

# Garden of the Heart - Part 3

by J.R. Miller

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*J.R. Miller's sermon emphasizes the importance of guarding our sacred trusts and living faithfully in the present to find true rest in Christ.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 26:3, Matthew 5:9, Matthew 25:21, Romans 15:2, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, Galatians 6:2, Philippians 4:6-7, 1 Timothy 6:20, James 1:27, 1 Peter 5:7

**Topics:** "Faithfulness", "Rest in Christ"

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## Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the importance of guarding the sacred trusts God has given us, urging believers to live each day with purpose and faithfulness. He illustrates that our responsibilities, whether in relationships, duties, or our Christian walk, require diligence and a commitment to purity, akin to the ermine's desire to keep its fur unspotted. Miller encourages Christians to find rest not in escaping life's struggles but in fulfilling their duties with a heart at peace, drawing strength from Christ. He concludes by highlighting the need for comfort and the role of peacemakers, reminding us that our actions should uplift others and reflect God's love. Ultimately, he calls for a life lived in accountability to God, where we report our daily actions and intentions to Him.

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## Transcript

Garden of the Heart

J. R. Miller, 1906

Guarding Our Trust

We cannot change yesterday-that is clear,

Or begin on tomorrow until it is here;

So all that is left for you and for me--

Is to make today as sweet as can be.

There is a serious responsibility in living. Christ commits something to us, something of His to each one of us, which we are set to guard, to keep, to use, to bring to its best, and at last to restore to Him, unharmed, unwasted. Jesus could say to His Father, as He came to the end of His life, referring to the lives entrusted

to Him, "I guarded them, and not one of them perished--but the son of perdition." When we come home at the close of our life we should be able to say to our Master: "All that You gave me, I have guarded and nothing has been lost out of my hands through any fault, neglect, or failure of mine."

Paul charged Timothy to guard "that good thing" which was committed unto him, referring to the interests of the gospel. Timothy was a young man. Young manhood was his, to guard and keep, and no trust could be more sacred.

It is said of the little creature, the ermine, that it will die rather than let any pollution touch its white fur. This fur is used for lining or facing certain official garments--for example, the robes of judges. The word ermine is used, therefore of the judge's office in token of the perfect rectitude and incorruptibleness which should distinguish the man who occupies the position. We say the judge must keep his ermine unspotted. So it should be with every Christian young man. He wears God's ermine. This is a world of evil--but he must keep his garments white, his life pure and clean, as he passes through it. He must be willing to suffer, to make any sacrifice in guarding the whiteness and purity of his life. The trouble with too many of us--is that we are not willing to fight in guarding the sacred trust committed to us. We yield too easily to the tempter; we fall in too readily with the world in its way.

To everyone, some good thing is committed by the Master, something of His that we must carry through this world, safely guarding it all the way, and present it to Him at last. Is any trust more sacred than that which is committed to a mother when a baby is laid in her arms? It is God's child, not the mother's alone. She is to guard it for God.

Every new friend who comes into our life, is a trust committed to us. We usually think of our friendships as privileges which bring us joy and benefit. But the truest thought of friendship is that it gives us the opportunity of serving, of helping, of guarding another. It is a holy moment when we receive a new friend. It is another life committed to us, that we may be a blessing to it that we may add to its beauty, that we may be shelter and protection to it.

A good family name is also something committed to us. If a father has won honor for himself by a noble and worthy life, by a ministry of kindness and good deeds, he bequeaths his name to his children as a heritage--something committed to them which they are to guard from stain. As Christians, too, we have the holy name of Christ entrusted to us. Wherever we go we bear it, and must sacredly guard it. If we do anything unworthy, we dishonor that name. The responsibility of being a Christian, is a very serious one.

We are to guard that which is committed unto us. It is not ours to do with as we please. Always that good thing committed unto us, whatever it is, belongs not to us--but to God. We shall have to account for it. When he was asked, "Where is Abel your brother?" Cain resented the question. "Am I my brother's keeper?" He would have disclaimed responsibility--but he could not. He was indeed his brother's keeper. "The voice of your brother's blood cries unto Me from the ground."

What our Master wants of us, is that we be faithful to every trust. Faithfulness is a great word. It is the word which our Lord used in speaking of the judgment. Those who have been faithful shall be rewarded, whether their faithfulness was in small or large matters. We are living in days of vast things--great corporations dealing in millions, great transactions involving hundreds of millions. Some of us come to think that it is scarcely worth while to do business with dollars and cents. One hundred dollars, a thousand, five thousand dollars are figures so small in comparison with the enormous sums in which the world's great transactions are made--that our little affairs seem of no account whatever. But he who is faithful in

dealing with his five dollars--is approved just as highly by God--as he who is faithful in handling his twenty million.

An invalid writes from California that she had consecrated her life to missionary work, hoping to go to one of the great mission fields. Instead of this, however, she has spent the years thus far in a sick room. We know, however, that Jesus is just as well pleased with what she has done, suffering for Him in sweet patience, making her chamber of pain--a sanctuary of prayer and praise, as if she had been toiling in India, teaching the children, working among the women, or visiting the sick in hospitals. Faithfulness is doing what God gives us to do--and doing it patiently, sweetly, songfully. "He who does the will of God abides forever."

The divine command is, "be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life." But "unto death" seems a long stretch of time. We fear we cannot hold out so long. Even a year sometimes seems a great while to continue in diligence without fainting by the way. God knows this, knows how long the way is, and deals very kindly with us, breaking our years into months and days. It will greatly simplify our faithfulness, if we make it a daily matter, taking up each morning only the duty of the one short day. Anybody can carry a heavy load, or stand a sore strain, or keep up a keen struggle--for one day. Anyone can be true to God, devoted, loyal, obedient, and submissive, for such a little space.

"Since time began,

Today has been the friend of man;

But in his blindness and his sorrow

He looks to yesterday and tomorrow."

Mr. Ruskin's motto was "Today." He had the watchword engraved on a block of chalcedony which always lay beside him on his table where he did his work. This watchword ruled all his life. He lived in today. He omitted no duty which belonged in its schedule. He never fretted about anything that did not belong in today. There is no better word for any of us to take as our motto. We cannot do anything with yesterday; whether it was well lived, or left a blank, it must stand as it is. We can amend nothing in its record, strike out nothing; add nothing that was left out. Tomorrow we cannot yet touch to make it beautiful. When it comes--it will be soon enough to take it up. But today is ours. It is only a little space of time, and if we put all our whole soul into it--we can make it almost perfect. If we live it in the sight of God, and do our day's work in the light of heaven, we can fill it with beauty and with good, so that it shall shine as a bright star among the days. Let the curtain drop of yesterday, hiding it and cutting it off completely; and on tomorrow, shutting out all alluring or anxious view of it--so that we may see only today. Then live intensely in this little space of time. Fill its hours with splendid faithfulness. Skimp nothing. Leave no task undone. Shirk no duty. Postpone no task which belongs to today. Do everything beautifully--and not a moment will be wasted. Let "Be perfect" be your impelling, inspiring motto.

Fill the day with love. Forget yourself and think of others. If there is a call for kindness, show the kindness now, today; it may be too late tomorrow. If a heart hungers for a word of appreciation, of commendation, of cheer, of encouragement, say the word today. The trouble with too many people--is that they fill the day with neglects, with postponements, with omissions, with idle words and idle silences. We do not realize vividly enough, that there are many things which if not done today, need not be done at all. If we have slept through the hours when duty waited, we may as well then sleep on.

Let us learn well the lesson of "Today." If we will master this one secret, we shall have the key to a beautiful and successful life. No one ever can fail, who always makes today what he might make it. On the other hand, thousands of life failures are caused by letting today pass empty.

Begin tomorrow morning. Make the day a shining one. Rise early and get God's blessing. Give the day to God and yourself to God for the day. Regard the day as the most important day of your life, the day whose influence will pour down through all the future, the day whose deeds, words, decisions, and achievements will mold all your tomorrows. Decline no duty, however unpleasant--a duty not done will leave a blank in this day's record, and a trail of regret in days and days to come. Never loiter on the way. Haste not--but rest not. Give every moment something worth while to keep. Love God, love your fellow men. Live today as you would live it if you knew it were your last day--live it for God and for judgment.

Every day which we make beautiful by our faithfulness, lifts our feet to a new and higher plane, and sets a better standard of living for us. We should never go back again to the things we have left behind. Perfection is the goal set before us, and we are never to cease striving for it. If we can be faithful to our trust for one day, we can be faithful another, and then another day, ever climbing upward. That should be our aim until self has been altogether forgotten, lost, and left behind--in the absorbing passion to please God and do His will in all things and guard everything, small and great, which He entrusts to us.

"If I could live to God for just one day,  
One blessed day, from dawn of light,  
Until purple twilight deepened into night,  
A day of faith, unfaltering, trust complete,  
Of love unfeigned and perfect charity,  
Of hope undimmed, of courage past dismay  
Of heavenly peace, patient humility-  
No hint of duty to constrain my feet,  
No dream of ease to lull to listlessness,  
Within my heart no root of bitterness,  
No yielding to temptation's subtle sway,  
Methinks in that one day would so expand  
My soul to meet such holy, high demand  
That never, never more could hold me bound  
This shriveling husk or self that wraps me round,  
So might I henceforth live to God always."

The Lesson of Rest

No words Jesus spoke have found welcome in more hearts, than His promises of rest to weary and heavy laden ones. No other word touches the deep need of human lives, as this word does. What is this rest which Christ gives? It is not rest from labor, for work is one of the laws of life, and is necessary to health, growth, and happiness.

"Rest is not quitting

The busy career;

Rest is but fitting

One's self to one's sphere."

The world's thought is that if we can get away from trouble, struggle, need, and suffering--that we shall find rest. In one of Job's complaints, he laments that he had ever been born, or that he had not died before his eyes saw the light. "There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary are at rest." But there is nothing noble in such a bitter cry. The rest of the grave is not the rest that Christ promises.

Nor can we ever find rest by fleeing from the place of God's appointment, because it is a place of suffering. In one of the Psalms the writer is in great trouble, and cries to God to help him. Then he says:

"Oh that I had wings like a dove!

Then would I fly away, and be at rest."

This, too, was a mistaken longing. The place where he was--was the very place in which God wanted him to be, and he could never have found rest by fleeing from it. We can find rest, only in the place of duty. Only the other day one wrote: "I wish I could leave all this tangle, this perplexity about money, this need for struggle." But he cannot get away. He is face to face with the necessity for courage, for action, for work, and he cannot escape from it. Then even if he could flee out of it all--he would not find rest. An old writer said about the wish in the Psalm: "David should have been praying for the strength of an ox to bear his trouble, not for the wings of a dove to flee away from it." That is the only way to find rest. We must stay in our place, perform our duty, bear our burden, and do God's will. That is the footpath to peace.

The rest which Christ gives is rest in the soul--not external ease. One may have it in all its sweetness and fullness, and yet have to toil unceasingly, and endure continual suffering and pain. Some of the holiest Christians the world has ever known, have been the greatest sufferers--but meanwhile nothing has been able to break their rest.

Christ's call is not a call to less earnest living; rather it is a call to still greater activity, to more wholehearted service, to work which will count for more. They only can do their work well--who have this rest in their hearts. The restless mind is unfitted for the best work.

The prophet says, "In quietness and in confidence, shall be your strength." The man who accomplishes most, is the man who has calmness in his heart. The prophet says again, "He who believes, shall not be in haste." Some people are always in feverish haste. They rush restlessly from morning until night. This makes them excited, flustered, fretted. The commentaries tell us that the words may be translated, "He who believes shall not fuss." He who has his mind set on God is not in haste. He has the quietness of God in his soul. He is complete master of himself, and never becomes excited. Nothing hinders more in life

than hurry.

It is Christ's rest which we need, in order to make our lives calm and strong. Restlessness makes us weak. It unnerves our hand, so that our work is not well done. It disquiets our mind, so that we cannot think clearly. It disturbs our faith, so that we lose our hold upon God and eternal things. We can do our best work in any sphere--only when we are at peace with God. This rest of Christ, instead of sapping our energy and making us less active and enthusiastic in our Master's service--will give us a new secret of strength, and put into our hearts a new impulse to work. Our work lacks power because we are not at rest. Our spiritual life lacks depth--it is too much like the noisy, fussy stream which splutters down the hillside, and too little like the quiet lake that is noiseless and still, its peaceful depths undisturbed by the surface storms. One day of quiet work with the rest of Christ in the heart--will do more for the kingdom of God than a whole month of nervous, restless, fretted activity.

There are two promises of rest: First, Jesus said, "I will give you rest." Then He said, "You shall find rest." He gives rest at once to those who come to Him--but it is not the full and complete rest. Rest is a divine gift--but it is also a lesson which we have to learn.

It is not only the rest of forgiveness--but a rest which extends to all the life, to the desires, the ambitions, the cravings; a rest which holds all the life in its sway. The lesson is not easy. To teach a human life, with its mighty energies and sublime capacities, to be still--is not an easy matter. It is a task that requires years.

The lesson is learned by taking Christ's yoke upon us. A yoke is a symbol of submission. Captive kings put their necks under the yoke of their conquerors. A yoke also implies service. Animals are yoked together that they may draw a load. We are yoked with Christ. We enter upon a life which our Master shares with us. If we have a duty or a task--He walks beside us. If it is a sorrow we are called to endure--He shares it. Every burden we have to carry--He carries it. In all our afflictions--He is afflicted. To be yoked with Christ is the highest honor that could be ours.

We must also enter Christ's school and learn of Him, if we would find the larger, fuller measure of this rest which is promised. Each new experience is a new lesson set for us by our great Teacher. There will come to you a sharp temptation tomorrow. While God permits it, He does not mean to have you sin. He does not mean to make life hard for you. He lets you be put to the trial--that you may learn to resist, to come out victorious and strong. Every temptation is a lesson. Even Jesus learned, by the things that He suffered. If a new duty comes to our hand, a new task a new responsibility, God has turned another page in your lesson book for you.

The Christian graces all have to be learned. They do not come naturally to any one. Paul said, "I have learned, in whatever state I am, therein to be content." It is a satisfaction to us to know that he had to learn to be contented, and that he was well on in years before he had mastered the lesson. So we have to learn to be patient, to be meek, giving a soft answer to hard words, to insults, to wrongs. We have to learn to be forgiving towards those who injure us.

We have to learn to be unselfish. Selfishness stands in the way of our obtaining the fullness of Christ's rest. It is hard for us to give up our own way, our own interest, and our own comfort. Many a man's heaviest burden--is himself. Unselfishness is one of the longest and hardest lessons we have to learn. But we must learn it, for we cannot know the joy of perfect rest until we get our selfishness mastered.

These are hints of the meaning of the Master's words, "Learn of Me... and you shall find rest unto your souls." Dr. Babcock's little poem, "School Days," interprets life to us in this way:

"Lord, let me make this rule,

To think of life as a school,

And try my best

To stand each test,

And do my work,

And nothing shirk.

Some day the bell will sound,

Some day my heart will bound,

As with a shout

That school is out

And lessons done,

I homeward run!"

In attaining the fullness of Christ's rest, we must stay in Christ's school until the end. We must have lessons, lessons, continually. Everyone who comes before us sets a little lesson for us. We say this person tries us. Well, that is just the reason we need to see him often--until we have learned to keep sweet. Sickness comes, that in the quiet of the darkened room, we may learn the lesson of patience, trust and peace. People think a season spent in a sick room is lost time. Perhaps no days of our life will mean as much to us at the end--as the days we have spent in pain, shut away from active life. Sudden danger comes, not to startle us--but to teach us not to be startled by any alarm, any terror, since God is keeping us. One of Alice Palmer's hymns was written after a time of great danger. While she was lying ill, lightning struck the house, shattering it, destroying the room next to hers. She was not disturbed. Then she wrote a hymn of this experience.

"He shall give His angels charge

Over you in all your ways.

Though the thunders roam at large,

Though the lightening round me plays,

Like a child I lay my head

In sweet sleep upon my bed."

Many Christians seem never to learn this lesson of rest. Their faith in God seems to do little for them. They tremble before every smallest danger. They are afraid of tomorrow lest it bring poverty or pain. But there

are no accidents in the believer's life. God watches over each of His children. We say we believe these things. Why, then, do we not have the rest? Let us get the lesson: "Learn of Me... and you shall find rest unto your souls."

### The Message of Comfort

God loves to be a comforter. His heart is ever tender and compassionate toward human pain and suffering. One of the great chapters of Isaiah opens with these words, "Comfort, comfort My people, says your God." The people were in exile--but now the period of their captivity was drawing to an end, and the messengers were sent to speak words of comfort and cheer.

When Dr. Watson resigned his church in Liverpool after long service, he said that if he were beginning his ministry, instead of closing it, there were three things he would do: He would preach shorter sermons; he would be more attentive to his English; and he would preach more comfortingly. Perhaps it would be a good thing if all who preach would note these wise counsels. It may be that our sermons are too long. It is certain that not all of us give sufficient heed to our English. But perhaps we err most--in not preaching more comfortingly to the people who come to hear us.

A professor in a theological seminary said to the student: "Never fail in any service to speak a word of comfort. No congregation, however small, ever assembles, but there is in it at least one person in sorrow who will go away unhelped if in Scripture lesson, hymn, prayer, or sermon--there is nothing to comfort a mourner, or to lift up a heavy heart." An American preacher said: "I never look over a congregation of people waiting for a message from my lips without thinking of what burdens many of them are carrying, through what struggles they are passing, what sorrows they are enduring, and how much they need comfort and encouragement, that they may be able to go on in their pilgrim journey."

Comfort was to be the theme of the ministry of the Old Testament prophets. When we look into the Bible--we find it full of comfort from beginning to end. On every page God is telling His people that He loves them, that He is their friend, and that He wants to do them good. There is not a chapter in the Scriptures which does not in some way reveal or declare, divine mercy. That is what makes the Bible such a dear and precious book to the weary, the struggling, the disappointed, the wronged, the bereaved, and the lonely. Wherever they open it they find the divine sympathy, the divine love, promises of help, of strength, of comfort. So long as there are tears and sorrows, broken hearts and crushed hopes, lives bowed down, and spirits sad and despairing--so long will the Bible be a book which is full of encouragement, light, hope, help, and strength for earth's weary ones. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort!" 2 Corinthians 1:3

We need great wisdom for the ministry of comfort. Some who have it in their hearts to be comforters of others, altogether fail in their efforts. Job's friends, when they had learned of his trouble, came to sympathize with him. But, instead of comforting him, they made his trouble only the harder to bear, by their ill advised words, telling him that his afflictions were in punishment of his sins, and pitying him because he was enduring sore divine judgments. We can sympathize with him when he cried: "Miserable comforters are you all!"

We need to make sure that we understand God's way of giving comfort. This is beautifully illustrated in the message in Isaiah, "Comfort My people, says your God." These two little possessive pronouns are wonderfully suggestive--"my" and "your"; "My people," "your God." The people were in exile--but they were still God's people. He had not cast them off, though they had sinned. Could any other comfort mean more

to our hearts, than to know that God calls us His children? Yet that is our comfort in every hour of suffering, in every sorrow we have to bear. This was the comfort which came to Jesus Himself on the cross. In the darkness He lost sight of God's face for a time. It seemed as though He was forsaken. But in the desolate blackness about Him He still knew that God was His--"My God! My God!" He cried. In the darkness of any sorrow the friends of Christ may always say this. To God's word, "My people," they may answer back, "My God."

There is another suggestive word in the message. "Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem." It was the Hebrew expression for the lover's wooing. The words were those with which a man would plead at a maiden's heart. That is the way God bids His prophets to comfort Jerusalem. That is the way, too, He would have us comfort His children who are in sorrow.

One of the most beautiful words in this great book of Isaiah occurs in the last chapter. God is speaking of the return of blessing to His people after the captivity. "I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream." Then He adds: "As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort." Isaiah 66:13. One of the favorite figures of Isaiah is that of a mother nursing her children and tenderly cradling them in her own bosom. Here it is still the mother who is in the prophet's thoughts--but it is the grown man instead of the infant that he sees coming back with wounds and weariness upon him--to receive his mother's comfort.

God's first coming to us, is in our mother. He could not come then to us otherwise. Infancy could not understand God in His majesty, glory, and greatness. So our mother's tenderness, yearning, devotion, and fondness are from God, revealing of God's own heart, God Himself coming to the child in the mother. We may never be afraid that we can overstate the tenderness and care of God's love. Indeed, we are apt to put God too far off, thinking of Him too much in His majesty and greatness. Sinai is not the truest revealing of Him. Jesus with little children in His arms, or a mother comforting her hurt child, is better.

The word comfort comes from a root which signifies to strengthen. When God comforts us--He does not take away the sorrow. The loneliness is still ours. He does not give back the loved one who has died. Instead of this, He gives us strength to go on in the lonely path without the accustomed presence. He helps us to bear the sorrow--and still sing. He comforts by strengthening. This divine strength comes to us in many ways. Other loved ones left, mean more to us since the break in the circle. We see beauties in them which we had never seen before. The fact that one is gone makes us conscious that we shall not always have even those that now remain, and thus they grow dearer to us. Sorrow draws the household closer together. It makes all more patient with one another, more thoughtful, more kind, more forbearing. It is wonderful how much more comfort we get from those who are living, after bereavement, than we did before. Then the memories of the beautiful lives which have been taken away, become a source of inspiration and strength to us.

Not all sorrow, however, comes through bereavement, and not all of God's comfort is for the bereft. In the case of the people of Israel to whom God sent His prophets with the message of comfort--the sorrow was because of the exile. They had been taken away into captivity. They had been broken as a nation and carried into a strange land. Now the bidding was, "Comfort My people, says your God." They had been crushed and broken--but not destroyed. They would come again from their humiliation, prepared for new glory.

We do not need to go back to ancient history, to find parallels to this experience. The life of earth is full of its captivities, its times of suffering, and its periods of sickness. Many who have had no bereavements, need God's comfort quite as much as those who have had many sorrows. Writers of the history of ancient times, tell us of the benefits which the Jewish nation received from the captivity in Babylon. Before they were carried away--their besetting sin was idolatry. They were continually turning from the true God--to serve the gods of the heathen! But their stay in exile cured them of this sin. In other ways, too, were they benefitted by their captivity. This was God's intention in permitting them to be carried away. The captivity was not an accident. Those seventy years were not lost years. The people were not out of God's thought, nor out of God's care, while away from their own land. God kept His eye upon them, and made their time of captivity, to be a most profitable period for them.

It is the same in the experience of God's children everywhere. There are breaks in prosperity. There are times of sickness, when men are taken away from activity, when their work ceases, and their hands hang down in enforced idleness. There are business failures, experiences which seem disastrous, when the work of years is swept away--when great plans come to nothing. Yet none of these trials are intended to be destructive. True success is not merely a career with no checks, no interruptions, no defeats and failures. We are here rather to grow into godly men. God wants to make something of us--to cleanse us of the evil in us--and to form us into the image of Christ. Ofttimes He can do this only by allowing us to fall under sore discipline.

A musician ordered from a violin maker, the best instrument he could make. At length the musician was sent for to come and try his instrument. As he drew the bow across the strings his face clouded and he became angry. Lifting the instrument he dashed it to pieces on the table, paid the price he had contracted to pay, and left the shop. But the violin maker gathered up the broken pieces and set to work to remake the instrument. Again the musician was sent for, and drew the bow across the strings as before. The violin was perfect. He asked the price. "Nothing," the violin maker replied. "This is the same instrument you broke to pieces. I put it together, and out of the shattered fragments, this perfect instrument has been made." That is the way God does oftentimes with men's lives. They are not what they ought to be. Outwardly they may seem very beautiful--but no sweet music comes from them. They are lacking in spirituality, and the likeness of Christ does not appear in them. Then God permits them to be broken in sorrow or suffering--and with the fragments He makes a new life which yields praise, honor, and blessing.

There ought to be unspeakable comfort for us in this teaching. To many, life seems only a failure. It is full of disappointments. The things we seek elude us, and our hands are empty after years of hoping and striving. There is much sorrow in the world. Many are discouraged and disheartened. It is to these, that God's comfort comes. This is our Father's world, and He never forgets one of His children. We need not be cast down or give up in despair, whatever our experiences may be. The poet's word is true:

"God's in His heaven-

All's right with the world."

But that is only half the truth. "God's in His heaven," truly--but God is also on His earth--always near to each one of His children. He is making us--that is the meaning of the experiences we are having. If only we will leave our lives in His hands, only good can ever come to us.

On Being a Peacemaker

No one of the Beatitudes has a greater promise, than that for the peacemakers. "They shall be called the children of God," said the Master. This must be because they are like God. God is a peacemaker, and we become His children just in the measure in which we are peacemakers.

In one of the prophets, God reveals His desire for the peace of His people by saying: "I know the thoughts that I think toward you--thoughts of peace." Always God desires His children to have peace. He wishes them to be at peace with Him, to be reconciled to Him, accepting His grace and love, and entering into fellowship with Him. He wishes them to have His peace, the very peace of God, in their hearts, amid all the trials and sorrows of life. Christ bequeathed His peace to His friends. "My peace I give unto you."

Then He wants them to be at peace among themselves. Strife between brothers is unseemly, undivine. If we are God's children--we will share with Him all these desires for peace.

In a narrower sense, a peacemaker is one who seeks to cure dissensions, to bring together those who are in any way estranged, to remove misunderstandings, and to promote peaceable relations among men. It is a noble mission, one to which every follower of Christ should be heartily devoted. The blessing upon the peacemaker is so great, so exalted, and so divine--that everyone should be eager to win it.

One way to be a peacemaker--is to live a peaceable life oneself. Perhaps there has been too little attention paid to the cultivation of the graces of Christian life. Doctrinal soundness has been insisted upon as a test of Christian life--more than the graces of the Spirit and beauty of character has been. An irritable temper is too often regarded, not, indeed, as a quality to be admired and commended--but, at the worst, as an excusable infirmity, one that must be charitably tolerated, a weakness so common among good people that no one can reprove his neighbor for it. So many Christian men and women are touchy and easily offended, so easily hurt and so likely to hold a grudge--that it seems necessary to leave a wide margin in defining what true religion requires of its followers in the matter of patience and forbearance.

But the teaching of Jesus on this point is very clear. He insists on love, not merely as a fine sentiment--but as a quality of daily life, affecting all its relations and its contact with others. "But I tell you--Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek--turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic--let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile--go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." Matthew 5:39-44. There would seem to be no place left in this teaching for resisting wrong, for resentment, for retaliation. Certainly strife is not commended by our Master.

In the epistles, too, there is many and exhortation to peaceable living. For example, Paul counsels Christians, as much as in them lies, to live peaceably with all men. If there must be quarreling, it should not be the fault of the Christian. He must not begin it. It must not come through his insisting on his rights. He must do all in his power to get along with his neighbor without strife. If others are disposed to be quarrelsome, he must meet the disagreeable spirit with love, overcoming evil with good. "The finest thing about our rights," says George Macdonald, "is that, being our own, we can give them up."

According to the New Testament, whatever is unloving in act, word, or spirit--is to be avoided. All malice, bitterness, clamor, and evil speaking are to be put off--and all meekness, patience, kindness, and thoughtfulness are to be put on. We may do a great deal as a peacemaker, by always keeping love in our hearts. In the Bahama Islands, wells of sweet water are often seen near the sea. They rise and fall with the tide, and yet they are always fresh and sweet. As the water filters from the sea through the coral it

loses its brackish saltiness. A Christian's heart should be such a well, sweetened by the grace of God--and yielding only love, instead of nature's resentment and bitterness.

We may be peacemakers also--by living so that it will be impossible for any one to quarrel with us. The influence of such a life in a community works continually toward peaceableness. One contentious person can fill a whole neighborhood with strife. A quarrelsome man stirs up bitterness wherever he goes. But one person who has the forbearing spirit, who meekly endures wrongs himself rather than contend against them, is a maker of peace. Others are influenced by his example. Every time we keep silent under insult, and loving and sweet under provocation, we have made it easier for all about us to do the same.

We may seek to be peacemakers also by exerting all our influence to prevent dissensions among others. We find continually, as we go among men, the beginnings of bitterness and estrangement. In every community there are whisperers who go about retailing gossip, the tendency of which is to separate friends. Every Christian should be a discourager of tale bearing. Too many people encourage it. They are glad to hear something unpleasant about another, and are quick to pass it on. Such eagerness is not commendable.

There are peace destroyers, who delight in sowing doubt and suspicion of others in people's minds. One often learns, in close fellowship with others, that two neighbors or friends are in danger of becoming enemies. Now is the opportunity for the peacemaker's ministry. Instead of aggravating the little beginning of bitterness, as he may do by a word of encouragement, he should set about to try to heal the breach and restore confidence. Usually it is not hard to do this. Many quarrels begin in a slight misunderstanding, and a few words spoken by a true hearted peacemaker will show, first to one and then to the other, that there is really no cause for ill feeling, that the doubt of loyalty is unjust, and that a separation or an estrangement is not only unnecessary--but would be positively sinful.

A true peacemaker, going about thus, trying to draw people ever closer together and to heal all threatened contentions and quarrels, is doing a divine work of love in the world. The great majority of strifes among men are needless. They are caused by the meddlesomeness of outside parties. Or they come from hasty words or acts unconfessed and unrepented of. The peacemaker's word, spoken at the right moment, would prevent all this.

We may do the peacemaker's work also--by seeking always to bring together those who have become estranged. In every community there are such people. Sometimes they live under the same roof and eat at the same table. There are brothers and sisters; there even are husbands and wives, who are farther apart than any strangers. A thick wall of rock has been built up between them. It may be difficult to heal such estrangements. But even in the most unhappy and most hopeless alienations, the peacemaker's holy work may yet be crowned with success. It requires great wisdom and the purest and most unselfish love. It requires both patience and prayer, for only God can be the real peacemaker in such cases, and the most we can do is to interpret His love to those we seek to bring together. Yet many a blessed reconciliation, followed by a long and sweet friendship, has been brought about by a wise and Christlike peacemaker.

Still another way in which we can get the blessing of the peacemaker, is by seeking to diffuse more and more of the love of Christ. This we may do in our own life by showing patience, gentleness, and forbearance wherever we go, under whatever evil treatment we may be called to endure. Christians should make their homes, homes of peace, in which no angry word shall ever be heard. But home is not the only sphere of such influence. It is wonderful how much one noble nature may do toward making it

easier for all in a community to live sweetly--by the warm tides of its own lovingness changing the atmosphere of a whole circle.

### The Other Man

"His neighbor," not himself, the teaching runs. "Let each one of us please his neighbor for that which is good, unto edifying." If the inspiration for this teaching had come from the spirit of the world, it would have run somewhat thus: "Let everyone of us please himself, for his own advancement and entertainment, for his own gratification." But the inspiration is from the divine Spirit, and, therefore, the words read as they do.

Paul has much to say in his epistles about liberty and love. At that time one of the burning questions in the church was whether it was right for Christians to eat meats which had been offered to idols. Paul settled the question instantly for himself. An idol was nothing--only a piece of stone or wood or metal. It had no effect on the meats which were dedicated to it.

Did not that, then, settle the question of duty once for all? No; there is something besides law--there is love. This bids us think of the other man.

"Take heed lest by any means, this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to the weak." There are some who are not so strong as you are. They think it wrong to eat these dedicated meats--but if they see you eating them, they may be emboldened to partake themselves. Thus through the influence of your example--they would violate their conscience and thus sin. So "through your knowledge he who is weak perishes, the brother for whose sake Christ died." Conscious of his own liberty, Paul yet thought of the other man, and would yield his liberty when there was the least danger that if he claimed it he might cause a weak brother to sin. "Therefore, if meat causes my brother to stumble, I will eat no meat for evermore, that I cause not my brother to stumble." This is the principle which Paul enunciates--we are not to please ourselves.

The strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. If the companion with whom you are walking is unable to go fast, you must go slow, thus accommodating yourself to his feebler strength and slower step. We are to think always of the other man. That is what the law of love bids us do. It is not an easy lesson. Someone says: "If a man would live at ease, let him beware of love. If he loves a country, it may call him suddenly to hardship and death. If he loves art, it will set him heartbreaking lessons of trial and self surrender. If he loves truth, it will call him to part company with his friends. If he loves men, their sorrows will sit by his fire and shadow its brightness. If he loves some other soul as the life of his life, he must put his happiness at the hazard of every day's chances of life and death. Love is a harder master than law, and those who follow must stand ready to strip themselves of all lesser possessions."

"Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please Himself." Blot SELF out of your thought. That is the first great lesson.

But there is more of the lesson. At least, there is a qualification. Pleasing the other man is not all. We might please him to his hurt. He may have a heavy burden, and it would please him to have us come up beside him and lift the burden away. But that might do him harm, defeating the purpose of God in giving him the burden. The lessons may be hard, and it might please the child if we would sit down beside him in the evening and do them for him. But it would not be a kindness to him. Love makes a great many mistakes of this kind.

Someone writes: "The mother who defeats the growth of her child by releasing it from a distasteful discipline is not kind--but ignorant; the father who shields his son from the penalties which might arrest the downward tendency is not tender--but cruel." Some people are pleased by flattery--but flattery only puffs up--does not edify, build up. There are some whom sin pleases--but sin leaves curse, not blessing; harm, not help.

We must read the whole of the lesson: "Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up." Our pleasing of him must always be--for his good. Edifying means building up. This was a favorite figure with Paul. He had seen the great buildings in ancient cities. He knew that they had risen slowly, block by block, column by column, touch by touch, until at last they were finished and stood forth in majesty and strength. To edify men is to put some new block in its place in the temple of their character.

We must see to it, that our pleasing of others always ministers to their good in some way, edifies them, adds something to their character, and makes them braver, stronger, truer, and happier. The world is full of discouraged people, and we have power to say a hopeful word or do a kindness which will drive the discouragement from their hearts and nerve them again, with strength for brave, victorious, and songful living.

We must keep in mind, as we go on, that Paul is talking about the weak brother. We are quite apt to feel that it is unreasonable to ask us strong people, eager to get on and making long strides, to curb our desires and take short, mincing steps in order that the weak brother can keep up with us. Men, full of life, strenuous, daring, courageous men, say that it is absurd to expect them to restrain themselves and check their energies in waiting for the timid ones, the halting ones. But Paul says: "Let us not judge one another any more; but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block in his brother's way."

The teaching of all this, is that we should be willing and ready at all times and in all ways--to deny ourselves, to make sacrifices, to give up our own rights--when any other one would be hurt by our going on in our own swift and strenuous way. Christ died for the weak brother with whom we find it so hard to be patient. If Christ died for him, does it need any argument to show that we ought to be willing to give up our rights in little or even in greater matters--in order to help him along? One of the most beautiful sights one ever sees--is some strong man, wise and great, stooping in patience to help along in life one who is weak, dull, ignorant, slow.

Some of us chafe and fret when those we would help get on so slowly, when we have to tell them the same thing over and over a hundred times. But we should remember how gentle Jesus was with His disciples in their dullness. He never once showed impatience with them. David, at the close of his long and great life, when accounting for his success, attributed it all to God's forbearance with his slowness and stumbling. "Your gentleness," he said, "has made me great." It is a lesson that all need to learn--how to deal with the weak brother so as to help him along, and to get him strong at last. So we see that there is something greater, more sacred--than liberty, than rights. Love is the greatest thing in the world. If there is danger that a man's moderate drinking may lead a weak brother to immoderate drinking, thus causing him to perish for whom Christ died, what should the man do? He may assert his rights--but that is not the lesson that love would teach him.

We are to see to it, that everything we do and every influence of our life--shall be for our neighbor's good. If a man has no neighbors, if he lives alone on an island far from other human habitation, he may say that he can do as he pleases, for no one can be hurt or disturbed by anything he does. But that is not the way

any of us live. There are other people all around us--and every word and act of ours will affect their lives. We are bound so to live--that we shall do hurt to none--but shall edify--add something beautiful to the life of everyone. A boy may enjoy beating his drum, or a man may insist on playing his cornet until midnight in his second story room. But suppose his playing keeps his neighbor awake, or disturbs the sleep of a sick man next door--what about the higher law of love?

It is a most serious thing to live. It is a serious thing to live our own life, even if no other one were concerned, for we must give account for every idle word, for every act, and for every neglect of duty. But it adds immeasurably to life's seriousness, to remember that we are responsible for every touch we give to any life which falls in the slightest way under our influence. One was telling of a look of bitter anger from another, once a friend, in chance meeting on the street. The look left a wound in a gentle heart, a wound which will be long in healing. We must think of the sin of grieving or injuring those who love us. Let us think still more seriously of causing others to sin. No matter what it may cost us, let us live only to bless, to help, to save others.

The reward of sacrifices made in serving our fellow men--is divine commendation and honor. Those who suffer in helping others upward, will find their wounds--to be marks of blessing and beauty. The saintliness which will have the highest place in the kingdom of grace, is not the saintliness which keeps its garments white by withholding itself from human need and sin--but that which, like the Master Himself, goes down into the lowest depths to lift up the fallen and the sorrowing.

Let us take the lesson out into our every-day life--"Not self--but the other man." One had for a motto, "Others!" Shall not we make this word our motto, blotting out the unsightly undivine word "myself," and writing instead the beautiful, Christly motto, "Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself."

### Making Our Report

"The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to Him all that they had done and taught." Mark 6:30

It is well for a friend of Christ to maintain the most intimate relations with his Master. There are wise mothers who train their boys to give them their full confidence, telling them all that they do, all that they hear. They report the conversations they have with other boys, and all that takes place when they are at school and at play. The boys are happy who have such mothers. It takes almost infinite gentleness and tact in a mother, to keep such confidence as her boy grows older. Yet there are mothers who are their sons confidential friends, even in their manhood. A boy never goes far wrong--who comes to his mother every evening and tells her all he has done that day.

This is also the ideal relation for the Christian with his Lord. When the apostles returned from their missionary tour, it is said that they "reported to Him all that they had done and taught." It will help us greatly in our Christian life, if we will train ourselves to the habit of reporting to Christ continually, all that we do and say. We may come every evening to His feet and tell Him all about the work and the life of the day.

Each day is a miniature life. We are born in the morning--out of the darkness of the night. We live through the hours until evening comes again, and then we sink away into the death of sleep. Each morning we are sent out by our Master, commissioned by Him to do certain tasks, to touch certain lives, to leave in the world certain blessings, to endure certain temptations, to suffer or rejoice, as the case may be. At the close

of the day--we come back to make report, in our evening prayer, of all that we have done, not only the good and beautiful things--the obedience, the kindnesses, the victories over evil, the things that have been helpful to others--but also the foolish things, the disobediences, the defeats, the neglects of duty.

If we remember as we go through the day--that everything we do or say, and everything we fail to do or say--must be reported to our Master, it would make us more careful as the moments pass--of what we do and what we fail to do. We would not do the things which would shame us to look into Christ's face, and tell Him what we did. We will learn to do only what it will give us pleasure to report to Him. It would do much to make us always charitable and kind to others, for we shall not care to tell the Master that we said unkindly words of our neighbors. If we constrain ourselves to report in our evenings prayers--all our criticisms of others, all our uncharitable words, and all our blaming and fault finding--we shall soon be cured of the habit of censoriousness, and we shall learn to do and say only things we shall be glad to tell our Lord.

Yet, we need never dread to tell Christ of our failures for the day. And there always will be failures. Our moods will not always be gentle. Sometimes we will speak rashly and harshly. We will not always be patient and thoughtful. Unchristian tempers will break out in spite of our determination always to keep sweet. We will fail many a time to be loving. But the Master will be infinitely gracious and gentle in dealing with our faults and failures. He is more kindly than a mother. No words in the Bible are sweeter to a faithful Christian, certain nights when he comes to his evening prayer, than those in one of the Psalms. "He knows our frame--He remembers that we are dust." If we are living faithfully and are striving to do our best, and to do better each day--we need never dread to tell our Master all that we have done, even the worst. He wants us to be very frank and very honest with Him. Of course He knows all that we have done--but He wants us to tell Him all, keeping nothing back. We may come with the whole story, even if it be a confession of weakness, foolishness, or sin. He is never severe with us, as some human friends are, for He wants us never to be afraid to come.

It is well to bring to Christ the report of all our earthly affairs, as well as our spiritual matters. All our life, no matter how prosaic, is part of our Christian living. We are serving Christ at our commonest task work--as really as when we are at our prayers. The greater part of what we do belongs to what we call secular things; but we are to do everything in the name of Christ, and are to seek as much to please Him in these duties--as in our acts of worship. We are to put our religion into our carpentering, our farming, our mercantile pursuits, our professional work--doing everything "as unto the Lord," and honestly, conscientiously, skillfully. In our devotional exercises we come into God's presence to have our ideals elevated, and to get strength and wisdom for true Christian living; then in our daily task work, whatever it may be--we go out to live the heavenly life in the common affairs of earth.

In the single verse which contains the holy record we have of our Lord's life from His twelfth to His thirtieth year--we read that He "advanced in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men." But we know that He was not engaged all the time in studying the Scriptures, and in prayer. He was a carpenter's apprentice, and a carpenter all those years, busy in His shop from morning until night. We know that He pleased His Father just as well on His weekdays, when working as a craftsman, as He did on the Sabbaths, when His shop was closed and He was worshiping in the synagogue. He could make report to God at the close of His weekday's toil--just as cheerfully as at the end of His Sabbaths. A writer says, referring to the work of Jesus as a craftsman: "The business of the little day was so done that at the same time it was commerce with the Infinite. Every business transaction was so scrupulously pure and honest as to afford a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit of the eternal God. While He earned His daily bread--He

was drawing into His hungry heart the very bread of life. He and His Father were inseparable partners in the making of a household chair, or in the making of a yoke for the ox of the field." Everything He did was done piously, because done to please God.

It should be the same with all of us. The division of our life into secular and religious is misleading. Our weekdays should be as holy as any Sabbaths in the sense that we are to honor Christ as really then as on the Sabbaths, and do the commonest duties according to God's laws. We should do our secular work conscientiously, putting into every part of it, our best skill and taste.

It would be well if young men going into business, would train themselves from the beginning to do all their work so well, so honestly, so conscientiously, while putting their best skill into it--that they can come to Christ's feet when any piece of it is finished and report every smallest detail to Him without shame or shrinking.

No truth is taught more clearly in the New Testament, than that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to give an account of our life on the earth. Then all secret things will be revealed. The Scriptures tell us that then, the books will be opened. The opening of books in certain great financial investigations has brought out facts concerning business methods which tarnished hitherto honored and illustrious names. The books will be opened in the judgment--and the records will be read. Nothing is hidden that will not then be revealed. Sometimes we are tempted to think that, because our work is so obscure and no human eyes are likely to see it--it is not necessary for us to do it carefully. But there is an Eye that does see even the minutest details of all that we do, and it is for this Eye that we should work. Then there will be a revealing some time, somewhere, when our fidelity or our negligence will appear. We should do everything with reference to that great opening of all life's records!

There is a machine called the dynograph, recently invented, by which, as the railroad train runs over the road, every unevenness in the tracks is detected and registered. A roll of paper is moved by power received from the wheels of the car. Over this paper are suspended needles containing red ink, one needle for each track. If the track is perfectly smooth and level, these needles make a straight line. If there is unevenness in the track, even the slightest, the line is wavering. Thus the machine ingeniously tells the whole story of the tracks. Just so--the story of every human life is infallibly recorded in the books of judgment. We cannot pass that great day--for what we are not. The truth will be revealed, whether it is good or bad.

If, then, we are to come to the final judgment with confidence and without fear, we must live all our life to please our Master. Report will then be made of all we have done through all the years, and we shall have to account for the trusts reposed in us, for our privileges and opportunities, and for every influence we have exerted. We are not done with life as we live it--we must face it again, every particle of it. It may seem a little thing to do a secret evil thing some quiet day or night. Nobody knows it. It is hidden and dropped out of sight as soon as done. We do not think of it as ever coming up again to plague us; but it will. Jesus said that we must give account of every idle word we speak. If for every idle word, then far more surely for every sinful word, every false word, every cruel word, every word which tempted an innocent soul to do wrong. We must give account to all our life!

In our Lord's parable of the judgment, we read of those who turned others away hungry from their doors, who refused a cup of cold water to those who were thirsty, who failed to show comfort to a sick neighbor. At the time--it did not seem that these neglects were important. But the day the King came--they had to be

accounted for. Then it appeared that it was the King Himself who was at the door, asking for bread, or for a cup of water, or who lay sick on the hard bed. We may call nothing in life trivial. Any day may be doomsday; at least, there is never an hour of any day which may not cast its light or its shadow down the years.

There is only one way to disarm judgment of its terrors and its dread. If we live a holy life all our days, if we obey our Lord's commandments, if we do the duty of love faithfully unto the end, if we accept the will of God as the law of our life, and fill our place in the kingdom of heaven with faithful obedience, it will be a joy to tell the Master in that great day--of the things that we have done and to hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things. Come and share your master's happiness!"

Someone says that the secret of a happy old age--is a well watched past. The secret of any today, is a well watched yesterday. And there is no better way to keep our days beautiful and free from memories which will vex us afterward, than to tell Jesus every night all that we have said and done through the day.

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