Did he get morbid and discouraged, and mourn his hard fate? Did he wait until circumstances got favorable? No, he at once accepted his position, and made the best of it, doing his duty in the kitchen so faithfully that he soon became the foreman over all his master's house; and when, afterwards, he was sent to prison, he did his work in prison so faithfully that he soon became the master of the situation, and the overseer of the prisoners.

The world is full of young men who are waiting for something worthy of them, and have no heart to do better because they are unfavorably situated. The man who is going to succeed on the throne must first succeed in the ranks. A young man came to the writer once, without work. He had been a bank officer. Next day he started out to mop out cars with a soap bucket and brush. He did it well and gladly. He was thankful to have that to do, and determined to do his best. It was not a week till he was in a valuable post in that railway company. Such men will succeed. God will bless brave, manly, patient courage everywhere. Brother, begin where you are. There was no other road to Pharaoh's throne except through the dungeon. Had he not been there amid wrong and shame Joseph could not have been brought to the notice of the king as he was, and raised to his princely place. Instead of quarreling with your trying position, and blaming some one for putting you there, why don't you look for the side door that leads to the kingdom? There is always such a door of faith for those who trust God in all things. The secret of Joseph's victory was simply this: He believed that God was in the bitterest of his trials, and would carry him through and give him double for all his shame. And I doubt not that often the memory of his early visions came floating over his spirit to point to the bright future which God was still holding for him when the ordeal was past.

His deliverance and triumph came at last. It came directly through his prison cell and his hardest experience. It came with an uplift so glorious, that his former troubles were forgotten. It came with an opportunity for the noblest revenge, for it not only laid the land of Egypt at his feet, but it brought his own brethren to his feet too, to see the fulfilment of his dreams, and the failure of their envy, and to claim at his hands the kindness which gave him his crowning victory. Oh yes, wronged and trusting one, "God will lift up thy head." He says of thy enemies, "I will make them come and worship at thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." The pendulum must swing back with equal rebound, and as we are partakers of His sufferings, so we shall be of His consolations:

"The light of smiles shall fill again

The eyes that overflow with tears,

And weary hours of grief and pain

Are harbingers of happier years."

God's blessed "afterward" always comes, and "the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby." Then the teardrops and blood-drops shall be crystallized into pearls and rubies in our crown. God has a wonderful way of balancing accounts, and no true child of His need fear the touch of sorrow, for He can "turn the curse into a blessing," and overturn, when His time has come, the mightiest adversary, and turn the light affliction which was but for a moment into a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Like the contrary wind which the skillful sailor, by tacking, makes carry his vessel on her way, so God makes "all things work together for good to them that love God," and nothing can be against them.

The best thing about Joseph's triumph was that it was a victory of love. He did not use his exaltation for himself, but as a benefactor and savior of the world. And his highest joy was to be able to return good for evil to the very brethren who had wronged him. It was not the joy of a mean revenge which filled his heart as he found the betrayers of his youth in his power, but it was the gladness of being able to do them a kindness. And how noble was that kindness; how wisely did he endeavor to awake in their consciences a true sense of sin; and yet how magnanimously did he try to efface all sense of remorse, and lead them to see in it all God's overruling love and power in bringing about their own deliverance as well as the saving of "much people alive."

How can we have such love? What did the apostles say when Christ told them about the love that forgives until seventy times seven? "Lord, increase our faith." Yes, it is only when we see God above all our trials that we can forgive and forget the human instrument. Overruling and counteracting all their hate, we behold the hand of infinite power and love, and we fear them not; we feel only sorry for them, as we see their ultimate discomfiture and sorrow, and we can even love and bless them that curse us.

If we could ever see the Hidden Hand that lies back of all other hands, we would ever have the victory of faith and the victory of love.

Is it not sublime to hear this wronged and outraged brother saying, "Now, be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither, for God did send me before you, to preserve life . . . God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So, now, it was not you that sent me hither, but God, and He hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt"? And then again, a little later, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive."

That is faith's after-view of trial. It sees God's hand over all, and recognizes no evil ultimately. To such a soul nothing can be amiss.

Joseph had not only looked over the span of life with victorious faith and hope, but his vision out-reached the horizon of Time and took in the Eternal. His last words were as full of glorious expectation as his first. He "made mention of the departing of the children of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones." Yes, he saw in the distance their redemption, and a little farther on the Great Redemption itself, and beyond that, the Glorious Resurrection; and in that day he claimed his place with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the millennial earth, and the deathless, sinless, glorious kingdom of that Greater Sufferer, who, like himself, was to be rejected and betrayed by His brethren, innocently accused and condemned, cruelly wronged, and then divinely

exalted to be a Prince and a Savior, to deliver His people, to be made known to His long-alienated brethren, and to be ruler of all the families of the earth.

Yes, it was fitting that Joseph should be the most beautiful and perfect type of Jesus. It was meet that this innocent and blameless life should point forward to Him "who did no sin, neither was guile found in His lips. It is meet that in this wronged and patient sufferer we should see His marred and bleeding face who "was taken from prison and judgment . . . despised and rejected of men. A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief . . . reviled and He reviled not again, suffered, and He threatened not." It is blessed to see in that forgiving brother the love that sought and waited and made Himself known to us, and then, forgiving us all, helped and taught us to forgive, and draw some good even from the lessons of our sinful past. And it is glorious to rise from Joseph's exaltation to Messiah's glory, and see Him reigning as a Prince and a Savior, not for Himself, but for His people's good, and saving and feeding a perishing world by His gracious hand. It was He who lived and triumphed in Joseph, and if He lives in us we shall also find it true, "If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign."

9. THE CURSE OF SELFISHNESS

"If I have eaten my morsel alone." Job 31:17.

This is classed by Job among some of the basest and most abominable offences against God and humanity. He gives us a catalogue of seven different crimes of which men are guilty, and solemnly asseverates his innocence of all.

The first of these respects the law of purity; the second, of honesty; the third, charity toward the poor and helpless; the fourth, greed and avarice; the fifth, pride and vainglory; the sixth, idolatry; and the seventh, vindictiveness and malice toward his fellow-men. To have eaten his morsel alone places him in the same category with all these gross and glaring vices, and to his lofty sense of right it is just as odious and abominable as licentiousness, idolatry, or greed of gain.

The expression here used stands for selfishness in all its forms. It represents the heartless and self-centered spirit that absorbs all the blessings of life to itself, and neither thinks nor cares about the needs and sufferings of others. Our Lord has given us His estimate of this spirit in the parable of the rich farmer, who lived only for his wealth, and who is described as saying to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." The parable has told the story of his fearful doom, and lighted it up with the solemn moral, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

Selfishness has a thousand forms, but no matter what its aspect, it is always the deep fountain of all human sin and the worst foe every one of us has to face. Archbishop Whately said: "If you ask me to tell you who it is that causes you the greatest trouble, and threatens you with the direst danger, I can only say that if you will look in the glass, you will see an excellent picture of him." The sin of selfishness puts you in the place of God, and is high treason against the sovereignty of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Let us look a little at this monster who so easily disguises himself that he has become the rival of heaven and the idol of every human heart.

Selfishness is contrary to the very law of nature itself. The scientist will tell you that every plant and animal is adjusted according to a law of mutual dependence and helpfulness. It takes two flowers to produce the seed that will reproduce and perpetuate the blossom. They must meet in the exchange of the fertilizing pollen which gives life to the plant, and in the distribution of the pollen every element of nature and multitudes of living creatures are made to minister to future generations. The honey bee, as he sucks from flower to flower the sweet nutrition, deposits the fertilizing pollen of some other flower in the cup that he visits, and thus ministers to others while satisfying his own industry and appetite. The very life of a plant is built on the principle of its death in order to give life to the next generation. The beautiful blossom withers and dies, but out of its sepulcher comes the little seed pod which is to create a new summer of radiant blossoms. The wild creatures of the wilderness and the birds of the air band together in herds and flocks for mutual protection, and the instinct of motherhood leads them to provide for the next generation

with the most self-sacrificing care, and even lose their very lives for their young.

All nature is full of interdependence and helpfulness. The philosopher calls this altruism. It is just a little foreshadowing of divine love. Emerson has well expressed it:

"All are needed by each one;

Nothing is fair or good alone."

And Burns has put it still more strongly:

"God never made an independent man;

'Twould mar the general concord of His plan."

The very animals themselves are inspired with the instinct of helpfulness to the suffering. A dog will risk his life to save a belated traveler or a wandering sheep. Not long ago the papers told about a noble dog that had been cruelly beaten by a rough man. In the scuffle the man fell into the river, and then the noble dog leaped in and rescued him, and brought him safe to land.

A missionary surgeon in Madras tells how one day he set the broken limb of a little dog that he had found on his doorstep, and the next morning he heard a scratching and whining at the office door; and when he went out there was the little dog whom he had healed with another dog who also had a broken limb, and the grateful little animal had brought him to the friend that had helped him in his distress.

Oh, ye who are eating your morsel alone, who are hoarding the gold of earth or the Gospel of heaven while others are perishing! The very creatures that you despise will some day rise in judgment and condemn you for a selfishness which is worse than inhuman, nay, worse than brutal, because the very brutes themselves would be ashamed of it.

Selfishness is contrary to every instinct of humanity. God has put upon the heart of man an intuitive feeling of consideration for others and appreciation of benevolence and self-sacrifice. There is nothing more wonderful than the social law which binds humanity together in families and communities. Henry Drummond has given us a beautiful picture of the development of love in the human breast. It did not spring from lust, but from a far sweeter, purer fountain; namely, the beauty and influence of a little child. Is there anything more touching than to see some strongman pursuing his daily toil in the dirty mine or the rushing factory, or the sun-scorched harvest field, day after day and year after year, in exhausting labor for the small pittance of his weekly wages, but happy and satisfied if, on a Saturday night, he can take to his little home the means to supply the wife and children whom he loves better than his ease and selfishness, and rewarded over again a thousand times by their smiles of affection and the happy gladness of the little ones as they climb upon his knees, or tax perhaps his strength in hours of watching by their beds of pain? The secret of it is the instinct of love which God has put in every human breast. Once this man cared for none of these things. His life was free, his pleasures were coarse and selfish, but a gentle hand has touched his heart, the magician Love has bound his life with the bands of God, and he never again can be willing to eat his morsel alone.

True, we find everywhere, even in human nature, exceptions to this law -- the coarse and brutal and selfish natures that can prey upon a famine-stricken land, and put up the price of corn to fill their coffers just because the poor are starving; the capitalists who can keep back the coal from the perishing, and with fiendish delight rejoice in its rise in value, caring nothing for the helpless women and children that pine; the ruffians that fight for life in the burning ship or flaming building, and trample down the innocent and helpless in their struggle for escape; the boors that can monopolize the best seat and look out for the main chance, and laugh at their shrewdness, while they get the best of the weaker and duller minds around them: these are abnormal types.

But this is not true human nature. Public opinion and humanity condemn it and denounce it, and all the heroism of history are made out of the very opposite material. The noble captain standing upon the deck till the last of the passengers is saved; the brave swimmer plunging into the surf to rescue the drowning victims; these are the types of character that win the admiration of the world; these are the heroes that illumine the pages of history.

Selfishness is contrary to divine law. God's law is a law of love. His very nature is beneficence. All-sufficient in Himself, and needing no creature to minister to His happiness, yet He called into being this glorious universe and surrounded Himself with the happy beings on whom He poured out the riches of His goodness. Every ray of sunshine, every radiant star, every tinted blossom, every song of warbling bird or holy angel speaks of His love. He might have made this earth a torture to its inhabitants; but He has fitted every color to every sense, and but for sin it would have been a paradise of happiness. God's blessedness goes out in blessing to others, and therefore He has put a curse on selfishness in its every form. Nothing ministers to our real happiness that is not prompted by love. There is a law of retribution that, in the end, brings upon the selfish one the curse which he seeks to escape.

Aesop's fable tells of the poor suffering ass that begged his companion, the horse, to draw part of the load. "For, if you do not," he said, "I fear I shall die, and then you shall have to carry it all." The lazy horse, however, shirked his load, and the poor ass sank and died under his burden. Then the farmer made the horse carry the load alone, and in addition he laid upon him the burden of the dead ass. "Foolish horse," said he to himself, "that I was, not to heed my companion's appeal. Now I have not only to carry a double load, but a dead weight, too." Selfishness always becomes a dead weight upon every life that is characterized thereby.

Even the heathen tell of the abhorrence of the heavenly powers to selfish purposes and aims. They have a fable of a selfish chief that dug a well and posted a law that none should drink of it but his own family. The well, however, failed to have any water. At length they appealed to the oracle, and the oracle told them that it would be dry until he shared it with the people. Even then he contrived to hold on to his selfishness, but in another form, by announcing that the people could have it all night but he should have it all day. The following day the water failed to come until the sun went down, but then, as the multitudes gathered around with their empty vessels, lo! the gurgling waters came bursting from the springs beneath and filled the well to the brim, and they drank and filled their vessels and went away rejoicing. But when the morning came the water disappeared again until the selfish monster learned the truth that we gain by giving and live by loving. In an old churchyard you may read this epitaph and epigram:

"What I gave, that I have;

What I kept, that I lost."

God's law is a law of love. Even His commandments to His people, as He told them of old, were "for thy good always." The denunciations of the prophets of Israel were chiefly brought against the selfishness of their luxurious age. Listen to Amos as he cries, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, that lie upon beds of ivory and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock and the calves out of the stall; that chant to the sound of the viol, that drink wine in bowls and anoint themselves with the chief ointments; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph."

Selfishness is in defiance of the law of Christ. "The Son of Man came, not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." He gave to His disciples a law of love higher even than that of the Old Testament. It is no longer "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," but it is "Love one another, as I have loved you." His birth in Bethlehem, His toiling youth, His life of constant self-surrender, sacrifice, and privation, His ministry of benevolence and unceasing blessing, and His death of voluntary shame and agony; all these have lifted up a flaming protest against the selfishness of man -- a protest that makes it mockery and blasphemy for any man or woman to call themselves the followers of the Lamb, who are living for gain, aggrandizement, or pleasure.

Selfishness is high treason against the throne of God. It sets up another god instead of Him. The one you seek to please, the one whose will you uniformly obey, the one whose interest you supremely seek -- that is your god. Selfishness is the worship of man and worse than the worship of humanity. It is self-worship, it is blasphemy, it is rebellion against the throne of God, and it will bring upon your head the damning curse of a God of love. You that want your way about things, that think the universe was made for your convenience and comfort, and that fret and fly into a passion because things go contrary to you -- you are arch rebels against the King of love, and will go down with Satan, your king, to the rebel's doom.

The followers of Jesus Christ are called to a life of self-sacrifice. Discipleship means learning of Him, following Him and being disciplined by Him. Only those who walk in His steps of self-denial and unselfish love dare call themselves His disciples, and the one badge evermore of true discipleship is the cross mark of the Lord Jesus. As Whittier has sung so truly and so grandly:

"Wherever through the ages rise

The altars of self-sacrifice;

Where love its arms has opened wide,

Or man for man has nobly died;

I see the same white wings outspread

That hovered o'er the Master's head."

Dear friend, have you these cross marks on your life ? Are you welcoming the glory of partnership in His love and sacrifice, and saying day by day:

"The cross of Christ I'll cherish,

Its crucifixion bear;

All hail, reproach and sorrow,

If Jesus leads me there."

The selfishness of Christians is in strange contrast with the Spirit of Christ.

Shall we attempt to describe the normal life of the modern church member? A carnival of fashion, dress, equipage, entertainment, and pleasure: fashions and furnishings designed chiefly to afford opportunity for more lavish expenditures than others have been able to reach; not only one home, but even three; a stud of horses, a summer yacht, a summer trip, hundreds of thousands for decorations and art, enough for a single banquet sometimes to send a score of missionaries, and in the humbler walks of life a wretched imitation of the splendid pageant of the rich and great.

Let an angel come down from heaven fresh from listening to the song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain"; let him read the summer advertisements in our newspapers and magazines; let him take a flying trip to our seaside watering-places, our summer hotels, our lawn parties and summer entertainments, and even our religious amusements, and I think I hear him say as he turns away from the disgusting spectacle, "There must be some mistake. This cannot be the world for which He died. These surely cannot be the men whom my Lord redeemed by the precious blood of Calvary." Put the picture of our selfishness, our folly, our mad race for money and enjoyment up against Gethsemane and Calvary, and we, too, will want:

"To hide our blushing face,

When His dear Cross appears."

10. ISHMAEL AND ISAAC, OR THE DEATH OF SELF

In the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians the Apostle Paul recites the story of Abraham, Ishmael, and Isaac, and tells us that this is an allegory, setting forth profound spiritual truths. The casting out of Ishmael is a parable of sanctification through our death to the law and sin, by virtue of our union with the Lord Jesus in His death and resurrection.

But there is a sequel to the story of Ishmael. It is the sacrifice of Isaac on Mount Moriah. And this expresses a much deeper experience than our deliverance from the power of sin. The sacrifice of Isaac represents the yielding up of our very self through crucifixion with Christ, and our death, not only to our bad self, but even to our good self.

"There is a foe whose hidden power

The Christian well may fear;

More subtle far than inbred sin,

And to the heart more dear.

It is the power of selfishness,

The proud and wilful I;

And ere my Lord can live in me,

My very self must die."

This is the experience which the Apostle Paul describes in Gal. 2: 20: "I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live." That covers the experience of sanctification from the life of sin.

But the Apostle advances another stage: "Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." That is the experience of Mount Moriah, the offering of Isaac, the yielding of self, the giving up even of our new life and the substitution of Christ Himself; a substitution so complete that even the very faith by which it is maintained is "the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me."

We read in the Book of Joshua of three sons of Anak, the heads of the Anakim, a race of giants who held the city of Hebron before Caleb's conquest. As the story of Hebron is a type, along with the whole of the Book of Joshua, of our higher spiritual victories, so these Anakim properly represent the great strongholds of our natural and sinful life. The word Anak means "long-necked," and may well suggest the spirit of self-will, self-confidence, and self-seeking, which are perhaps the worst forms of self-life.

Self-will, or the DISPOSITION TO HAVE OUR OWN WAY AND BROOK NO OTHER AUTHORITY OR WILL, is the most obvious form of the life of self. "Ye shall be as gods" was the promise of the tempter to our sinning parents in the first great moral conflict of the race. And ever since then, man has wanted to be a god unto himself. Therefore the first step in the consecrated

life is unconditional surrender, and the utter yielding up of the will in submission and conformity to the will of God. Nowhere do we find a more terrible picture of the tendencies of this spirit than in Saul, the first king of Israel, who seems to have been raised up as a great spiritual object-lesson and beacon of warning on the perilous shores of human experience. His downward career began in the rejection of God's command for his own preference. Samuel's judgment upon him makes this very plain, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft (or devil-worship) and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He also hath rejected thee from being king."

Self-confidence, or self-sufficiency, represents another of Anak's race. It is the spirit that relies upon its own strength and ignores the grace of God. It trusts its virtues, its emotions, its religious experiences, its own resources. Its type is Simon Peter. Strong in his self-confidence, and ignorant of his real weakness, he honestly meant what he said when he boasted, " Though all men should deny Thee, yet will not I." But he had to fail and fall to find out his own helplessness, and to die to his own self-sufficiency. The sanctified heart is not a self-constituted condition, but simply a vessel to be filled with the grace of God, a possibility of which He must be the impelling force, a capacity to hold the divine fulness, and a condition of constant dependence upon the sustaining and all-sufficient grace of God. The word "consecrate" in Hebrew means to "fill the hand," and finely suggests the idea of an empty hand which God Himself must continually fill.

SELF-SEEKING IS THE NATURAL DEVELOPMENT AND CLIMAX OF SELF-LIFE. It lives for its own pleasure, pride, and glory. Sometimes it manifests itself in desire for human praise. Sometimes it takes the form of that pride which scorns even the praise of man, and is content with its own self-consciousness of superiority. Whatever its form, it is impious self, sitting on the throne of God, and claiming the glory due to Him alone. Perhaps its most flagrant type is Nebuchadnezzar as he cried, "Is not this great Babylon which I have built, by the might of my power and for the honor of my majesty?"

But even the Lord's servants are not free from the same unholy spirit. It reached its height in Jonah, a prophet of the Lord, honored with unparalleled success, and yet in the very hour of greatest usefulness, so throwing the shadow of his own pride and ambition across his work, that God had to humble him in the dust, and leave him as a spectacle of infamy and warning to all others who might presume to mingle the spirit of self-glorying with the service of a crucified Master.

It is possible to be sanctified from all wilful sin or known evil, and yet to be under the influence of the subtle spirit of self, so that even our very holiness may minister to selfishness and pride. The Holy Spirit wants to probe to the very depths of our being and slay us in the very center of our life. True sanctification is not merely the death of sin, but the death of self. The Apostle does not say, Reckon, therefore, that sin is dead; but "Reckon yourselves dead indeed unto sin." It is not merely that the sinful principle must die, but the sinful person must be displaced by the divine personality, "Not I, but Christ that liveth in me."

It dishonors God and PUTS SELF AS A RIVAL ON GOD'S THRONE. "Ye shall be as gods" was the devil's deep delineation of the true character of fallen man, for ever since the Fall man has tried to be a god unto himself. Whenever we act because it is our own will, or for our own interest and ends, we are disobeying the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me."

And when we put self upon the throne, we become the very antithesis of God, for "God is love " and love is the opposite of selfishness. Human selfishness, therefore, not only mimics God, but proves its utter unfitness to occupy His throne because of its unlikeness to His nature.

The self-life is akin to the Satanic life. Satan's own fall began in a form of self-love. Made to be dependent on God, he became independent; and contemplating his own perfection, and counting it his own, he became separated from the source of his being, and fell into eternal rebellion and disobedience. So, still, any soul that becomes self-constituted, occupied with its own virtues and independent of the Lord Jesus, will share the devil's fearful fall. How awful the tragedy of Saul! He began with Saul and ended with Satan. So self always ends.

The self-life is INCONSISTENT WITH TRUE SANCTIFICATION. The seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is a dramatic picture of the good self struggling with the bad self. The good self wants to do right, but is not equal to the struggle, and is constantly dragged into defeat and humiliation. The two "I's" are in deadly conflict, but neither is strong enough to overcome the other, and the chapter ends with an emphatic statement of the very best that "I myself" can accomplish. That is: "With the mind I serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." That is the best that the good self can do.

But when we pass into Rom. 8, self is left behind, and it is now a man in Christ, and a man with Christ in him, and it is all holiness, victory, and joy. This is the danger of resting in what is sometimes called Adamic perfection, if there be such a thing. If we could receive Adamic perfection today, like Adam we would lose it tomorrow. But if we take Christ to be our sanctification, He will be in us "the same yesterday and to-day and for ever."

The spirit of self is fatal to harmony with our brethren, and the source of strife, suspicion, envy, jealousy, sectarianism, bigotry, and the whole brood of social grievances that afflict the Church of God. Like the fly in the ointment, it defiles the holiest things and destroys the body of Christ. It is just as bad for holiness people as for worldlings, and splits them up into sects and factions with endless controversies and strivings. It takes the spirit of the world into the pulpit, the Sunday school, and every form of Christian fellowship and work.

And it mars all our work for God. It seeks even the baptism of the Holy Ghost and the gifts of heavenly power for man's own glory and ambition. It builds up the Church and Kingdom of Christ in the spirit of rivalry and emulation. It makes the house of God a theater for the display of dress or musical talent or oratorical ability. It would even, like Jonah, rather see Nineveh perish than have the prophet lose his reputation. So long as the spirit of self dominates the Christian worker, God can scarcely afford to bless him without compromising His own glory and ministering to human pride.

The only remedy for it is death. It is inveterately bad, and is the very root and essence of the carnal mind and the sinful soul. It cannot be improved. You may educate it, but like the tiger's cub it would some day strike the very hand that would caress it, and prove that still it has the tiger's heart.

But you cannot kill it yourself. You may try, like Nero, to commit suicide and stab yourself a hundred times, but you will always miss the vital part. All that you can do is to hand it over to Christ, to pronounce the sentence of death upon it, to sign the death warrant, to give Him the right to slay it, and then to reckon it nailed to His cross and dead through His dying. "For if one died for

all, then all died; and He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them and rose again."

Then not only will self pass out with Jesus on the cross, but love will come in with Jesus in the resurrection; and Christ's life and Christ's love will displace the old life of self and sin. What a marvelous power love has even in a human life to lift above the tyranny of self! We have seen sometimes a petted and selfish girl surrounded by wealth and admiration until she was wholly spoiled and became the center of the circle in which she lived, her whole being perverted by a refined selfishness. But we have seen that girl in after years a self-denying, loving wife and mother, devoted to the happiness of her husband, sharing his poverty, toiling for his comfort, and with a love that never wearied and a heart that never grew cold or tired nursing the little children that have come into her arms. What has cast out the idol of self from the throne of her heart? Nothing but love. A noble, beloved human friend came in and took the place that self had occupied. So the love of Jesus, when truly revealed by the Holy Spirit, wins the heart and makes us content without the things that once we demanded, because His smile is our sunshine and His love our heaven. It is Christ that displaces self, and turns the earthly heart into a land of Beulah and a Hephzibah of love and joy.

But this can only come through the coming of Christ Himself. Are we willing to believe that He is waiting to win, to occupy, and to satisfy these hearts of ours with His life of love, and the expulsive power of that new affection that will enable us henceforth to live "not unto ourselves but unto Him that died for us and rose again"? Only by the surrender of self can you really find the satisfaction of true self-love. While we seek for happiness we always miss it, but when, as Abraham laid his Isaac on the altar of Moriah, we lay down our life, then we find, as Abraham did, that what we gave – that we have, and what we would have kept – that we should have lost. "For he that saveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for My sake shall keep it unto life eternal."

11. SAUL, OR SELF-LIFE LEADING TO DESTRUCTION

The place of Saul in Old Testament history is significant; and moreover, as we believe, typical of great spiritual truths. It is God's fearful object-lesson of the power and the peril of the self-life; even as it shows the need of the crucifixion of the self-life before we can enter into the kingdom of spiritual victory and power.

We see the spirit of self in the very motive that prompted the kingdom of Saul. Samuel perfectly understood it to be a virtual rejection of God as the supreme King of Israel and a vainglorious desire to be independent of divine control and to be like the surrounding nations of the world. "Make us a king," they said, "to judge us like all the nations." No wonder that Samuel was deeply displeased and prayed unto the Lord. But God answered him: "Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they have said unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them."

Nevertheless, Samuel still protested, and solemnly warned them of the burdens and exactions which their king would claim from them, and the trouble they were bringing upon themselves, adding, "Ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye have chosen, and the Lord will not hear you in that day."

But it was no use. They had set their heart upon their king and they answered, "We will have a king over us, that we may also be like all the nations: and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles." This is the spirit of the prodigal, saying, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." It is the desire of independence which is the very root of human sin, and it is the spirit of conformity to the world into which self-life always develops. We see it in the spirit of worldly conformity in the Church today, and we are conscious of it in our own natural hearts as that broad, self-asserting, and dominant "I" which makes man a God unto himself, who refuses to surrender his will to Christ, or yield the direction of his life to the will of God and the government of the Holy Ghost.

Therefore, the very first step in the new life must ever be surrender; and the essential condition of the baptism of the Holy Ghost is to yield the very last point to God, even the things which may in themselves be harmless.

We see the spirit of self in the character of Saul, and the qualifications which made him the choice and the idol of the people. Saul was the very embodiment of the human. He represented all that was most strong, chivalrous, attractive, and promising in human nature. He was of splendid physique, a head taller than all the people, a magnificent specimen of physical manhood, and "every inch a king."

He possessed the intellectual, moral, and social qualities that constitute a great public leader. He was brave, heroic, enthusiastic, and generous, and the early years of his reign are adorned with stirring examples of heroic deeds. He was all that the human heart would choose. He represented the best possibilities of human nature, and as the people looked at his splendid figure they

shouted again and again that patriotic cry which has so often re-echoed since, and which has so seldom been fulfilled as a prayer to heaven, "God save the king."

God had to let this man stand before the ages to show that man at his best is only man, and that human self-sufficiency must end in failure and desperate sorrow. This is the lesson that God is trying to teach His children still. How few of them have found it out so fully that they can say, "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." The sentence of death has passed upon the flesh, and there is but one thing that we can do with it -- to nail it to the Cross of Jesus Christ, to reckon it dead, and to keep it forever in His bottomless grave.

The spirit of self in Saul was combined with much that was good and attractive, both naturally and spiritually. Naturally, we have seen that he was not only a man of princely bearing, but of many noble and heroic qualities. He had also a beautiful family, and Jonathan, his son, is the most attractive figure in the long gallery of Bible characters.

When Saul came to Samuel, and was first called to the kingdom, he seemed to have many elements of sterling virtue and genuine humility. Like a dutiful son, he went to search for his father's asses, and then he went to the prophet Samuel to ask counsel about finding them. When he came to Samuel, and was told his extraordinary message and anointed to be king, there was no unbecoming self-consciousness about him. He kept his secret with discretion and modesty, and even in telling his uncle about the words of Samuel, he said nothing to him about the greater message concerning the kingdom.

When he left the presence of Samuel he did just what he was told, and when he met the company of prophets he joined them, and prophesied among them with genuine religious enthusiasm. Even when they sought for him to bring him out before the people and announce to him their choice as the national ruler, they could not find him, for he was hiding among the stuff; he seemed to be a very paragon of modesty and unobtrusiveness.

And yet this was the very man who let the dark and dreadful shadow of himself blight his own life and ruin his kingdom and his family. Oh, how self-deceptive is the human spirit! Oh, how pride itself will hide away in the very guise of deepest humility! In speaking of his earlier life the prophet Samuel pays a tribute to Saul's humanity. "When thou wast little in thine own sight," he says, "wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel?" We cannot doubt that Samuel's language is perfectly sincere, and that he is giving Saul credit for at least a measure of genuine humility. What then was the defect? May it have been this? It is one thing to be little in our own eyes; it is another thing to be out of our own sight altogether. True humility is not thinking meanly of ourselves; it is not thinking of ourselves at all. What we need is not so much self-denial as self-crucifixion and utter self-forgetfulness. The perfect child is just as unconscious in the highest place as in the lowest, and the true spirit of Christ in us recognizes ourselves as no longer ourselves, but so one with the Lord Jesus that we can truly say, "Not I, but Christ who liveth in me." "By the grace of God I am what I am."

But what are we to learn from this combination of excellences in one life and its ultimate failure and ruin? Alas, we are to learn that Satan's choicest wile is to mingle the good with the evil, and to cover his poison as a sugarcoated pill, because he knows we would never take the pill in its unmixed and undiluted form. Satan's choicest agents are those that are attractive and naturally

lovely. Esau was a more winning man naturally than Jacob; but Esau was lost and Jacob was chosen. You may be beautiful, you may be wise, you may be cultured, you may be moral, you may be useful, you may be noble and generous; and yet, with all, you may be living for yourself, and, at last, like Saul, you may be self-destroyed. Satan does not want your property outright now; he only wants a mortgage on it, and he is content to take a mortgage for a thousand pounds if he cannot get one for a hundred thousand. He can wait for the day of foreclosure. All he wants is to have his hand in it. It is the mixed lives that are doing the mischief.

"Wherefore, come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty."

The first test came to Saul in an hour of severe trial when, beleaguered by his enemies, and deserted by almost all his soldiers, he seemed to be facing destruction. Waiting seven days for Samuel to come and begin the battle by the usual sacrificial offering, Saul at last grew discouraged and impatient, and then he presumed to take upon himself the priestly functions which belonged only to Samuel, and to offer up the sacrifice without waiting for the prophet. As he was offering the sacrifice, Samuel came and pronounced upon Saul the terrible sentence, "Thou hast done foolishly; thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, as He commanded thee; for now would the Lord thy God have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, but now shall thy kingdom not continue. The Lord hath sought Him a man after His own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over His people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee."

Many a life succeeds while all is favorable, but in the hour of trial self shows itself. Saul was a splendid king until the first great trial met him, and then he became discouraged, distrustful, self-asserting and presumptuous, and dared to take in his own hands the things that belonged only to God. He usurped the throne of God Himself, and showed his true nature. He was a man of his own heart and not of God's heart; and henceforth God sought Him a man "after God's heart," who should do God's will and not his own, and thus be a true representative of Israel's true King.

As soon as Saul had shown himself in his real character, God immediately delivered the people out of their peril by two feeble men -- Jonathan and his armor bearer -- that He might show to Saul how little he needed his strength or any human strength or wisdom and how all-sufficient God was to those who truly trusted Him. Even this victory Saul almost wrecked by his interference and wilfulness, and it became apparent by his own folly that he could not be trusted with God's work, and that his persistent self-will would always hinder the will and the work of God.

Not instantly did the crisis come. God let this spirit of self work out to its full development slowly; but it was evident from this hour that Saul's life must fail, and that Samuel's prophecy was, alas, true.

God gave another opportunity and a second test. He sent Saul on an important expedition to destroy Amalek, the race of Esau that had tried to hinder Israel in their passage through the wilderness. There is a deep spiritual meaning back of this story; for Amalek was a type of the flesh; and the destruction of Amalek was just an illustration of the very principle which Saul's life so strongly emphasizes, and Saul's failure to destroy Amalek is, therefore, the more significant

because it shows how deeply rooted the self-principle was in his own soul. The man who spared Agag was the man who spared the principle of self in his own heart; and the two pictures blend with an awful significance for every one of us.

Saul successfully accomplished the invasion and returned victorious. He even seems to have been so possessed with the spirit of self-complacency that he failed to realize his own true character until Samuel uttered his fearful words of doom. "Yea, I have obeyed the commandment of the Lord," he cried with perfect assurance, and when the awful words of the prophet answered back, "Obedience is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He also hath rejected thee from being king "; it is doubtful if even then Saul fully realized the nature of his sin. So subtle and self-deceiving is the spirit of self that even then all he seemed to feel was the fear of being humiliated before the people, and he begged the petty bauble of Samuel's public recognition and honor, and this little bit of vainglory was the solace and the comfort of his wretched soul in the hour when the sentence of death and ruin was thundering in his ears.

What a spectacle of complacent self-deception; the snare of a religious motive, keeping the spoil to sacrifice to the Lord! We see the fear of man, the unwillingness of this weak man to displease the people when they begged him to save the precious booty of Amalek.

But one word above all others seems to crystallize the very element of this stupendous folly. It is the word "compromise." Saul obeyed, but with a compromise. Saul did much good, but he compromised with evil. God's commandments are uncompromising, inexorable, unqualified, and our obedience must be inflexible, absolute, and complete. The faintest reservation is really the very soul of disobedience. The failure even to hearken to the full meaning of God indicates a spirit of unwilling obedience.

Saul stands before us in this picture as the incarnation of self-will and, therefore, the enemy of God, nay, the rival of God upon His very throne. Could there be any other issue? "Thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord hath rejected thee from being king."

Not immediately did the judgment culminate. Slowly still the coil of self unwinds until all its hidden sinuosities have been revealed. Saul did much work after this, much good work, fought many battles, fought them well, reigned over Israel, and established a powerful kingdom, but it was Saul's Kingdom and not God's. All the remaining years were years of self-activity and self-vindication. For nine years he pursued David, his rival, with ferocious hate. The Spirit of God left him, and an evil spirit, by God's permission, possessed him; and as the years went on, the beginning and the end of his existence was Saul and not Jehovah. It was self incarnate with all its miserable works and fruits.

At length the culmination came. Eaten out by the canker of self, his heart became the dwelling-place of Satan. The devil took entire possession of him, and in one dreadful hour he gave himself up to spiritualism and, rejected of the Lord, sought the counsel of necromancers, whom he had formerly persecuted and banished from his kingdom. It was the last fatal step. Self had driven God from the throne, and now it gave it to Satan, and the next chapter of self-life was self-destruction.

Trembling and prostrated by the fearful vision which his own presumption had brought up from the depths of Hades, Saul dashed with reckless despair into the last battle of his life, and the next day the tragedy was complete -- the flower of Israel's youth was lying on the slopes of Gilboa -- the army of Saul was annihilated -- the Philistines were victorious on every side -- the kingdom which Saul had built up for a quarter of a century for himself was broken to pieces and scattered to the winds -- Saul's sons were lying dead on the mountain sides, and Saul himself, a wretched suicide, had gone to his own place. The scorpion, self, had stung others, and now, at last, it stung itself to death.

The revelation of human selfishness was complete, and before the sad and fearful spectacle we may well stand in awe, and humbly, earnestly, and fervently pray:

"Oh, to be saved from myself, dear Lord,

Oh, to be lost in Thee!

Oh, that it might be no more I,

But Christ that lives in me."

12. AGAG, OR THE SUBTLETIES OF THE SELF-LIFE

(1 SAM. 15:32, 33.)

Saul and Agag both teach the same great lesson and warning, namely, the peril of a self-centered life, but they teach it in somewhat different ways.

Agag belonged to the race of Amalek and the family of Esau, who through their entire genealogy represent the life of the flesh. From the very beginning of the human race God has drawn the line of demarcation between two races -- the fleshly and the spiritual. Just outside the gate of Eden the division began. The family of Seth called themselves by the name of the Lord, and the race of Cain went off and built their city of culture and pride, and became pioneers of worldliness and wickedness. The separation, alas! soon began to disappear; and in the days of Noah the two races had mingled and intermarried, and the progeny was a generation of monsters of iniquity, so degenerate and depraved that God turned with loathing from the race and pronounced the awful sentence, "The end of all flesh is come before Me; I will destroy man from off the face of the earth."

After the Flood God chose a separate family, the line of Abraham, and again endeavored to keep the chosen people separate. All along that line we see the earthly off-shoots of the family tree separating from the central trunk and going out into the world. The first of these was Ishmael, the type of the spirit of bondage and sin. The next of these was Esau, the progenitor of a whole race who inherited the earthly spirit of their father, who, for a morsel of meat, sold his birthright, and afterward married with the daughters of Canaan and became as corrupt and polluted as they. In the same line were the descendants of Lot's unnatural daughters, the Moabites and the Ammonites.

Above all these, the race of Esau and Amalek were the representatives of the spirit of the flesh and the world. This was the reason that God pronounced the decree of their extermination. We find that, when Israel went out of Egypt and started on their journey through the wilderness on their way to the Land of Promise, Amalek was the first to attack them. It is not difficult to see in this the foreshadowing of the fact that the first adversary that we have to contend with, when leaving our sinful past of bondage and iniquity, is the carnal nature in our own hearts, which tries to force us back to "the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity." This is what Agag represents, and this is what each of us has found to our cost to be a very real element in the experience of a Christian life.

The word Agag means ruler, and represents the spirit of self-will, self-assertion, and independence in the human heart. Its prototype is Lucifer, the prince of light and glory, who, being lifted up with pride and refusing to be controlled, turned from an angel to a fiend, and has become the desperate leader of the rebellious hosts of hell. We see it next in the supreme temptation of the Fall -- "Ye shall be as gods " -- the desire for supremacy. We see it in the spirit of human ambition, in the Oriental despot, in the world conqueror, in the society belle and the political "boss." All belong to the same family. They are of the race of Amalek and the house of Agag. Their cry is like the

prodigal, "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me," and let me go away from parental control, and do as I please.

There has been no age when this spirit was so rampant as our own. It appears to us as mannishness and calls itself liberty, but its end is license, lawlessness, and Antichrist, that "lawless one" who is yet to embody the elements of human wickedness and pride, and end the present dispensation by defying God and man, and perishing, like his father, the devil, in his presumptions. This spirit is found in every human heart, and may be disguised in many insidious forms. It may call itself by illustrious names, and ape the highest ambitions and the noblest pretensions, but it is Agag and Satan every time. The thing in you that wants to rule, wants to have its own way, to be independent, to refuse control, to despise reproof, is wrong in its very nature. The very first thing you need in order to be of any use anywhere is to be thoroughly broken, completely subjected, and utterly crucified in the very core and center of your will. Then you will accept discipline, and learn to yield and obey in matters indifferent; and your will shall be so merged in His that He can use you as a perfectly adjusted instrument. Henceforth you shall will only what God wills, and choose only what God chooses for you.

This is the real battleground of human salvation; this is the Waterloo of every soul; this is the test question of every redeemed life. This was the point where Saul lost his kingdom and Agag lost his life, and where still eternal destinies are lost or won as we learn the lesson or refuse to be led in triumph by our conquering Lord.

God had determined that the race of Amalek and the house of Agag should be utterly exterminated. They were not to be spared, but to be destroyed. It was a case of no compromise. There was nothing good in them. The least element of Agagism was destructive, and the whole community, with all their goods and belongings, must be put out of existence, just as the effects of a household where some one had died of some contagious disease must be wholly given to the flames. This is God's decree against the flesh in us. It cannot be cleansed; it cannot be improved; it cannot be cultivated; it cannot be educated into good ideas and principles. The flesh must be exterminated.

Now, what is the flesh? Is it the bad principle in man? Is it some outward or inward evil which can be cut away like a tumor by a surgical operation? Listen: "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So, then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God." There is the uncompromising decree of the total depravity and the hopeless condition of the flesh. But now, what is the flesh? Listen again: "But ye are not in the flesh, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." There is the distinction clear as a ray of celestial light. Every man who has not the Spirit of God is in the flesh; therefore, everything outside the Spirit of God is flesh. Therefore, the flesh is not simply the sinful part of human nature, but the whole of human nature. It is the natural man. It is the whole creature, and the whole thing is corrupt and polluted. The tree is so crooked that you cannot straighten it without cutting it in two. The tumor is so interwoven with the flesh that you cannot cut it without killing the man. There is no remedy. There is no hope. The old life must be laid down, and the new creation, wholly born out of heaven and baptized with the Spirit of God, must take its place as a new creation, as an experience so supernatural and divine that its possessor can truly say, "I am no longer the former man, I have died and Christ has taken my place. It is no longer I, but Christ that liveth in me."

Don't try to sanctify the flesh. Don't attempt to evolutionize the kingdom of heaven out of the kingdom of hell. It is not evolution, it is creation. It is not morals or manners, it is a miracle of grace and power. Take no risks upon the old man. He will fail you every time. You may think your trained hawk is a dove, but in an unsuspecting moment its beak will be buried in your flesh. Your little wolf may have all the manners of the lamb, but in an evil hour it will destroy all your lambs, and perhaps rend you limb from limb. It is hopelessly, eternally corrupt. It cannot please God. It must be utterly dethroned, renounced, and crucified with Christ.

We next see the attempt of man to compromise with the flesh and to disregard this Divine decree of its extermination. Saul spared Agag that he might grace his triumph, and he kept the best of the spoil that he might sacrifice unto the Lord his God. He obeyed the commandment of the Lord, to a certain extent. He defeated Amalek and destroyed the nation, in a sense. He did all God told him as far as it was agreeable, and he took his own way just where it was pleasant. His obedience, therefore, was not really obedience to God, but, in fact, self-will. He retained just enough of the flesh to destroy the whole service. The very essence of the disobedience was compromise. He tried to put the evil to a good use. It was a very insult in the face of Heaven to bring the forbidden thing and offer it to the God he had defied.

This is the spirit of modern religious culture. "Don't go too far! Don't be extreme! Don't be Puritanical! Go easy! Be liberal!" In other words: "Meet the world halfway. Marry that scoundrel to save him. Take that saloon-keeper into the church because you can make good use of his money. Put that brazen-faced woman up in the choir because she will draw her theatrical set to hear her sing. Go to the theater and the play with your husband, to get him to go to church with you on Sunday."

Nonsense! In the first place, in such an unequal contest on the enemy's ground the devil will always get the best of you. Instead of being saved, the husband will drag to his level the woman that ventured on forbidden ground. Instead of bringing her set under the influence of religion, the operatic singer will bring the church to the level of her set, and turn it into a clubhouse and a concert-room. The saloon-keeper's money will moderate the tone of the preaching, so that it will be a comfort unto Sodom, so that vice and sin can sit unchecked, and even count itself the very buttress and pillar of the holy Cause of Christ.

Think you that God will accept such service? Will He who owns the treasures of the Universe, and could Create a mountain or a mine of gold in a moment, and send a thousand angels to sing in His sanctuaries -- will He accept the money that is stained with the blood of souls and polluted with the filth of dethroned purity and honor? Will He accept the meretricious service that is sold for sordid gain? Will He go begging to the devil's shrine, and asking permission to let go his captives that they may be saved? Shame upon our unfaithfulness and our compromise! Oh, for the sword of a Samuel to hew in pieces the compromises that are an offence to Heaven and a disgrace to the Bride of the Lamb! We see the fawning pleading of the flesh for indulgence. Agag came forth, walking delicately, mincing like a silly, coquettish girl, smiling, seeking by his blandishments to disarm opposition, to win favor, looking like an incarnation of gentleness and innocence. A perfect gentleman! Surely, he could not harm a child! Surely, no one could dream of doing him harm! Ah, that is the old flesh pleading for his life, pointing out its refinement, its culture, its graces, the good that it is doing and wants to do, its claim upon your consideration and regard. Surely, such a

beautiful gentle creature should not be rudely slain. But back of all its disguises and fawnings the Holy Ghost will show you, if you will let Him, the serpent's coil, the dragon's voice, and the festering corpse of the charnel house.

Death is not always repulsive at first sight. The daughter of Jairus was beautiful in her shroud, and a flush of life still lingered on her cheek, but she was as dead as Lazarus stinking in his tomb. And so the sweet-faced creature, with her fawning charms, that brilliant minister with his intellectual sophistries, that voice that sings like an angel in the choir, are as corrupt and polluted as the poor creature that lies in yonder hospital dropping to pieces in the last stages of corruption, or that red-handed assassin reeking with the blood of his victim. They are both flesh, only at different stages of moral putrefaction.

We see in Agag the flesh feigning death. "Surely," said Agag, "the bitterness of death is past." And so you will find plenty of people, in pulpits and pews, on platforms and in obscure corners, who would make you believe that they are utterly dead, and yet, when you get a good look at them, remind you of corpses walking in grave clothes. They are so conscious of their deadness that you know they are alive! They are so proud of their humility that you would rather they were proud than humble. They are so constantly in their own shadow that they try you by their religious egotism. Surely, dead people don't know it, don't think about it, are unostentatious, unobtrusive, modest, simple, natural, free, and, like good water, without taste, color, or consciousness. Oh, for this blessed simplicity and this place of self-forgetting rest! Oh, for this fulfilment of the prayer, "Lord, let me die so dead that I won't know it."

Beloved, there is no danger so great, especially among Christians somewhat advanced, as that of counting ourselves in a place where we really do not live. There is nothing so hardening to the heart as to take the place of self-surrender and then live a life of self-indulgence, self-will, the while adding to it the greater fault of self-complacency; calling things holy which are not so. We are not to reckon that we are "reckoned" dead, but rather we are to reckon on a reality, to insist upon it, and take nothing less from God or from ourselves. Oh, that we would dare to call things by their right names and have no counterfeit, even ourselves.

Agag could not deceive Samuel. The old man pierces him through with one glance of the Holy Ghost, and, looking at his mincing figure, we can imagine him saying, "I know you with all your fawning. You are an old murderer. You are a selfish, cruel tyrant. Your sword has made many a mother childless. Many an innocent victim has been crushed beneath your lust of hate, and back of all your smiles there is a skeleton and a serpent's sting." With that sharp sword he cut through his blandishments, and hewed him to pieces before the Lord.

Sin never stops till it reaches its worst, and God shows us in a single sample the possibilities of the evil to which the tiniest seed and fairest bud of selfishness may yet ripen. Let us ask God to expose it in our hearts; let us open our being to the sword of Samuel, which is the sword of the Holy Ghost, described in the Epistle to the Hebrews in solemn but blessed words, "The Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

To be delivered from any form of self and sin, we need to be willing to see it, to recognize it, to call it by its right name, to throw off its disguise, to brand it with its true character, to pass sentence of death upon it, to stand to the sentence without compromise, to consent to no reprieve, to give God the right to slay it; and then there is power enough in the sword of the Spirit, in the fire of the Holy Ghost, in the blood of Calvary, in the faithfulness and love and grace of God, to make us dead unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

13. JONAH, OR THE SHADOW OF SELF

"Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech Thee, my life from me; it is better for me to die than to live." Jonah 4:3.

This was the best prayer that Jonah ever uttered, if he had only really meant it in the right sense. The greatest need of Jonah's life was to die to Jonah, and his life is just a great object-lesson of the odiousness and the foolishness of the spirit of selfishness in any mortal, especially in any one who professes, or pretends to work for God and the souls of men.

The story of Jonah is soon told. He was the first of the prophets whose writings have come down to us in the Sacred Canon. He lived in the reign of Jeroboam II, and it was through the instrumentality of the prophet that the monarch was enabled to raise Israel from the depression into which the nation had fallen, and lift her to the highest point of power and greatness in all her history.

Sent as the prophet of good tidings to his own people, Jonah gladly went, and by his inspired messages cheered on his countrymen, until they had subdued their enemies on every side, and won back long-lost territory from all their foes.

Had Jonah's career terminated at this point he would have gone into history as one of the most successful and brilliant of Israel's long line of prophets. But God gave him a new commission, and sent him with a message of warning to the city of Nineveh, the mighty capital of the Assyrian Empire. This was to Jonah not only unexpected but unwelcome. An enthusiastic patriot, he did not want to do anything that could bring the favor of God to the hated enemies of his country. And so the whole self-will of the man rose up in rebellion, and he determined not to go. Disobedience always brings separation from God, and so Jonah was inevitably driven from the presence of God, and looked about for some place where he might escape from the All-Seeing Eye whose glance he could not bear.

It was not difficult to find a chain of providences all working in the direction which he desired. And finding a ship at Joppa bound for the coast of distant Tarshish, he secured a passage at once and started for the chosen hiding-place. He was soon overtaken by the messengers of God's mercy and judgment, and, thrown into the sea as a sacrifice to appease the storm, he was swallowed by the great fish which God had prepared, and then flung out from his living tomb, a resurrected man.

God's message met Jonah again -- his commission was renewed to go to Nineveh, and preach the preaching that God commanded.

This time he went without any evasions or questionings, and for a time it really seemed that he was indeed a crucified man. But, alas, for human self-assertion! It was not long before Jonah came to the surface again. As long as his work succeeded and the people listened and repented, he was satisfied. But when God met the penitence of the Ninevites with His mercy, and canceled His judgment upon them, Jonah was disappointed and fiercely angry, because his reputation as a

prophet had been ruined by the failure of his threatenings. Sitting down under the shade of a gourd, outside the city gates, he fretted and scolded like a petulant child; and finally passed out of sight altogether, under his withered gourd, as a spectacle of humiliation and contempt, all the glory of his really wonderful work blighted by the dark shadow of himself, which he threw over it in his folly and selfishness. There are many lessons taught us by this extraordinary life.

We see a man who succeeds most wonderfully in religious work so long as his work is congenial, but fails completely and utterly breaks down under the first severe test of real character. Jonah did splendid work so long as everything went all right; but the moment things went against him he went to pieces.

How many of us there are who, in the sunshine of religious prosperity, seem to be extraordinary workers and even ideal saints. It is the test that tells. Character is more than work, and God is leading us, if we will only let Him, through the tests which will bring us to the death of self, and to the place where He can use us as

"Only His messengers, ready

His praises to sound at His will,

Or willing should He not require us

In silence to wait on Him still."

We see in Jonah a man who obeys and serves God, as long as it suits him, but is a stranger to that obedience which knows no choice except the Lord's will. "Ye are My friends," the Master says, "if ye do whatsoever I command you." It is no evidence of friendship to Christ to do some things to please Him; to do much that is good and right. The true friend does whatsoever He commands.

We see in Jonah a man destitute of the true missionary spirit, a man who thought he was full of zeal, yet had no deep love for God or the souls of men. Jehu had zeal enough, but it was zeal for his own cause. Jonah represents those people who will work as hard as you please for their own cause, even for the Church, and the work which centers in their own sect, or family, or country, but they know nothing of the real missionary spirit. They care not for the Ninevites, the Chinese, or the Africans, and they think it unreasonable waste to pour out hundreds of thousands of pounds for the evangelization of the world, instead of spending it at home, and using it to promote the welfare of our own people.

When we disobey God, we shall soon want to leave His presence altogether. Adam's single sin soon led to Adam's separation from his Creator, and we find him hiding from the presence of God. It is idle to think that you can indulge in any act of disobedience and still look up in your Father's face and call yourself His child.

Jonah had no difficulty in finding means to carry on his purpose. The devil has his providences as well as the Lord. The ship was all ready, and it was going to the right place, and Jonah was soon on board and comfortably asleep in his berth. Alas, the saddest thing about backsliding is that it brings with it the devil's sedatives, and the soul can calmly sleep amid the fiercest storm, and complacently dream that all is well. There is nothing in all the judgments of God so terrible as a reprobate mind and a soul past feeling.

Jonah was a man pursued by God's police, and brought to his senses by the trials and troubles which he brought upon himself and others. Thank God for the mercy that will not let us rest in our self-complacency and sin. Happy for us that we have a Father who loves us well enough to hurt us, and drive us home to His loving breast. The saddest part of the trouble of the backslider is, that others have to suffer because of his sin and folly.

Jonah's shipmates were the first to feel the effects of his disobedience, and to wake him up to his foolhardy insensibility. Many a time it is not until our fortunes have been wrecked, and our families broken-hearted, that we find out the secret of all our troubles, and come back to Him who has smitten only that He might heal us, and broken only that He might bind us up.

What a pity that we should compel God to bring us back to Himself by the officers of judgment, instead of flying to the arms of His love, and choosing the blessing which He is determined we shall not lose.

We see in Jonah a man who had to die to himself before he could do any real good. The great lesson of Jonah's life is the need of crucifixion to the life of self. Our Savior has used the story of Jonah as the special type of His own death and resurrection, and we know that our Savior's cross is the pattern of ours, and that as He died so we should die to the life of self and sin. In the story of Jonah we see God trying to put Jonah out of his own way, so that God could bless him as He really wanted to do. Surely, if ever a man had a good chance to die, it was Jonah, and if he did not, it was his own fault. He speaks of that living tomb himself as the belly of Hades -- the very bosom of death, and the prayer that he uttered, when in those awful depths, certainly sounded like the voice of a man who meant what he said; and when he came forth it really did seem as if Jonah was going to be out of the question henceforth. But, alas, as we shall see later, he was only half dead yet. God cannot use any but a crucified man to preach about the crucified Savior.

When Jonah came forth from the depths of death he was ready to go anywhere that God wanted him; and when we are dead to self and sin we will not have any question to ask except this one: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Then we will go to Nineveh or China, or any place the Master sends us, with glad and willing hearts.

But we see in Jonah a man who, after all, was only half dead, notwithstanding all his suffering and humiliation. For a time he goes right on, faithful and obedient. He preaches to the Ninevites the preaching that God bids him, and the most wonderful revival that ever attended any ministry follows his words, until, from the king on the throne to the meanest of his subjects, the people of Nineveh are prostrate at the feet of Jehovah and pleading for mercy. But the moment that God hears their cry, and disappoints Jonah's predictions of their destruction, the prophet breaks completely down, and falls into a fit of petulance and anger, because God had failed to do what He had threatened, and destroyed his reputation as a prophet.

It was but another form of the same old self-life, A man may give up the selfishness that seeks its gratification in the pleasures of the world, and yet may seek the gratification of the same self-life in some religious form. A woman may cease to be the queen of society and the idol of her hero-worshippers, yet she may drink in the sweet delight of her influence and sway over the minds and hearts of men in her very work for Christ, and the influence that she wields over the hearts that she brings under her religious sway.

The orator, as he holds spellbound the hearts of thousands, even when he tells them of Jesus and salvation, may be just as selfish and self-conscious as the actor on the stage or the politician on the platform, who speaks only for his personal triumph and ambition. Jonah's very success was his snare, and led him to forget his Master's glory and the real good of the people that he was sent to save.

God never can use any man very much till he has grace enough to put himself entirely out of sight; for He will not give His glory to another nor share with the most valued instruments the praise that belongs to Jesus Christ alone.

We can never succeed in our service for God till we learn to cast our own shadow behind us and lose ourselves in the honor and glory of our Master. It is said that Alexander the Great had a famous horse that nobody could ride. Alexander at length attempted to tame him. He saw at a glance that the horse was afraid of his own shadow, and so, leaping into the saddle one day and turning the horse's head to the sun, he struck his spurs into the flanks of the noble steed, and dashed off like lightning. From that hour the fiery charger was thoroughly subdued, and he never gave his master any trouble again. He could no longer see his own shadow.

Oh, that we could look into the face of our Lord, and then forever forget ourselves! Then He could use us for His own glory, and afford to share with us the glory and gladness of our work.

We see in Jonah a man whom God had to humble in the dust to save him from destroying his own work.

God loves to make us partakers with Him in the fruits of our work. So He honored Moses and Samuel and Paul, and their names have come down to us associated with their blessed service for the Lord; but this was because they loved to forget themselves, and seek only their Master's glory. How different it was with poor Jonah! He was seeking his own glory, and God had to humiliate him, and let him fail altogether in the very thing he wanted. Surely, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." Surely he that would be chiefest may well become the servant of all; for the Master has said, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me; for he that will save his own life shall lose it, and he that will lose it shall keep it unto life eternal." "If any man serve Me let him follow Me, and if any man serve Me, him will My Father honor."

Poor Jonah lost his honor because he sought it, and Paul found it because he renounced it, and sought only to live that Jesus might be satisfied, even if Paul should be forever forgotten. This is the spirit of true service, and surely this is the solemn lesson that comes down to us through that humiliating spectacle, sitting, disappointed and rejected, under his withered gourd, after the most successful ministry ever given to a human life, but one which brought no recompense to him, because he did it for himself.

We see in Jonah the picture of a man who wants to die when he is least prepared to die. It was a very great mercy that God refused to take him at his word, when he cried with childish impatience, "Lord, I beseech Thee, take away my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live." Let us be very careful how we utter reckless prayers. Poor Elijah asked to die one day in a fit of discouragement, and we only hear of him once again as a prophet.

Jonah asked in a petulant moment that he might die, and from that moment Jonah disappears from the page of history, and passes into an oblivion which has upon it no ray of hope or light of recompense. The best way to be prepared to die is to be living for some high and noble purpose. The men that are ready to die are the men that are needed most to live for God and their fellow-men.

We learn one more lesson from Jonah's life, and that is the true secret how to die, and then how to live for God and our own highest interest and blessing.

Thank God, Jonah's life lifts our thoughts to another and a nobler life, even that of the Lord Jesus Christ, who has died for us, and taught us not only how to live with Him, but also how to die with Him, and live the life that has been crucified with Christ, and is alive for evermore.

Not for His own glory did Christ live and die, but for us and for His Father. He died for us that we might live; yes, He died for us that we might die, and then live the crucified life and the life that is dead to self and sin.

Only through His dying can we truly die. We never can crucify ourselves, but we can be crucified with Christ, and say, "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live not unto myself, but unto Him that died for me and rose again."

Thus let us learn to die, and thus let us live, and someday we shall know the meaning of these mighty words:

"He died for me that I might die

To Satan, self, and sin;

Oh death so deep, oh life so high!

Help me to enter in."

14. THE LAW OF SACRIFICE

"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." Matt. 16:24.

Here lies the great difference between the world's Gospel and the Lord's Gospel. The world says, when it bids you goodbye, "Take care of yourself." The Lord says, "Let yourself go, and live for others and the glory of God." The world says, "Have a good time. Look out for number one."

The man that lets go gets all, and the man who holds fast loses what he has, and the Lord's words come true, "Whosoever shall save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake shall find it."

The law of sacrifice is the greatest law in earth and heaven. It is written in every department of nature. We tread on the skeletons of thousands of generations that have lived and died that we might live. The very heart of the earth itself is the wreck of ages and the buried life of former generations. All nature dies and lives again, and each new development is a higher and larger life built on the ruins of the former. A grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die, or else be a shrivelled seed, but as it dies it lives and multiplies and grows into the beautiful spring, the golden autumn and the multiplied sheaves.

And so it is in the higher world as you rise from the natural to the spiritual. Everything that is selfish is limited by its selfishness. The river that ceases to run becomes a stagnant pool, but as it flows it grows fresher, richer, fuller.

If you turn your natural eye upon yourself, you cannot see anything. It is as you look out that the vision of the world bursts upon you. The very law of life is love, caring for others by giving away and letting go. It is self-destruction to be selfish.

The law of sacrifice is the law of God. God, who lived in supreme self-sufficiency as the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, gave Himself. God's glory was in giving Himself, and so He gave Himself in creation, in the beauty of the universe, so formed that every possible sort of happiness could come according to a natural law.

God gave Himself in Jesus Christ. "God so loved the world that He gave." He gave His best, gave His all, gave His only begotten Son. The law of God is sacrifice. He so loved that He gave. It is the law of Christ Himself. He came through God's sacrifice, and He came to sacrifice. He laid His honors down, left the society of heaven for a generation, and lived with creatures farther beneath Him than the groveling worm is beneath man. He made Himself one of us, and became a brother of this fallen race. Christ was always yielding and letting go, always holding back His power and not using it. He was always being subject to the will of the men beneath Him, until at last they nailed Him to the cross. His whole life was a continual refusing of Himself, carrying our burdens and sharing our sorrows. And so sacrifice is the law of Christ, "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ." The law of Christ is the bearing of others' burdens, the sharing of others'

griefs, sacrificing yourself for another.

It is the law of Christianity. It is the law of the saint. It is the only way to be saved. From the beginning it has always been so. It was so on Mount Moriah, where Abraham, the father of the faithful, gave up his only child, the child of promise. All along the way was marked by blood and sacrifice.

Not only did Abraham give up Isaac, but Isaac gave up his life, and all through his life he laid himself down for others. We know how Jacob served for his wife, and then did not get the one of his choice. His was a suffering life, a passive life, a patient life.

And so Joseph died to his circumstances. Because he was to rise so high he must go down as low; down not only into banishment, but into shameful imprisonment and almost into death. When Joseph was out of sight, and all God's promises concerning him seemed lost, and his prospects seemed hopeless, then God picked him up and set him on the world's throne.

Moses had to be a fugitive. Moses had to try and then fail, and for forty years God had to teach him and train him; and when at last Moses was out of sight, God gave him his desire. At the very last moment, Moses had to let go the prospect of entering the Promised Land.

The Master's last message to Peter was, "When thou wast young thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands and another shall gird thee, and carry whither thou wouldest not. This spake He, signifying by what death he should glorify God." And Jesus sent him to a life of crucifixion, to be yielded, submissive, surrendered and led about by others against his natural choice, till at last he should be crucified with downward head upon his Master's cross.

It is so easy to talk about this. The longer I live, the longer I know myself and friends, the more thoroughly I am satisfied that this is the great secret of failure in our Christian life. We go a little way with Jesus, but we stop at Gethsemane and Calvary. They followed Him in His ministry in Galilee. The Sermon on the Mount was splendid morality. They loved the feeding of the five thousand, and said, "What a blessed King He would be!" They would not have to work as they used to do. But when He talked about Calvary and the cross, for them as well as for Him, and how they must go with Him all the way, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can bear it?" And a few days after you could count them on your fingers. They were not willing to go to the cross.

I am sure this is where multitudes have stopped short. They have said "yes" to self and "no" to God, instead of "no" to self and "yes" to God. Oh, it is so much easier to talk than to live! A writer has said that there are three baptisms to be baptized with. First, the baptism of repentance, when we turn from sin to God. Second, the baptism of the Holy Ghost, when we receive the Holy Spirit to live in us. Third, the baptism into death, after the Holy Spirit comes in. The Holy Spirit makes your heart His home, and then you have to go with Christ into His own dying. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me." And so He said about Himself, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished." He was going out into deeper death, and His heart was all pent up with it, until He went down into Gethsemane, down to Joseph's tomb, down into Hades and passed through the regions of the dead and opened first the gates of heaven. That is what Jesus saw before Him after He was baptized on the banks of the Jordan.

Oh ye, who have received the baptism of the Holy Ghost, it is you who have to go down into His death. I know that in a sense we take all that by faith when we consecrate ourselves to Christ, and we count it all real, and God counts it all real too; but now we have to go through it step by step. I know God treats us as though it was accomplished and we were sitting yonder on the throne. But we must go through the narrow passage and the secret place of the stairs. There must be no trifling here. You may count it all done by faith, but step by step it must be written on the records of your heart.

Now, what does all this mean in our practical life? First, it is dying to self-will. After you consecrate yourself to God, then will come the tug of war, and tomorrow morning you will have the battle of your life. Just because you have given up your will the devil will want you to take it back. He will try to show you how unreasonable it is, how right it is that you should have your way. It will be a life-or-death struggle, perhaps, for days. Jesus went into the wilderness for forty days. The devil tried to have Him choose His own way, but He stood the test. He let His own will go. "I came not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me."

God could make Him a leader because He had been led. No man can govern until he has been governed. If God is going to make anything of you, you must let your will go into His hands. You will find a good many tests after the first surrender, but these are just opportunities for allowing the work to be done.

Then comes self-indulgence, doing a thing because you like to do it. No man has a right to do a thing because he enjoys it. I have no right to take my dinner merely because I like it. This makes me a beast. I take it because it nourishes me. Doing things because they please you, seeking your own interest, is wrong. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." We have no divine warrant to seek ourselves in anything. Seek God, and God will seek your good. Take care of the things of God and He will take care of you. "Look not any man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

Again, there is self-complacency, dwelling on the work that you have done. How easy, after performing some service or gaining some victory, to think, "How good!" How quickly this runs into vainglory! How many are more interested in what people think and say of them than of what they are themselves!

In the work of God there is nothing we need so much to guard against as vanity. The seraphim covered their faces with their wings; they covered their feet with their wings. They covered their faces because they did not want to see their beauty, and their feet because they did not want to see their service, nor did they wish that any one else should see them. They used only two to fly. Take care how you put temptation in another's way. It is all right to encourage workers with a "God bless you." But don't praise. God does not say, How beautiful! how eloquent! how lovely! how splendid! That is putting on a human head the crown that belongs to Jesus. We have no more right to take Christ's honors here than we have to sit on His throne and let angels worship us. We have to be careful when God uses us to bless human souls.

Philip, as soon as he led the eunuch to Jesus, got out of the eunuch's way. There are subtle spells that come between man and man, and between woman and woman, and between man and woman. They seem sweet and right, but you need much of the Holy Ghost to keep your spirit pure.

I am not talking here of sinful love. Surely, it is not needful to speak of that. I am thinking of a far more subtle and refined spell, which is at once dishonoring to God and dangerous to you. God keep us from every service, and every friendship, and every thought that is not in the Holy Ghost and not to the honor of Jesus alone.

Then there is self-confidence, that which feels its strength, spiritual or mental self-righteousness, power to be good or do good. We must lay all that aside and realize our utter nothingness. There is the self-life of sensitiveness, susceptibility to be wounded. There is selfish affection, wanting people to love you because you like to be loved. Divine love loves that it may bless and do good. You ought to love others, not because it pleases you but because it blesses them. Paul could say, "I am glad to spend and be spent for your sakes; notwithstanding the more earnestly I love you, the less I be loved." He does not say I will help you as long as you love your tears. You are weeping because you say I will help you as long as you love me. No, I gladly spend my last drop of blood to bless you at any cost, even when I know you do not appreciate me the least bit. That is what is the matter with you. People hurt you; they do not appreciate you. Well, spend and be spent all the more when you are the less loved.

Time would fail to tell of selfish desires, covetousness, selfish motives, selfish possessions, our property, our children, and they give us loads of trouble, and care, and worry, just because we insist on owning them. There are selfish sorrows. There is nothing more selfish than the tears we often shed. When God saw Israel weeping, He was angry, and said, "You have polluted My altar with your tears." You are weeping because you have not better bread. You are weeping because something else is dearer to you than God. You are weeping because you are not pleased or gratified.

Even our sacrifices and self-denials may be selfish. Yes, our sanctifications may be selfish. A sarcastic friend of mine used to say when he heard people testifying about their sinlessness, "Poor old soul, she committed the greatest sin of her life, she foretold the biggest lie." Self can get up and pray, and sit down and say, "What a lovely prayer!" Self can preach a sermon and save souls and go home, pat itself on the back and say, or let the devil say through him, "You did it splendidly; what a useful man you are!" Self can be burned to death and be proud of its fortitude. Yes, we can have religious selfishness as well as carnal selfishness.

How can we get rid of this? Well, above everything else, we must see the reality of the thing, we must see its danger, we must see that it is sin. We must look at it frankly and choose that it shall go. The worst is that it deceives us. It says, "How that fits somebody else, not me." God means you. Pass sentence of death upon it, or else it will pass sentence on you. You may keep it as long as you like. It is like the lovely little serpent with little spots on it like jewels. Ah, at the last, how it stings!

May God show us everything in us that will not stand the searching flames. Above everything, do not let us have a larger Gospel than we have a life. Having passed sentence of death upon ourselves, then let us take Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit to do the work. Don't try to fight it yourself. And then, when the test time comes, and God leads you out to meet it, BE TRUE. The test will come, but when the battle comes do not defend yourself, but say, "Lord let me die." Perhaps some one will try to provoke you. Perhaps some one will try to praise you. Just say again, "Lord, let me die." The Holy Spirit is able to take everything we dare to give, and give everything

we dare to take. Shall we dare to take Him for the death of our subtlest foe, and truly pray:

O Jesus, slay the self in me

By Thy consuming breath;

Show me Thy heart, Thy wounds,

Thy shame, And love my soul to death.

When the Shekinah flame came down,

E'en Moses could not stay;

So let Thy glory fill my heart,

And self for ever slay."

15. CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST

"Let us also go, that we may die with Him." John 11: 16.

This was an outburst of impetuous love from the heart of Thomas. The disciples had been vainly endeavoring to dissuade the Master from going back to Judea, because of the malignant hate which the resurrection of Lazarus had awakened on the part of His enemies, and the certainty of such hate being renewed in a dangerous form if He should return. "Master," they said, "the Jews of late sought to stone Thee, and goest Thou thither again?" But when Thomas saw that persuasions did not avail, and that the Lord was certainly going back to face His enemies, he cried in an impulse of desperation and devotion, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." This, does not refer to the death of Lazarus, but to the certain death which Jesus would incur should He return to the midst of His infuriated foes. It was the cry of a devoted soldier ready to follow his leader in the "forlorn hope," even into the jaws of danger and of death.

Thomas was wiser than he knew in the words he uttered. It is true he and his fellow-disciples did not immediately share their Master's fate, for, as Christ afterwards said to Peter, "Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now, but thou shalt follow Me afterwards."

But there was a deep and sacred sense in which they were to die with Him, even before the literal death which persecution and martyrdom were to bring to them. And there is a real and solemn sense in which these words are true of every disciple of Jesus Christ. For the death of our blessed Lord is not only the source of our salvation, but it is also a pattern of our life, and the secret of our crucifixion . . . "crucified with Christ."

There is an important sense in which we may die with Christ to our past life of sin. The first chapter in the believer's life is justification. This is founded upon the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it comes to us through the faith that reckons His death as ours, "For in that He died, He died unto sin once. . . . Likewise reckon ye yourselves also to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. . . . For he that is dead is freed from sin," or, as it literally means, "is justified from sin."

When God saves a man, He does not merely overlook his sin in kind and gracious clemency, but He settles for it completely and finally. And when He justifies a sinner, He not only overlooks his fault, but He declares him righteous, and puts him in the same position as if he had never sinned; or, rather, perhaps, as if he had been punished for his sin, and had thus satisfied all the demands of justice and law.

When Jesus Christ hung upon the Cross of Calvary He suffered as the Substitute of every sinner who should afterward believe in Him. Hidden somewhere in His wounded side we were there, and God counts it as if it were our death and our execution. This was the day of judgment for Christ and the believer. Every demand of justice was satisfied, every penalty executed, every debt paid. With Him we died to sin, and God recognizes us as if we had actually passed out of existence. The criminal was executed, and buried, and as a dead man the law can never touch him again.

But now, through Christ's resurrection we have come into a new life; and that life is utterly detached from the old sinful life. God recognizes us as though we were not the same persons who sinned, but new creatures, born out of heaven and standing in the same position before Him as Jesus Christ occupies. Thus the death of Christ, when reckoned ours, puts us in the place where we are justified and "accepted in the Beloved."

Surely, this is a glorious place for a guilty, hell-deserving man. O sinner, hasten to claim the blessed privilege of reckoning yourself to be "dead indeed unto sin" through Him. "Let us go, that we may die with Him," and then let us rise to live for Him who died.

There is a sense in which we may die with Him to the power of sin in our hearts and lives; for when Christ died on Calvary He died for our sinful nature. "God, sending His own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of God might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." "He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

These passages undoubtedly teach that the death of Jesus Christ was God's provision for our sanctification, just as much as for our justification, and that He bore on the Cross of Calvary not only our guilt and liability to punishment, but our sinful nature, with all the roots and springs of corruption which we inherited from a fallen head. It is our privilege, therefore, to reckon, not only that our past life of sin was expiated on the Cross, but that the principle of sin and the whole sinful man was crucified when Jesus died. It is our privilege, therefore, to lay that over upon Him, to reckon it crucified with Him, to refuse to recognize it any longer as having a right to control us, to repudiate it, and take our new life from His resurrection and reckon ourselves alive unto God through Jesus Christ. The secret of this is the reckoning of faith, and the deepest snare we shall meet in this life is the assault of Satan upon our faith by an appeal to our feelings. He will try to make you think, even after you have made a full surrender and renunciation of yourself to Him, that there is really no change, that your old sinful self is still there in all its power, and that this reckoning is a fiction and a falsehood. If you once listen to him and take counsel of your own heart, you will surely fall, but, if you refuse to believe him and hold fast to your reckoning, God will make it real. In the spiritual life the very principle of victory is faith. What you dare to claim and hold fast, God will make it true in your experience, and if you falter you shall always fall.

But we must enter into Christ's death moment by moment, in the actual living out of this transaction of faith. There is a point where we definitely yield and accept Him. But then it must be translated into all the details of our actual life, as He meets us in His providence and brings us face to face with the very experiences which introduce us into actual fellowship with his earthly life, and enable us to live it over again with Him. It is there we shall find the value and help of this blessed oneness with the Crucified. We shall not have gone very far till we shall find that our strength and goodness have quite failed us; and how comforting it is to realize at that moment that He does not expect from us either strength or goodness, but only to ignore our strength and goodness, and take Him instead as our all-sufficiency. Our business is to die with Him to all our own resources, and then to receive His fulness, "grace for grace." We shall learn gradually that we are no good in ourselves, and we shall come to know it without being discouraged. He has known it all the time, and He has simply been bringing us fully to find it out. We shall come at last to begin every battle with a surrender to Him and end it with a song, "Thanks be unto God that always leadeth us in

triumph through Christ Jesus."

Again, we shall often come to the place where our old positive nature and our self-asserting will springs to the front, and we find our struggles unavailing to subdue that will; and then again we shall learn with infinite joy that it is His business to subdue that will; that we have but to hand it over to Him, to the end that His love may chloroform it to death and "work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

Thus as we come into the conflict of fierce temptation we shall find Him in the front, and His reassuring voice will say to us, "Stand still and see the salvation of God. The battle is not yours, but God's." If we are wronged by injustice, misunderstanding, or misrepresentation we shall find that it is His wrong first, not ours, and we shall hear Him say to our persecutors and enemies, "Why persecutest thou Me?" and it will be such rest to "commit the keeping of our souls to Him in well-doing as unto a faithful Creator," and to die with Him even as He suffered and died, "as a lamb led to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb."

So also, when trouble and calamity confront us, instead of rushing impetuously for the help of man, or seeking some expedient of self-effort, we shall find ourselves falling into His hands, and recognizing that our trial is His first and ours only in fellowship with Him.

How beautiful the incident at Capernaum, where poor Peter suddenly found himself confronted with the demand of the Roman officers for their taxes, and embarrassed at his inability to pay the demand. How tenderly we are told that the Lord "prevented him," that is, anticipated his trouble, and even before Peter had said a word about it provided relief by sending him down to the sea to catch a fish with the coin of gold in its mouth. But with exquisite tact He added, "That take, and pay for Me and thee." "It isn't your tax only, Peter, but Mine first. I am bearing the heavy end of the burden and you are suffering with Me."

If we can thus recognize the trials of life as partnership with His sufferings and always put Him first, the things that have humiliated us, harassed us, and often become to us temptations to unbelief and sin will be changed from weights to wings, and will become blessed occasions for closer intimacy with our Lord, and nobler triumphs in His name.

Shall we thus die with Him? Shall we follow Him forth along that pathway of loneliness, shame, and sorrow, and at every step realize a closer fellowship with Him? And should the coming days bring to us a full rehearsal of all the story of His life and sorrow, let us never for a moment meet it alone, but always with Him. Should our pathway lie down the slopes of Olivet, and even lead us into the somber shades of Gethsemane, let us remember that He is only saying to us, "What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?"

"Ye are they that have continued with Me in My temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom as My Father hath appointed unto Me."

Should we go forth in these coming days to meet Him in the reproach and shame of the judgment hall, and the betrayal of some Judas, or even, harder still, the denial of some fondly loved Peter, oh, let us take Him with us through it all, and, meeting it in His Spirit, sweetly realize that we are simply dying with Him. And as the shadows deepen into the darkness of that cross, where for Him earth's sun ceased to shine, earth's friends forsook Him and fled, and even His Father's face for a

little while was clouded and turned away, oh, let us remember Him who, "for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame":

"Crucified with Christ, my Savior,

To the world and self and sin,

To the death-born life of Jesus

I am sweetly entering in.

In His fellowship of suffering,

To His death conformed to be,

I am going with my Savior

All the way to Calvary.

'Tis not hard to die with Jesus,

When His risen life we know.

'Tis not hard to share his sufferings,

When our hearts with joy o'erflow.

In His resurrection power

He has come to dwell in me,

And my heart is gladly going

All the way to Calvary."

16. THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Col. 3:1.

"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." Phil. 3:10.

These passages describe our attitude toward the resurrection of Christ, and the power which His resurrection is fitted to exercise upon our life and work. "If ye then be risen" -- literally, "If ye then were resurrected with Christ." There is a difference between "risen" and "resurrected." One may rise from one level to another; but when one is resurrected, he is brought from nothing into existence, from death to life, and the transition is simply infinite.

The great objection to all the teachings of mere natural religion and human ethics is, that we are taught to rise to higher planes. The glory of the Gospel is that it does not teach us to rise, but shows us our inability to do anything good of ourselves, and, laying us in the grave in utter helplessness and nothingness, raises us up into new life, born from above and sustained from heavenly sources. Christian life is not self-improvement, but is a supernatural and divine experience.

Now, resurrection cannot come until there has been death, and just as real as the death has been, so will be the measure of resurrection life and power. Let us not fear, therefore, to die, and to die to all that we would detach ourselves from, yea, to die to ourselves. We lose nothing by letting go, and we cannot enter in till we come out. "If we be dead with Christ, we shall also live with Him."

The passage in Colossians expresses the fact that we have already died and risen, and that we are now to take the attitude of those for whom this is an accomplished fact. The Apostle does not call upon us to die again with Christ and rise with Him anew, but he calls upon us to recognize the fact that we have done this, and now are expected to live on a corresponding plane. He tells them later in the passage, "For ye have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

In the sixth chapter of Romans this thought is much more fully worked out. "As many of us as were baptized into Christ," the Apostle says, "were baptized into His death. Therefore we have been buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Then, to emphasize more forcibly the finality of this fact, he says, "Knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him; for in that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God." Therefore, and in like manner, the Apostle bids us to "reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Christ Jesus," and to yield ourselves "unto God as those that are alive from the dead and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God."

Now, much of the teaching of the present day would bid us yield ourselves unto God to be crucified by a constant process of dying, but the Apostle says nothing of the kind here. On the

contrary, we are to yield ourselves unto God as those who have already died and are alive from the dead, recognizing the Cross as behind us; and for this very reason presenting ourselves to God, to be used for His service and glory. Have you never seen soaring in mid-heaven some bird, with mighty pinions spread upon the bosom of the air, and floating in the clear sky without a fluttering feather or apparently the movement of a muscle? It is poised in mid-air, floating yonder, far above the earth below; it does not need to rise, it has risen, and is resting in its high and glorious altitude. Very different is the movement of the little lark that springs from the ground, and, beating its wings in successive efforts, mounts up to the same aerial height to sing its morning song, and then returns again to earth. One is the attitude of rising, and the other is the attitude of "risen."

Perhaps you say, "How can I reckon myself dead when I find so many evidences that I am still alive, and how can I reckon myself risen when I find so many things that pull me back again to my lower plane?" It is your failure to reckon and abide that drags you back. It is the recognizing of the old life as still alive that makes it to be real and keeps you from overcoming it. This is the principle which underlies the whole system of grace, that we receive according to the reckoning of our faith. The magic wand of faith will lay all the ghosts that can rise in the cemetery of your soul; and spirit of doubt will bring them up from the grave to haunt you as long as you continue to question. The only way you can truly die is by surrendering yourself to Christ and then reckoning yourself dead with Him.

Should old traits of evil reappear; should old thoughts, evil tendencies, assert themselves, and say loudly and clamorously, "We are not dead," what then? If you recognize these things, fear them and obey them; you are sure to give them life, and they will control you and drag you back into your former state. But if you refuse to recognize them, and say, "These are Satan's lies, I am dead indeed unto sin, these do not belong to me, but are the children of the devil, I therefore repudiate them and rise above them" -- then God will detach you from them and make them to be really dead. You will find they were no part of you, but simply temptations which Satan tried to throw over you until they seemed part of yourself. This is the true remedy for all the workings of temptation and sin. It is an awful fact that when one counts himself wicked he will become wicked.

There is a strange story written by a gifted mind, describing a man who was two men alternately. When he believed himself to be a noble character he was noble and true, and lived accordingly; but when the other ideal took possession of him he went down accordingly. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Our reckonings reflect themselves in our realities; therefore God has made this principle of faith to be the mainspring of personal righteousness and holiness, and the subtle, yet sublime, power that can lead men out of themselves into the very life of God.

Our attitude will influence our aim. People live according to their standing. The high-born child of nobility carries in his bearing and his mien the consciousness of a noble descent, and so those who have a title to a heavenly kingdom, and the consciousness of their high and heavenly rank, walk as the children of a king. The remainder of Paul's letter is devoted to working out this most practical idea, that, because we have risen with Christ, therefore let us live accordingly.

The argument against lying is: we have put off the old man and put on the new man. We have ceased to be paupers and become princes. We have put on the new man, therefore let us put on kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, and over all that charity, which is a

perfect girdle that binds all the garments together. The best of all our robes is Christ Himself; and we are to put on Christ.

This resurrection life is intensely practical. The Apostle brings it into touch with the nearest relationship of life, the family circle, the position of masters and servants, and all the secular obligations of life. It is to affect our whole conduct and aims and lead us to walk with Him wherever we are called.

This leads us to notice the practical power there is in this glorious fact, that we have been raised up together with Christ. It has power, in the first place, to confirm our assurance of salvation, because the resurrection of Christ was the guarantee that the ransom price was paid and the work of atonement complete. When He came forth triumphant from the tomb, it was evident to the universe that the purpose for which He went there was fulfilled, the work He undertook satisfactorily done, and the Father was satisfied with His finished atonement. Therefore, faith can rest upon His resurrection as an everlasting foundation, and say, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again."

Again, the resurrection of Christ is the power that sanctifies us. It enables us to count our old life and our former self annihilated, so that we are no longer the same in the eyes of God, or of ourselves; and we may with confidence repudiate ourselves, and refuse either to obey or fear our former evil nature. The risen Christ Himself comes to dwell within us, and become in us the power of our new life and victorious obedience. It is not merely the fact of the resurrection, but the fellowship of the Risen One that brings us our victory and our power. We have learned the meaning of the sublime paradox, "I have been crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." This is the only true and lasting sanctification, the indwelling life of Christ, the Risen One, in the believing and obedient soul.

Christ's resurrection has a mighty power to energize our faith and encourage us to claim God's answers to our prayers, and ask difficult things from God. What can be too difficult or impossible after the open grave and the stone rolled away? God is trying to teach us "the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, "according to His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand." Christ's resurrection is the pledge of all we can ask for, and if we pray in "the power of His resurrection," we will take much more than we have been doing.

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is the secret of power for service. The testimony of His resurrection is always peculiarly used by the Holy Spirit as the power of God unto the salvation of men. It was the chief theme of the ministry of the early apostles. They were always preaching of Jesus and the Resurrection. It gives a peculiar attractiveness to Christian life and work. Many Christians look as gloomy as if they were going to their own funerals. We heard not long ago of a little girl who met some very sad-looking people on the road, and she said, "Mother, those are Christians, aren't they?" And when the mother asked her why she thought so, she said, "They look so unhappy."

This is the type of Christianity that comes from the cloister and the crucifix. This is not the Easter type, and certainly it is not the higher type. The religion of Jesus should be as bright as the blossoms of the spring, the songs of the warbling birds, and the springing pulses of reviving

nature. Our Lord met the women on that bright morning with the cheering message, "All hail," and so He would meet each one of us on the threshold of our Christian life, and bid us go forth with the joy of our Lord as our strength. This joy must spring from the resurrection and be maintained by life in the heavenlies with its ascended Lord. This is the message that a sad and sinful world needs today. Its motto must not be the Ecce homo of the judgment hall, but the glad All hail! of the Easter dawn. The more of the indwelling Christ and the resurrection life there is in Christian work, the more will be its living power to attract, satisfy, and save the world.

There is power in Christ's resurrection to enable us to meet the hardest places in life and endure its bitterest trials. And so we read in Philippians that the power of His resurrection is to bring us into the knowledge of the fellowship of His sufferings, and make us conformable unto His death. We go into the resurrection life that we may be strong enough to suffer with Him and for Him.

There is a very remarkable passage in Isaiah which tells us of those that "mount up with wings as eagles"; but immediately afterwards we find the same persons coming down to the ordinary walks of life, "to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint." It would seem as if the mounting up was just intended to fit them for the running and walking, and that the higher experiences of grace and glory were designed to enable them to tread the lower levels of toil and trial.

It is in keeping with this that the Apostle speaks of glorying in tribulation. "Glory" expresses the highest attitude of the soul, and "tribulation" the deepest degree of suffering. And so it would teach us that when we come to the deepest and lowest place we must meet it in the highest and most heavenly spirit. This is going down from the Mount of Transfiguration to meet the demoniac in the plain below, and cast out the power of Satan from a suffering world. Yes, these are the sufferings of Christ. The power of His resurrection is designed to enable us to rise to all the heights of His glorious life, and like Him go forth to reflect our blessing upon the lives of others, and find a sweeter joy in the ministrations of holy love than in the ecstasies of divine communion.

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