Sunday Afternoons With Railroad Men

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It has been my privilege, during twelve successive seasons, to address the Sunday afternoon meetings of the Pennsylvania Railroad Department of the Young Men's Christian Association of Philadelphia. The following addresses, selected from stenographic reports of the most recent series, are published at the request of fellow-workers and friends.

CHAS. R. ERDMAN

Princeton, New Jersey
October, 1906

I

READY FOR WORK

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts.

Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin forgiven. And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until cities be waste without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the land become utterly waste, and Jehovah have removed men far away, and the forsaken places be many in the midst of the land. And if there be yet a tenth in it, it also shall in turn be eaten up: as a terebinth, and as an oak, whose stock remaineth, when they are felled; so the holy seed is the stock thereof. Isaiah 6.

Sunday Afternoons With Railroad Men

I

READY FOR WORK

It was a remarkable and memorable experience by which Isaiah was prepared for his prophetic work. A somewhat similar experience, however, is needed by each one of us, if we are to be able to undertake successfully the service which is allotted to us. We, too, are prophets. We are privileged "to speak for God," as we seek, in this Association, to bring men to a saving knowledge of Christ. We can go farther and say that a similar experience is needed by every man who would accomplish faithfully and well his daily task. Possibly we are too ready to divide men into classes, and to imagine that some are more in need of religious experiences than others. Let us rather remember that whether we are to find our place of service on the engine, in the office, in the pulpit, or in the

shop, we need to catch the vision which Isaiah saw.

"I saw the Lord." In these four words we find the sum and substance of this interesting story; and what we are all needing is a new and brighter vision of Christ. In the case of Isaiah, he is supposed to have gone to the temple to worship, and while bowing there the beautiful building seemed to dissolve and disappear, and in its place the prophet beheld the dwelling place of the Most High God; he saw the Lord seated upon a throne. The robe of light in which he was clothed swept down and covered the temple floor, leaving no place for the seraphim to stand. They supported themselves upon wings, which at the same time hid their feet and their faces. They sang a responsive song—"Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." At the mention of the divine Name, the foundations of the temple quaked, and incense floated upward to veil the vision from the prophet's sight.

It was this startling revelation of the holiness and power of God, by which Isaiah was prepared for his wonderful service; and such a vision we need to seek. It is not something mystical or mysterious that we need; yet something like Isaiah's vision we must have. Our need is, that Christ should become to us more vivid and

more real. We are told that St. Francis of Assisi had a mystical vision of Christ when he had gone alone to pray in the little chapel on the mountain side. To his enraptured vision, his Lord appeared in the form of a seraph. So intently did St. Francis look upon him that his body underwent a marvelous change; in his own hands and feet became imprinted the marks of the wounds which the disciples saw in the hands of the risen Christ. Perhaps we may doubt the historic truth of such a story. There is surely this reality about it, that St. Francis ever had a vivid, mental image of Christ, and a consuming passion for him who had loved him and had died for him. We need not seek the experience of the old mystic, but we should strive to attain to such a sense of the personal presence, power, holiness, and love of our Lord.

> "I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasy;
> No sudden rending of the veil of clay;
> No angel visitant, no opening skies;
> But take the dimness of my soul away."

We are told that Lord Tennyson, when once asked what was the greatest desire of his heart, replied, "A clearer vision of God." If we, then, are to be prepared for the work which lies before us, we need to gain a clearer vision of our Lord.

The Method by which such an experience can be had, may in some particulars, be suggested by this story from the life of the prophet. It may be that as we meet together in some such place as this, where men are thinking and talking of our living Lord, the speaker and hearers will disappear from our thought, and we shall see with clearer vision the glory and the power of him whom we serve; but more probably we shall attain our end along some simpler and more familiar path. Some of you may have heard the address of Mr. John R. Mott, which he delivered before the Convention of Railroad Men in Detroit, when he spoke of "making Christ a reality." He made a reference to the life of Chinese Gordon, which suggests an obvious method of making Christ real; namely, the study of the life and words of Christ. "In times of barrenness or coldness," wrote General Gordon, "I read the Scriptures much; that is, when Christ recedes I apply my mind and heart to the Scriptures, and he comes back again." This is a method we can all follow. Let us resolve anew to observe the "Morning Watch;" to read a definite portion of the life of Christ each day; and let us ask that when we meet here to speak together of the things concerning Christ, we may see him with a vision ever more clear.

Prayer also is a natural way of attaining our end. Isaiah was probably in prayer when he caught his vision, and our Lord was himself in prayer when he became transfigured before his disciples. It matters not where we pray, whether on the road, or in the home, or in the church. As we speak with Christ, his presence becomes more real, however simple our prayer may be.

Then, too, it is suggested that we associate with men to whom Christ is real. That is evidently one end to be secured by the work of a Christian Association. Choose your companions from those who are faithfully following your Lord, and their conversation and their faith will help to clarify your spiritual vision.

Then, too, seek to keep your thoughts and your life sweet and clean. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Nothing so dims the spiritual vision as impure thoughts and unholy deeds.

By all these methods, and others which may suggest themselves to your minds, we should seek for a vision of the Lord. We are therefore suggesting no mystical, sudden, or strange experience, but rather a constantly increasing sense that Jesus Christ our Lord is

> "A living, bright reality,
> More dear, more intimately nigh
> Than e'en the sweetest earthly tie."

The result of such an experience may be distressing at first. It was so in the case of Isaiah. He cried out, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts." That was perfectly natural; not because the prophet was a peculiarly great sinner, but because he had a divine standard of comparison in mind, and in the presence of perfect holiness he became conscious of his sinful self. The greatest saints have ever been the most ready to confess their sin. Do not be discouraged if the thought of Christ, as living and present, results in a distressing vision of self; for as soon as there is confession, there is pardon and cleansing. So we read of Isaiah, "Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin forgiven." This was the strange thing, not that Isaiah was conscious of guilt; but that sin was so soon purged. It is not strange that we feel unworthy to enter upon this work of bringing men to Christ, when we realize how unworthy we are of such service. The remarkable thing is this, that in the pres-

ence of our Lord we can feel a sense of acceptance, and pardon, and peace. You see that poor woman entering the room where the Saviour is reclining at the feast. You know she is a sinner, and you are not surprised that as she kneels at his feet the hot tears fall fast; but you are rather surprised that at a single word from the Saviour, she rises in gladness, and goes away in perfect peace. We believe that "the Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins." We believe that "if we confess, our sins he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." We confidently declare that, however dark the past may have been, each man present here to-day can be so truly cleansed by the blood and power of Christ that he can begin to do definite personal work with a view to bringing some fellow-man into the service of his Lord.

What we need is complete devotion to this service, and this naturally follows when one believes in the forgiveness which Christ has purchased with his own precious blood. Such was indeed the experience of Isaiah. As soon as he had received the assurance of pardon he hears "the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" and at once the prophet replies, "Here am I;

send me." There was something pathetic in that divine cry, "Whom shall I send?" as though the Lord had very few who were ready to undertake his work—and he did have but few—and when our Saviour came, and wished to make known the truth to all the world, there were but few whom he could send. You remember his word, "The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers are few." And there are only a few to-day who are ready for the Master's service. There are many who profess the name of Christ, many whose names are on the rolls of Christian churches, many members of Christian Associations, but how few of all this number are ready to enlist in definite personal work! How few are willing to do anything that the Lord may give them to do! Let us not undertake such service until our lives are clean, and our hearts are pure; but if trusting in Christ as our Saviour from sin, let us turn to him to-day as our Master and Lord; and as we look out upon the men round us who are Christless, Godless, hopeless, let us say as Isaiah said, "Here am I, send me."

> "I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord;
> I'll be what you want me to be."

It will require courage. It was no easy task which was assigned to Isaiah. As the chapter

comes to its close, we read that he was warned of the unwillingness of the people to listen to his word. The more earnestly he preached, the more stubborn they were to become, until their godlessness was to result in captivity, and the land was to be destroyed. Yet a remnant was to be saved; some would heed the word of the prophet. They would be for the nation like the stock of an oak tree which had been felled: It would in time spring up and stretch out its great branches. So from the little band of people whom Isaiah was to bring back to God, would come forth that nation, among whom was to appear the Christ, the Saviour of the world. The work which each one of us may accomplish, may appear to us insignificant and difficult; but let us be of good courage. If we are truly devoted to the service of our Master, then the results are in his hand, and through us he will accomplish a greater work than we have ever dreamed.

> "Toil on, faint not, keep watch and pray;
> Be wise the erring soul to win;
> Go forth into the world's highway,
> Compel the wanderer to come in."

It is because we realize the need of faithful Christian work among railroad men, that we should seek such a vision of our Lord as is de-

scribed for us in this story from the life of the prophet of old. You may remember that the knights of King Arthur set forth in search of "the Holy Grail." They longed to catch a glimpse of that cup which had held the sacred blood of the Saviour. Let us go forth on a truer and nobler quest. Let us seek to gain a vision of the glory and power of our living and present Lord. We shall thus be prepared to confess our faults, to consecrate our lives, and to undertake his work. We shall know something of the blessedness of which Bernard sings:—

> "Jesus, the very thought of thee,
> With sweetness fills my breast;
> But sweeter far thy face to see
> And in thy presence rest."

II

FISHERS OF MEN

After these things Jesus manifested himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and he manifested himself on this wise. There were together Simon Peter and Thomas, called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also come with thee. They went forth, and entered into the boat; and that night they took nothing. But when day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach: yet the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus therefore saith unto them, Children, have ye aught to eat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his coat about him (for he was naked), and cast himself into the sea. But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from the land, but about two hundred cubits off), dragging the net full of fishes. So when they got out upon the land, they see a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now taken. Simon Peter therefore went up, and drew the net to land, full of great fishes, a hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, the net was not rent. Jesus saith unto them, Come and break your fast. And none of the disciples durst inquire of him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus cometh, and taketh the bread, and giveth them, and the fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

So when they had broken their fast, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again a second time, Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Tend my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. John 21:1-17.

II

FISHERS OF MEN

Last Sunday we were studying together a story from the Old Testament, which told us of the preparation for service given to a prophet, by a vision of his Lord. This afternoon we are to review an incident from the New Testament, which tells us of a vision of the risen Christ, which prepared his followers for their glorious task. It is the early morning scene beside that little inland Sea of Galilee. Simon Peter had suggested to his friends that they should "go a-fishing." A party of seven had started out in the evening, and had fished all the night through. As dawn was beginning to break, they heard a voice from the shore, calling to them, and asking what they had caught. They say that they have taken nothing; and then the voice replies, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and ye shall find;" and so they let the net down as directed, and as soon as they had done this the net inclosed a

great school of fishes. Instantly, the beloved disciple, John, recognizes his Master, and cries out, "It is the Lord!" Peter, impatient of delay, leaps overboard and swims ashore. When the boat with their friends has touched the beach, they gather round their Lord, and are surprised, not only by his unexpected presence, but also to find that he has prepared for them a breakfast, and on the coals they find bread is baking, and fish are broiling. When they have breakfasted together, the Master hears the confession of Peter's love, and commends him anew to service in his name.

Such is the story. It is one of the accounts which we have of the ten or eleven appearances of our Lord after his resurrection; but it has a special message for us to-day, as it speaks to us of the aim, the encouragement, and the motive, which we have in our work for Christ.

First of all, then, it suggests that in bringing men to Christ we are "fishers of men," or, as the words really mean, we are "saving men alive." This is the great work which lies before us during the coming months. Such is the first message which the Saviour brought to his disciples on that memorable morning: "Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers

of men." He did not speak these words at that time, did he? No; but just as soon as they saw the miracle they recalled the meaning that he had assigned to a similar miracle three years before. You remember how, when Christ was first calling men into his service, he went down to the seashore and borrowed a fishing boat from Peter. He used the boat as a pulpit, and then, when the sermon was ended, he told Peter to push out from the shore, and to let down his net. Peter replied, "Master, we toiled all night, and took nothing: but at thy word I will let down the nets." You remember the miracle which followed; the great catch of fish; and the words which our Saviour spoke, and which I have already repeated, "Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men." So now, when Christ has risen from the dead, and is sending out his disciples on their great mission, he works through them this similar miracle, to suggest that if they obey him, they will be used to save men. He is thus repeating the former message by a second striking object lesson. He is telling them that they are not to be merely fishermen, but life-savers. "You will save men alive."

That is exactly what we are trying to do by the work of this Association. We are seeking

to save men by drawing them toward the loving, living Christ. It is a great thing to have the shores of our loved land dotted with life-saving stations; but it is true that every church, every chapel, and every Christian Association throughout the length and breadth of this land is a life-saving station. We are striving, with the equipment of this great building, to do many other things, which will help men toward a fuller and a larger life; but our first aim is to seek those who are lost. These meetings are held, and our Association work is being conducted, so that we can take one man after another who is in peril, who is fighting against temptation, who is being drawn down by deadly currents, and lift him up to light and life, to holiness and God. To be fishers of men, to be saviours of men—this is indeed blessed work.

One of our friends in this Association celebrated last Sunday afternoon his fifth anniversary as a child of God, and I remember what was said by one who is specially interested in our work: "It seems to me that if nothing else has been accomplished by erecting this building, and carrying on this work, other than the reforming of that one life, and the transformation of that one home, the work would have been a great success." Why so?

Because one soul is of such supreme value; one life of such priceless worth. We can truly rejoice that we are banded together anew in our effort to save men.

A few weeks ago I was in Central Pennsylvania, and as I stood one evening looking out over the broad river, a story came into my mind in connection with the old bridge of the town. I do not know the exact truth of the incident, but it illustrates this work of ours. It is said that on a certain occasion, when the river was swollen with the spring floods, a man had floated out from the shore in a little boat without oars, and was being borne swiftly down the stream. Word was telegraphed down to the town that the boat would pass in a very short time under that bridge, which spans the river. Immediately a number of men provided themselves with ropes, hurried to the bridge, and, standing at intervals, hung down one rope after another, so that, wherever the boat might pass, the man might have a chance for his life; and, sure enough, before long there came the boat, drawing nearer and nearer to the bridge. The poor man saw what was being done, and just at the right instant he grasped a rope, and his life was saved.

Is not that exactly what we are seeking to do? Are we not throwing out ropes and ex-

tending a helping hand to one man after another who is in peril of being lost? We are not called merely to rejoice in our own safety; nor to fold our hands in idleness when we ourselves have been saved; we are sent to work for the saving of others; to forget ourselves, and to strive to rescue every man whom we see to be in need.

In the second place, this story suggests to us the encouragement we have in our service. The encouragement is this, that we are being supported, aided and sustained, by an unseen but ever-present Master and Lord. All the appearances of Christ after his resurrection were designed in part to teach the disciples the truth of his continual presence. He would appear to them suddenly, when least expected, in an upper room, or as they were walking by the way, or as they were gathered on a mountain top, to teach them that he was ever near. So when he appears to these fishermen in their unsuccessful toil in the twilight of that early morning, he wishes them to understand that whatever their labor, he will ever be near them, to aid and to sustain.

This truth will surely strengthen us. We are not called to labor in our own strength or wisdom. One who has all power in heaven and in earth is with us as He was with those disci-

ples of old. He wished to show them that they could look to him for guidance, and could depend on him for support; for this reason he gives the direction which leads to their success, and then invites them to share the breakfast which he himself has provided. Have we failed in our effort to bring some soul to Christ? Possibly we have not been looking to him for wisdom and help. Are we afraid to undertake some special work? Possibly we are forgetting how ready he is to supply the needed power and grace.

When Stanley was about to be sent on his first expedition, the telegram which summoned him was very brief. It was in substance, "Go, find Livingstone." No matter how great the difficulty, no matter how long the task, no matter what the peril, he was to penetrate to the very heart of Africa; he was to save the great missionary explorer. Yet there was one thing else in that telegram. Stanley would never have started if the message had included nothing more. Just enough was added and enough implied in the signature of the telegram to suggest that all the money which was needed, and all the supplies he might require, were at his command. Our Master is sending you forth to-day, sending you back to the home, sending you out on the engine to-morrow, or to the

office, or to the shop, and he is saying, "I know you can do nothing in your own strength, but draw on me for support; depend on me for help, and for the wisdom and courage you need, and I will give it you." "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Let us consider, however, in the last place, what motive will keep us at work. There is but one,—Love; love for our fellow-men, and, above all, love for Christ. This message is emphasized in the story we are studying to-day. In this beautiful morning scene there are several features which suggest to us this motive. There is the keen vision of John, who was first to recognize his Master, because he lived nearest to his Master's heart; and then there is Peter, the poor backslider, who wishes to swim ashore, unwilling to wait for the boat, the progress of which is impeded by the burdened net. Three years before, on a similar occasion, he cried, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man," but he has learned to love his Lord more since then. It is true he denied him, but with infinite compassion the risen Christ appeared to Peter, first of all the disciples, to speak to him words of pardon and peace. No wonder Peter loves that Master now; no wonder he is so eager to greet him on the shore in that early twilight.

But this motive of love is especially manifested in that remarkable interview which follows. Three times the Saviour asks Peter to confess his love, and three times Peter repeats the avowal of his devotion.

There are many truths suggested here. This one at least we can unite with what has gone before; the miracle has been a picture of service; the interview can be a message of love. It must be love for our fellow-men which moves us to bring them to Christ. I remember the story of a poor old woman who would not be saved alone. She wanted somebody else to be saved with her. It was a story of the flood down in Alabama. A number of poor colored people had taken refuge on the top of an old corn shed, which seemed about to be swept away. There they clung, with the surging waters all about them. Some men in a boat came out to rescue them, and as the boat came near the rescuers cried, "Let the women and children come first!" Just as the crowded boat was about to push away, one old woman was heard to cry, "Can't you take my old man, too?" "No, we cannot take him," was the answer. "Then let me go back," and up she crawled to the roof, to die with her poor old husband. As the boat drew away into the darkness, her voice was heard singing:—

"I'se clingin' to the ark,
Let me in, let me in;
For the water's deep and dark,
Let me in, let me in."

And they left her there. But another boat was found and was sent back to complete the work of rescue. As they came near, those in the boat heard her singing again:—

"The Lord hab heard my cry,
Let me in, let me in;
He will save us, by and by,
Let me in, let me in."

She was willing to be saved when her husband could be saved, too.

How many persons are there here who believe they are saved, but are not sure their households are saved? How many mothers and fathers are here who believe that their boys are without Christ? How do you feel about the man you meet every day on your engine or in your office? Are you willing to be saved without him?

Love for our fellow-men will make us "fishers of men;" but there is even a higher motive. Love for Christ will make us work for Christ. Jesus did not say to Peter, "Do you love these men?" but, "Lovest thou me?" That was the point. There are many people in this world

who are not very lovely. We might be willing to save the people we love, and still be careless about the unkind, sinful people we have neither known nor loved; but when we love Jesus Christ we will love them, too, and will for his sake do for them all we can.

A little story was handed me a few days ago, which speaks about the power of love. It was manifested by a little newsboy whose mother had been taken from him. They had lived together, helping one another, and when she died he felt that he had lost everything in the world. He wished to show his affection, so he went to a yard where monumental marbles were being carved, but was disappointed to find that he could not afford to purchase a stone. He happened to spy a piece of granite that had been broken by accident. He asked if he might have it. "Yes, you can," replied the superintendent; "but what are you going to do with it?" "I am going to take it over yonder, and put it on my mother's grave." A day or two after he came with a little four-wheeled cart, and the men helped him put the piece of stone on it, and started the boy on his way to the cemetery. The superintendent of the yard was so interested in the boy that after a time he went to the cemetery to see what had become of the stone. He asked the man in

charge if he had seen anything of the boy. The man took him to the grave of the boy's mother and pointed out to him the stone. On it he saw an inscription rudely drawn in great capital letters. They read something like this:

"MY MOTHER SHEE DIDE LAST WEEK
SHEE WAS ALL I HAD
SHEE SED SHEAD BE WAITING FUR—"

That was all there was on the stone, and then the superintendent heard the following explanation: "The little fellow came out here day after day, and cut these letters himself on that piece of stone. One day I missed him, and nothing was heard of him for some days, and then a man came out from the church to which his mother had belonged, and ordered a little grave dug; here it is. You see the little chap was coming out here to finish his work, but as he was crossing the street there was a runaway; he got under the wheels and was killed; and when they picked him up they found in his hand a little old file that had been sharpened to a point, and with that file he had been cutting those letters on the monument in memory of his mother, just because he loved her so. When the men back in the yard heard the story, they clubbed together and bought that stone for

the little grave, and on it they put first his name and then these words: 'He loved his mother.' When the boys and girls came out from the Sunday School, I heard the superintendent say to them: 'My children, I would rather have that put on my tombstone, and lie there by that little boy, than to be the veriest king in all the world, and yet fail to love my mother.' "

"He loved her." What will love not do? Is there anything too hard for love, any obstacle too great—the love of a mother for her son; the love of a child for its mother? Surely the love of Christ for you, and your love for Christ, will send you forth as you have never gone before, to serve in "his blessed name."

III

FOLLOWING CHRIST

And there arose a reasoning among them, which of them was the greatest. But when Jesus saw the reasoning of their heart, he took a little child, and set him by his side, and said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this little child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same is great.

And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out demons in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. But Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against you is for you.

And it came to pass, when the days were well-nigh come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he were going to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we bid fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?

But he turned, and rebuked them. And they went to another village.

And as they went on the way, a certain man said unto him, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But he said unto him, Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but go thou and publish abroad the kingdom of God.

And another also said, I will follow thee, Lord; but first suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house. But Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. Luke 9:46-62.

III

FOLLOWING CHRIST

Our afternoon Scripture lesson suggested to us six moving pictures, six dissolving views, six striking scenes, from the life of our Lord. The first three represented his disciples, and the last three concerned men who were meeting Jesus for the last time, as he was on his way to Jerusalem and to the cross. Those first three scenes may be helpful to those of us who already call ourselves Christians; and the last three may bear a very definite and helpful message to the men and women here, who, once more this afternoon, it may be for the last time, are being urged faithfully, openly, and honestly to follow Jesus Christ.

The first scene presents to us the disciples as they are engaged in a heated argument. "There arose a reasoning among them, which of them was the greatest;" that is, greatest "in the kingdom of heaven." That was the question they were discussing; and there was

something very admirable about the discussion. They evidently regarded the kingdom of heaven as a reality, and they thought it worth while to enter in, and to attain a high place in its glory. Perhaps if some of us had just as much faith, we might sometimes argue about the same facts. If heaven were just as real to us as the present world, as real to us as this building and our homes are, if the friends yonder were just as much in our thoughts and hearts, just as actual to us as our friends here are, I think we might sometimes question what our place is to be in heaven.

Yet our Saviour rebuked them; for while there was something of faith about their discussion, there was much more of pride; and there is no place for pride among the followers of Christ. He took a little child and placed him beside him and said, "Whosoever shall receive this little child in my name receiveth me . . . for he that is least among you all, the same is great." He took a little child because they were talking about heaven, and heaven belongs to little children. If there is any poor mother here whose little one has been taken from her into the yonder land, she can be absolutely sure that the little one is to-day in the presence of Jesus Christ, because "to such belongeth the kingdom of heaven." And there is no greater

service in this world than to care for little children. We are surrounded by "little children;" by men and women who have less strength than we have; less strength of mind, less strength of character, less strength of body,—who have limitations which we do not have. To be of service to such, in the name of Christ, is to be great in the sight of our Lord. Lowly service is the measure of greatness. That is the message.

Do not think that greatness consists in having the highest place. It consists in serving and helping those who are like children in their helplessness and their need. "Whosoever shall receive this little child in my name receiveth me."

Only a few days ago Dr. Barnardo died, in London—a man who had been used of God in rescuing, saving, and giving life to thousands of orphans. I suppose among all the nobility of England, you could not find a man greater than he, who has given his life to save the little ones. I tell you it is just so here to-day. Those of us who are greatest in the sight of our Lord are not those of us who occupy the highest place, but those of us who are willing to do the little things, and the humble service, for his sake. There is no place for pride among his followers.

"John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out demons in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us." He "answered," of course, because Jesus had said that if one did anything "in his name" he would be rendering him a service. So John was saying, "I rendered thee a service, I forbade a man, who was casting out devils in thy name, to do it." There was something admirable in John's action. He so loved his Master that he wished everybody to follow in that little company of disciples. He would have liked to have had all the people in Galilee as followers of Christ.

Now, there is something admirable about a man who loves his own denomination, and who wishes to have other men join his society of Christians. If any man is sure that he has found the shortest way to heaven and the most secure, I do not blame him for wanting others to follow along that same path. That is all right. But Jesus rebuked John, and said unto him, "Forbid him not: for he that is not against you is for you." It was as if he had said: "Why John, it is all right to love your own denomination or your own little society of Christians; but never stand in the way of another man's work for Christ. Do not try to oppose what another denomination is doing in the Mas-

ter's name. Do not in any way discourage any other disciple of Christ because he does not follow with you." We cannot expect all Christians to belong to the same denomination, or to subscribe to the same creed, or to worship in the same way. This is the question: Is good being done, and is it being done in the name of Christ? John should not have forbidden one who was casting out devils and who was doing it in his Master's name. No wonder Jesus rebuked him. If any man, no matter what his denomination, is seeking to save men, and to cast out devils in the name of Christ, let us bid him "Godspeed." There is no place for bigotry among the followers of Christ.

That great convention that met in New York City, and closed ten days ago, that conference in reference to the Federation of Churches, was a magnificent exhibition of what Christ had in mind. All these different denominations, twenty-eight in number, representing eighteen millions of Christians, came together to say: "Let us all agree to work side by side; and let us not insist that every one shall follow in exactly the same little company." "Forbid him not: for he that is not against you is for you."

Then, as Jesus "steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem," we have another scene. He was entering a village of the Samaritans,

and the Samaritans would not receive him. John cried, "Lord, wilt thou that we bid fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?" Now, there was something rather admirable in John's spirit. He was rather on his mettle, I think. He had just made a great mistake about that man who was casting out demons, and he thought he would retrieve himself. He loved his Master, and he could not bear to see him insulted. There is something admirable in the feeling of a man who, when he hears his Master's name used profanely, and when he sees his Master's cause being thwarted and opposed, is filled with a certain righteous indignation, and distress. There may be something admirable in such love for the Master; and yet the Master rebuked John. He turned and said, "John, ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." "And they went to another village." He was saying, "John, there is no place for intolerance among my followers." Even though Christ may be insulted, even though his name may be used ever so profanely, it is not for you or for me to show anger, or try to injure any man. There is a time of judgment coming, and there will be a day when, as the apostle Paul said, those who have refused the gospel of Christ "shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord." That day

is coming, but we are not living in that day. We are living in "an accepted time," in a "day of salvation." God is long-suffering, and very patient. Even though this man may reject Christ, that man may turn his back upon him, and a third man may profane his name, and may defy him to his face, this is not a time of vengeance. No, it is a time of patience and gentleness; and if you and I follow Christ, we must be kind, gentle, forbearing, and forgiving. If you have been insulted this week, because you are a Christian, if there is some one who is making your life miserable because you are trying to follow Christ, do not think of revenge, do not think of showing unkindness, do not think of cruelty, but seek by your patience, your forbearance, and your forgiveness to show "what spirit ye are of"—the spirit of gentleness, kindness, and love, that you may win some soul for Christ. There is no place for intolerance among the followers of Christ.

Now, as they are advancing on their way, a young man comes running to meet Jesus, and cries, "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." You can just imagine how glad Jesus was to hear that word. You can almost see him putting out his hand to welcome that young man. Oh, how glad our Master would be if every young man here to-day would say,

"I will follow thee withersoever thou goest—whatever it may cost, whatever sacrifice, whatever hardship, through any persecution, I will follow thee."

But Jesus turned and rebuked him. Are you not surprised at that? He rebuked him. He said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." You do not hear anything more about that young man who wanted to follow Christ. Why not? What was the trouble? What did the Master mean? He meant this: He did not want to have any man follow him who had not counted the cost; and here is a young man who is simply moved by a passing emotion to go along what seemed to him to be an easy path. He said, "It will be a great thing to follow in this company; it is a popular thing to be a disciple." He had never thought that it might mean sacrifice, that it might mean pain, that it might mean loss; and just as soon as he knew it was going to cost him something, then I find him turning back and following no more with Christ. Oh, Christ wants you to follow him! And he would love to hear, this afternoon, that you will follow him, wherever he may lead; but he wants you to understand that it will cost you something. He does not want us to follow him just because

it seems an easy thing to do, and because other people are doing it, and because our friends want us to do it. It is worth all the world to follow Christ. There is no sacrifice too great to make for him. It is the only life worth living. Yet do not think it is all ease, and praise, and popularity, and worldly success. It means toil, self-denial, pain, conflict, and blood; but if you are willing to pay the price, I tell you, it will mean an exceeding great reward—one hundredfold in this life, and in the world to come life eternal. There is no place among the followers of Christ for rashness and inconsiderate haste.

The Saviour turns to another young man with the familiar invitation: "Follow me." The young man turned to him and said, "Suffer me first to go and bury my father." That is a very good excuse, you might say, for a young man to make—a very natural request, that he might bury his father. As our Saviour extends his invitation to every one here this afternoon, some may, perhaps, make an excuse which seems to be reasonable at first. But our Saviour turned and rebuked him, who seemed to be so kind-hearted, loving, and considerate. He rebuked him and said, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but go thou and publish abroad the kingdom of God."

Now, why did he rebuke him? He rebuked him because he looked that young man through and through, and he knew that the excuse he was making was a poor, miserable, worthless pretense. I do not believe the young man had a father lying at home dead. If he had, what was he doing out there in the crowd? It was customary in the east to bury a man the same day he died. What did Jesus mean? I will tell you.

A short time ago I was taking supper with one who has labored for twenty years in the land where our Saviour lived. He turned to me and said, "Do you know what it means in the Bible when it says, 'Suffer me first to go and bury my father'?" "No, what does it mean?" "I will tell you what it means. It means that the man who said this had no good excuse, and was trying to find one; for that is a proverbial expression in that land, even to this day. I was going to Europe about two years ago, and I tried to urge a rich young man, a native, to go to Europe with me. The young man turned to me (he was in perfect health, with his father near him, in perfect health) and said, 'Let me first bury my father.' The young man meant: 'I do not care to go now. I have no very good excuse, but something might happen to my father. Wait until I am perfectly free

from all obligations, and when I have a better opportunity I will go.' So Jesus gave to that man a definite invitation to follow him, but he replied, 'Suffer me first to go and bury my father.' "

But, my friends, do you not know of some men who have excuses for not being Christians, just as poor and as worthless as that? Perhaps there is some one here to-day. Every man here is receiving, at this hour, by this gospel service, an invitation just as real, just as definite, just as direct, as though Jesus Christ were standing here and saying, "Come and follow me; follow me."

And what is your reply? Is it not some excuse which is really worthless? If never before, I beg you this hour to take that excuse which is keeping you back from fellowship with Christ, and hold it up in the sunlight of his love, look it through and through, and see if our Saviour is not right in saying to you, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead." He is saying in effect, "Anything that is keeping you back from me is keeping you back in the place of real death; and if you are willing to be kept back in that old life, by these wretched excuses, some day, some day, you will die there among the dead, and you will be buried by the dead."

What is your excuse to-day?

The last scene of all. Another man comes to the Saviour with the word: "I will follow thee, Lord; but first suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house." That young man was perfectly sincere. He had counted the cost. He knew it would mean sacrifice. He was not making an excuse. He did not say, "Let me go back and bid farewell," meaning that he expected to stay there. He expected to go home, and, after the briefest possible delay, to follow Christ. Why, then, did Christ rebuke him?

Listen to what Jesus replied, "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." What did he mean? Why did he say that? Ah, he said it because, in his great heart of love, he knew that delay would mean eternal loss! He knew it. You see, Jesus was on his way through this part of the country for the last time. He would never pass this way again; for the young man this opportunity was the last. There is a solemn message in these words of Christ. You may have almost decided to follow him; but you may be saying, "I will wait a short time; next Sunday, next year." Yet Christ may never again come so near to you as he is at this hour. He is saying, "If you really desire to delay, it shows that you are unfit for the kingdom of

God." Any man who has heard Christ's plea, any man who knows the Son of God is urging him to follow him, and yet is hesitating and unwilling to decide, is proving himself unfit to enter heaven. Let us not so condemn ourselves.

> "Almost cannot avail,
> Almost is but to fail,
> Sad, sad, that bitter wail,
> Almost, but lost!"

Let us resolve now to follow Christ—to follow him in humility, in sympathy, in patience; to follow him through the shadows, the semblances, the mysteries—on into a larger and a truer life; on into the yonder land, the morning land; on to the palace of the King.

IV

BALAAM

The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment.

Forsaking the right way, they went astray, having followed the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the hire of wrong-doing; but he was rebuked for his own transgression: a dumb ass spake with man's voice and stayed the madness of the prophet. 2 Peter 2:9, 15, 16.

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Matthew 6:24.

Read also Numbers 22, 23.

IV

BALAAM

A strange man he was—Balaam, the son of Beor of Pethor; a worshiper of God, yet the most famous wizard and enchanter and magician of his day; a professed servant of Jehovah, yet a veritable slave of greed; a seer of prophetic visions, yet more blind than the ass upon which he rode; foretelling the glory of the people of God, yet planning to accomplish their ruin. We see him standing upon the mountain top, his face bright with prophetic inspiration, crying out in the enthusiasm of religious emotion, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" then we follow him down to the plains of Moab, and we hear him giving the vilest counsel to king Balak, suggesting how Israel can be seduced and destroyed. He seems to be "to good and evil equal bent, and both a devil and a saint."

Yet it is not difficult to explain the apparent contradictions of this character. Balaam is try-

ing to serve two masters, and such an effort always results in contradiction and disgrace. He is offered gold as the price of sin. He avoids the sin and loses the gold; then, regretting the loss, he yields to sin and loses his soul.

Nor is his experience an uncommon one. This is the very power and pathos of the story. So many young men start out in life with lofty aspirations, who soon come to disaster and disgrace; they believe in God, but they have not come to the point of complete surrender. They fear God, but they love gain, or praise, or self-indulgence. They fear to do wrong, and yet they do not love to do right. There is no true safety save in absolute dedication of self to the faithful service of Jesus Christ. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one and despise the other."

The temptation came to Balaam, just as it always comes to you, at the weakest point. He is asked to curse God's people, and is promised a reward in gold. The story runs something like this: The armies of Israel have been sweeping everything before them, and have entered the plains of Moab. Balak, the king, fearing to meet the hosts in open conflict, sends to the far East to summon Balaam, the famous magician, that he may come and curse the peo-

ple of God. The messengers approach Balaam with the request of the king. He replies that he does not know whether he can go or not. He tells them that he must first go and inquire of God. That is just the right thing to do. When one is uncertain whether a thing is right or wrong, let him immediately ask God. Do not take a step while uncertain. "When in doubt, don't," is a safe rule. Ask God for light, and he is sure to make you understand whether a proposed course is right or wrong. So Balaam went and prayed; and when he came down in the morning to meet his guests, he was very sure that it would be wrong for him to go with them. He wished, however, to go. His words were these, "Jehovah refuseth to give me leave to go with you;" that is to say, "I would love to go, but I do not dare." Does that answer awaken a response in any of our memories? Do we know of anyone who has refrained from wrong while desiring to do the wrong? Have we ever said, "I should love this sin, but dare not yield?" If this is our attitude toward any temptation, we can be sure that the same temptation will return with redoubled force. It is not a moral victory to refuse because we are afraid. So it was with Balaam.

The messengers bring their report to king Balak. They tell him that Balaam would like

to come, but he does not dare. No wonder that Balak sends the messengers back with larger promises in the mouths of more illustrious princes. Balaam meets them with the boast, "I will not disobey God, even for a house full of gold." How self-confident we often are just before we yield to temptation. Balaam tells them that he must again consult God; that was his fatal error, he already knew the will of God. He was virtually asking God to allow him to sin; yet some of us are guilty of equal folly. When certain that a course is wrong, let us not again ask God for light; that is, to tamper with conscience, to violate conscience. No wonder that God tells Balaam to go, while at the same time feeling displeasure with him for going. That is the operation of a changeless law. To violate conscience is to blind the conscience, and to suffer the penalty of going on a wrong course with the thought that it may be right. To long for sin is to yield, and to feel justified in yielding. Augustine used to ask God to give him victory over his vices—but not yet. He hoped that God would not answer his prayers then. You may be sure that God did not, but allowed Augustine to sink yet more deeply into sin. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death."

God was very good to Balaam. He warned him of the error of his way. No sooner has the prophet started on his journey than an angel of God stands in the path to dispute his progress; but Balaam is too blind to see his peril. The beast on which he is riding seeks to avoid the danger, and turns from the road, but is driven back by the angered prophet. A second time the ass seeks to turn aside, and this time crushes the foot of the prophet against the wall. When for the third time the angel stands in the way, and when there is no room to escape, the beast falls down under the prophet, and he begins to beat the animal with his staff, and then the ass cries out to rebuke the prophet for his cruel anger. One might have thought that the prophet would suspect that he was in the wrong way, when he showed such temper against a poor dumb beast. When a man returns to his home, and makes everyone in the household miserable, finding fault with the servants, offending his wife, rebuking the children, he should be suspicious that the trouble may not be in the household, but in his own heart. Balaam, however, does not seem to feel that he is himself at fault, until his eyes are opened and he sees the angel standing in the pathway, and learns that he has been in peril of death; but even yet he does not

repent. He offers to return, but he does not wish to return. "If I must go back," he is saying, "I will return," but he wants the gold; his eyes are fixed upon it, and he insists upon going forward to his doom. Why is it that some men cannot see God's hand of warning as they go on their dangerous way? When a man finds that his course is resulting in the loss of friends and happiness and health and home, why will he not stop where he is, and seek to retrace his steps? There are providences in the life of every man who is seeking to serve self, which are intended as warnings from God. "Turn ye, turn ye . . . why will ye die?"

And now, as the story reaches its sad climax, we find Balaam coming to the end of his journey, and meeting Balak, the king. He is taken to a high summit, where, from the mountain top, he can see all the tents of Israel. He opens his mouth to curse the people of God, but, to his dismay, instead of cursing, he blesses. King Balak is astonished, and takes him to the summit of Mount Pisgah, thinking that from this height Balaam can curse Israel. But again he fails, and pronounces a blessing instead. For a third time he is taken to a mountain top; this time to the summit of Peor; but as he again looks upon the armies of Israel, he again

prophesies blessing for the people of God. Balak is enraged. He tells Balaam that he had hoped to give him a great reward, to elevate him to a position of great honor, but he bids him now begone, and to return to his own home. Before he leaves, Balaam utters one more prophecy, this time declaring that Israel will yet subdue the people of Moab. And now Balaam turns toward his home. He has been defeated, discredited, despised, disgraced. God has made him do just what his ass did—open his mouth and speak contrary to his own nature. Oh, what bitterness of disappointment and chagrin!

But let no one think that satisfaction can ever be attained by one who is seeking to serve two masters; by one who longs to sin, but who is afraid of God. Such a course always ends in unrest, disappointment, and disgrace. Yet there is one worse alternative, and that Balaam chooses. It is to turn from God to serve sin. Balaam sees the money slipping away. In the madness of despair, he turns back to Balak. He tells him how Israel can be seduced, and, through his vile counsel, twenty-four thousand of the people of God are destroyed; and now Balaam is given his reward; now he is elevated to honor; and now he is contented. Is he? Does sin ever bring satisfaction? Does Satan ever

keep his promise? Listen. We hear the noise of conflict; we behold the armies of Israel rushing on to avenge the death of those who have been destroyed. Balaam must take his place among the armies of Moab. He is high in power and in authority; but the battle is against him, and among the princes he falls, mortally wounded.

> "In the lost battle, borne down by the flying,
> Where mingles war's rattle with groans of the dying,
> There he is lying."

Let us leave him there, while stones of reproach are being piled over his body by countless generations of men, and over him let us write this epitaph, "No man can serve two masters." He wished a different one. He wished to have written, "He died the death of the righteous." Why this great difference? It is because no man can die the death of the righteous unless he lives the life of the righteous; and no man can live the life of the righteous save he who yields himself wholly to the service of Jesus Christ. Let us make to-day a complete surrender, and as we have been singing "I surrender all," let us make that surrender with the whole heart; and we shall go out of this building, not only pardoned for past sins, but able to overcome the temptations which will assail us. We can prove "more than conquerors," if we are willing to serve Christ, and to serve him alone.

V

THE RECHABITES

The word which came unto Jeremiah from Jehovah in the days of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying, Go unto the house of the Rechabites, and speak unto them, and bring them into the house of Jehovah, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink. Then I took Jaazaniah, the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habazziniah, and his brethren, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites; and I brought them into the house of Jehovah, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan the son of Igdaliah, the man of God, which was by the chamber of the princes, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the keeper of the threshold. And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites bowls full of wine, and cups; and I said unto them, Drink ye wine. But they said, We will drink no wine; for Jonadab. the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons, forever: neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any; but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land wherein ye sojourn. And we have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, or our daughters; nor to build houses for us to dwell in; neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed: but we have dwelt in tents. and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us. But it came to pass, when Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians; so we dwell at Jerusalem.

Then came the word of Jehovah unto Jeremiah, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: Go, and say to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith Jehovah. The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons, not to drink wine, are performed; and unto this day they drink none, for they obey their father's commandment. But I have spoken unto you, rising up early and speaking; and ye have not hearkened unto me. Therefore thus saith Jehovah, the God of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them; because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard; and I have called unto them, but they have not answered. Therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me forever. Jeremiah 35:1-14, 17, 19.

V

THE RECHABITES

This day has been observed throughout the world as a "Temperance Sunday;" and it may be of interest and profit for us to review a "total abstinence" story more than two thousand years old. The narrative concerns those strange men who refused to drink wine, even when it was offered them by an inspired prophet in the house of God. This refusal was due to their desire to obey a rule which had been established for their tribe by a chieftain named Jonadab; and their obedience to this ancient law was used by the prophet Jeremiah as an object lesson for the nation of Israel. It may bring an appropriate message to us.

The tribe to which Jonadab belonged was not numbered among the tribes of Israel. His people were known as Rechabites. They led a wild, roving, free life, within the borderland of Israel; and when for a brief moment Jonadab is seen upon the stage of history he appears

in company with the fierce king Jehu, who has been sent as a scourge to the people of God. Jonadab meets Jehu, as the king is on his way to complete the slaughter of the house of Ahab, and to massacre the followers of Baal. It is a bloody scene he is invited by the king to witness. All the worshipers of the idol god are gathered, by royal invitation, to a great service in the house of Baal. The building is thronged, the doors are closed, and then the word is given by the king for the detail of soldiers to put to death by the sword with hideous slaughter the entire host of idolaters. It is a cruel scene, yet its horror is not to be compared with the tragedy which is being enacted to-day by order of the Demon of Intemperance in the house of the God of Strong Drink. There fell a few hundred men, foul, faithless, godless, meriting their fate; but here before us we see men of attractive character, with bright prospects in life, with pure principles and lofty aims; men from Christian homes, with godly parents and loving friends; men such as these, being brought down by this demon to lives of infamy and graves of shame. How many such men there are! How many men who have been employed by this Pennsylvania Railroad have lost, first, their position, then their manhood, then their friends, and, last of all, life itself,

under the power of strong drink! How great an army of men in this country (one hundred thousand a year) are marching to drunkards' graves! It is a pitiful scene, and more heart-rending than anything in the story of Jonadab and Jehu.

When the Rechabite chieftain turns from the temple and its scene of blood, he rejoins his people and prepares for his tribesmen a strange rule of life. He commands that henceforth no man of them shall own or inhabit a house. No one shall drink wine or plant a vineyard; no one shall cultivate or own a field. His motive is evident. He wishes his people to be kept from the cities with their perils and abominations. He desires his tribesmen to maintain their simple manners and their roving life. He wishes them to escape the enervating and corrupting influences which he considers inseparable from a settled life. So when he prohibits the use of wine, it is not because he regards its use as sinful, but because wine is to him the very symbol, and suggestion, and product of a settled life. A vine requires time for growth and care in its cultivation. The preparation of wine requires buildings, and the wine must be stored before it is ready for use. It is evident, therefore, that this peculiar law was enacted with a view to the safety of the people he loved.

So when to-day we plead with every young man to adopt the rule of total abstinence from intoxicating drink, we need not do so on the ground that the use of liquor is necessarily criminal—that may be an open question—but we surely can be upon the grounds of self-preservation, of precaution, and of wisdom.

In view of the evil which strong drink produces, we remain total abstainers because we desire to escape a deadly peril. It is obvious that the man who refrains from taking the first glass will never be a slave to drink, and also that the man who is not a moderate drinker will never sink into a drunkard's grave. I was reading recently a little story which spoke of the peril of a single drink. A physician happened to stop with a friend in front of a saloon, when a builder whom he knew, a man of high character, of ability, and bright prospects in life, came out of the saloon and said laughingly, "I have done what I never did before in my life." "What was that?" "Well, a man, who had long been owing me money for work which I had done, and who refused all payment, offered to settle with me if I would stop in here and take a drink with him. I declined, and told him it was against my principles; but, finding that I could not change his mind, I went in and got the drink," and he laughed as he told the story.

As soon as he had finished, the friend of the doctor turned to the man and said solemnly, "Sir, that was the dearest drink that ever passed your lips, and the worst bill you ever collected;" and his words proved to be true, for within twelve months that builder was a confirmed drinker, and in three years he died the death of a drunken outcast.

If we are total abstainers on the ground of prudence, much more should we be total abstainers when we think of the possible disaster which our example as moderate drinkers may bring to others. I have been told that Rudyard Kipling was led to give up the use of intoxicants on this ground alone. The story runs that he was one day sitting at a table in a beer garden, when he saw two young girls at a table near by, who were being brought under the influence of liquor. He watched them until they rose from the table and went reeling out of the place, down to ruin and death. Kipling is said to have remarked, "My use of liquor has been aiding in the destruction of these lives, and, with the help of God, I will drink no more." I do not know how true that story is, but I believe that we may well come to that same conclusion to-day, out of sympathy and love for the men and women who are being influenced by our lives.

This rule of total abstinence seems very peculiar to some men. It is much less peculiar than the rule which had been established by Jonadab for the Rechabites. They obeyed their chieftain year after year, and then for generations after his death. But at the time of which our story treats they were subjected to a very peculiar temptation, and as we follow the story we shall learn a lesson in obedience. It was the year when Nebuchadnezzar's armies were sweeping onward toward Jerusalem. It became unsafe to dwell in the open country, and we find the Rechabites seeking their safety within the walls of Jerusalem. They drive their cattle through the streets; they pitch their tents in the open squares of the city; their strange appearance and customs are discussed by all the people. Then it is that God puts it into the heart of the prophet Jeremiah to use these Rechabites to instruct his own people. By invitation of the prophet, the Rechabite chieftains are asked to the temple, and, being received within its courts, they are offered great bowls of wine; but they refuse to drink, even though urged by the prophet of God. They stand true to their principles, and declare that they cannot disobey the rule of their ancient chief. Then Jeremiah turns to the people of Jerusalem, and, using the obedience of the Rechabites as a text,

he urges upon the people a true obedience to God. It furnishes, as we have said, an admirable object lesson in the matter of obedience.

Obedience to parents is suggested to us most obviously by this beautiful picture, and such obedience is a lesson many of us need to learn. It may possibly be obedience in the very matter of the use of wine. The Rechabites might easily have said what you have heard some young men say, "Our father did not know what is best for us; times have changed; we know what he said, but his advice is out of date." It does not take some young men very long to grow wiser than their elders, but there may be for such a time of deep regret. I was recently reminded of that story from the life of the great man of letters, Dr. Johnson. He was found standing in the marketplace of Litchfield, with bared head, in the blinding rain. "Why are you standing here," a friend is asking. "Oh," he replies, I am standing here for a little while to do penance, when I remember how, here in this old town, I used to disobey my father." More than one man has lived to shed bitter tears in the memory of his willful and disobedient days. Some time since one was standing beside the coffin of a mother, whose heart had been broken by his wasted life, and, between his convulsive sobs, he was heard to murmur, "Oh, if I had

only done as she told me!" "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee."

Obedience to principle is even more strongly depicted in this striking lesson. It was no usual temptation by which these Rechabites were beset. There in the temple courts, invited by the messenger of God, how easily could they have appeased their consciences by saying that under such circumstances it might have been right to disobey the ancestral rule! How natural for them to have said, "Of course, we will not habitually use wine, and when we are back in the wilderness we will not think of strong drink; but here in the city, and on this one great occasion, in the temple of God, we can break our usual rule!" And is it not frequently the case with a young man whose rule is to abstain from strong drink that he finds himself in circumstances which seem to warrant his breaking his usual custom? He is dining with wealthy friends, he is offered a glass of champagne by some lady; or he is away from the usual circle of his relatives and acquaintances, and there comes the suggestion, "Of course, I shall not become an habitual drinker, and these circumstances are so very peculiar that it will be perfectly safe for me to take a single glass." But this is the time for one to show his true man-

liness, by his absolute obedience to principle. I am not here discussing the necessity of such a principle, but I am pleading for faithfulness to any rule of life upon which one has determined. That is such a refreshing story which comes to us from the life of General Fiske. He was in command of a certain district in the Southwest when it became his duty to receive and welcome to the city a superior officer who was coming to take command. He escorted the Major General to the hotel in which rooms had been engaged. As soon as they were in the parlor the superior officer ordered a servant to bring in four whiskey punches. "Only three, if you please, General," said General Fiske courteously. "You will not refuse to drink with me, will you?" said the superior officer. "If I should drink now it would be for the first time; you would not advise me to begin, would you, General?" "No! God bless you; long may you wave," was the gracious and gallant response. It is courage like this which reveals character worthy of our praise.

Obedience to God is, however, the supreme lesson of the ancient story. It was to teach a nation this truth, that Jeremiah tempted these sons of Rechab. He knew they would be faithful, and he knew that by their faithfulness he would be able to bring a message to all the peo-

ple of God. Let that message enter our hearts to-day. It will be one of peculiar encouragement if read in the light of that story of old. Jeremiah pleaded with the nation to obey their God, as the Rechabites obeyed their father; and if we recognize the duty of obeying our parents, and the wisdom of acting in accordance with our principles, much more should we seek to do the will of our Father who is in heaven. It may be in the matter of intoxicating drink, it may be in our friendships, our amusements, or our plans of life; but in things great and small, let us seek to do his will, and in the chiefest of all matters, let us remember that it is his commandment that we should "believe on the Name of his Son Jesus Christ," and should "love one another." It is not merely a privilege, it is a duty for one to yield his life to the service of Christ. And if we so yield we shall surely be safe. He is a Friend who alone can deliver. It may be that some one here is needing to-day special deliverance from the power of drink. I was reading of a hunter in India who had fallen asleep on the porch of his bungalow. A tiger had seized him while unconscious, and when he awoke he found that he was being dragged away by the arm, into the jungle. But a friend heard his cries, and springing out killed the tiger, and set the poor sufferer free. There

is probably some man here to-day whose right hand is in the tiger's mouth, who feels that he is being dragged down to death; but there is One here more mighty and more loving than the truest earthly friend. He will save you now if you put your trust in him. God wills, God commands it; yield yourself to serve and to obey Christ Jesus the Lord.

The last word of the ancient story is this:—That because of their obedience to their father, the tribe of the Rechabites should not become extinct. Jeremiah declared, "Therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me forever." And truly the word is repeated for us: "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

One Sunday afternoon, when I had been speaking here on the subject of fidelity to principle, a gentleman, whom I recognized, stopped to tell me a story, which he began by saying he knew to be true. I knew it would be true, for I knew the man and the place he occupied in the community and the church. He told me of a young man who had escorted his fiancée to a fashionable reception given by a relative of the young lady. As they stood near a wine table the young man was offered a glass. "Excuse me," he said, "but I never use wine." "But you

must drink to my aunt's health," said the young lady. "You must excuse me," was the reply, "but I cannot accept." "Yes, but I would regard it as an insult to my aunt if you refuse." "I am sorry, but refuse I must." Later on the unhappy conversation was resumed, and the young lady remarked, "I see there are some points on which we decidedly differ"; and in the end this engagement was broken. Only a few years after, that poor girl had fallen a victim to drink, and was murdered in her bed by a drunken husband with her infant babe by her side. The young man had lived to become an officer in a Christian church. "And I," concluded my friend, "am that man." This is simply one story from the book of life which illustrates the verse we have quoted, "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

VI

SAMSON IN DISGRACE

And the Philistines laid hold on him, and put out his eyes; and they brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison-house. Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven.

And the lords of the Philistines gathered them together to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice; for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand. And when the people saw him, they praised their god; for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hand our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, who hath slain many of us. And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison-house; and he made sport before them. And they set him between the pillars: and Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel of the pillars whereupon the house resteth, that I may lean upon them. Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport.

And Samson called unto Jehovah, and said, O Lord Jehovah, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes. And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house rested, and leaned upon them, the one with his right hand, and the other with his left. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead that he slew at his death were more than they that he slew in his life. Then his brethren and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and brought him up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the burying-place of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel twenty years. Judges 16:21-31.

VI

SAMSON IN DISGRACE

We should remember that the story of Samson's disgrace fills but one brief chapter of his life. There were other chapters. There had been twenty long years of victory, of honor, of service for the people of God; but men do not remember these. "The evil that men do lives after them." So will it be with us; no matter how beautiful our lives, if, in forgetfulness of God, we fall into sin, it will be the sin which will be remembered by the world. This is a warning which the story suggests.

For twenty years Samson had been a great hero, and had performed deeds of valor, because he was strengthened by the Spirit of the Lord. His strength was not due to his long hair, as some have supposed. His hair was simply an outward symbol of his devotion to God. He was a "Nazarite." According to the vow he had taken he drank no wine; and used no razor; and he did not come into contact with the dead; but these peculiar observances were merely the ex-

ternal symbols and suggestion of his complete dedication to the service of the Lord. Because he was so dedicated, he was enabled to perform miracles of strength.

Nor did his power reside in his muscles. Samson was not a giant. If his great strength had been due to the size of muscle or bone, the Philistines would not have offered Delilah eleven hundred pieces of silver in order that she might discover the secret of his strength; they could have understood his power without an interpreter. There was a secret. To this, we have already referred. It is a secret which we may all possess. Complete dedication to God results in our receiving supernatural power, whereby we can overcome sin and be of service to our fellowmen. This is the word of encouragement which the lesson brings.

The story opens with the departure of Samson from Dan. We read that he "went to Gaza." That was the beginning of his trouble. He was leaving the scene of his victories, his service and his glory, and going down to the city of his disaster, his disgrace, and his death. He was leaving the land of his fathers, and turning toward the land of the enemies of his God. But he was not going alone; as we look upon him to-day, we see that he has a great company of followers. The men who are going down to-

ward Gaza from Dan are not few in number. Those of us here to-day, who find less interest in church services than we felt a few years ago; those of us who have less and less time for our Bibles; those who are neglecting the seasons of daily prayer; those who have not time for Christian work; those who feel less of love for the Lord; are all faced toward Gaza. The whole church of Ephesus seemed to be turned in that way. They were good men, there was nothing wrong in their lives, but the Saviour was saying of them, "I have this against thee, that thou hast left thy first love." I think the poet of our childhood knew what it was to go toward Gaza, for he sang:—

"I remember, I remember the fir-trees dark and high;
I used to think their slender tops were close against the sky;
It was a childish ignorance, but now 'tis little joy
To know I'm farther off from heaven than when I was a boy."

There are a good many of us who feel that we are "farther off from heaven" than we were in those days when we learned to pray at our mother's knee, when we heard the story of our Saviour's power, and when we were resolving that we should grow up to follow in our Saviour's steps. Of course we are not expecting to become servants of sin. Samson never

dreamed that he would become a captive in the power of the Philistines. Our lives may be free from reproach, yet if we are growing more forgetful of our Saviour, we are following in that great company which was going down from Dan.

There were some things Samson was leaving behind. He was surely leaving the service of God. He did not even try to persuade himself that he could do anything for the Lord down there in Gaza; he was simply intent on having a good time. It had grown a little tiresome for him up there in Dan. There had been a good deal of hardship, and no little fighting, and self-denial. He thought he would enjoy the change; and we see him starting out on the journey which had so fatal an end. It is always a pathetic sight to see a man who is giving up his Christian work. He is not intending to become a servant of sin, but it is always a sign that a man is faced the wrong way, when he is allowing his companionships, his amusements, or even his business projects, to absorb the time and the attention which he once gave to the work in the Sabbath school, in the church, or in the Christian Association. We follow such a man with no little solicitude, when we see him turning away from some definite service which he has formerly been rendering in the name of the Lord.

There was something more that Samson was leaving behind in Dan. It was his dependence upon God. Instead of this, we see him weighted down by a great burden of self-confidence and self-conceit. You can notice it in the very way in which he is walking. He seems to be saying: "No one can capture me; I am going into the very stronghold of the enemy, but I cannot be overcome. I have been a victor for twenty years, whom have I to fear?" There are a good many men who face Gaza with such self-confidence as this. They have been able to resist temptations year after year; and now while they are conscious that they are giving up active Christian service, they have no thought that they may fall under the power of sin.

It is in the spirit of self-confidence, that we see our hero enter the city of Gaza. At once a plot is formed to capture him; but he rises at midnight and, with the glee of a schoolboy, amuses himself with the joke of carrying off the city gates, posts and all, and placing them on the top of yonder high hill. It is this self-confidence which explains his treatment of Delilah. Her name means "a languishing beauty," and no sooner has be found her in the valley of Sorek, than she begins her attempts to deliver him into the power of the enemy. She begs him to tell her the secret of his strength. "If

they bind me with seven green withes that were never dried, then shall I become weak, and be as another man," replies Samson; but no sooner is he bound than at the word, "The Philistines are upon thee, Samson," he breaks the withes as a thread is broken when touched by fire. It was all a huge joke; he knew he could not be bound. So again, at the entreaty of Delilah, he declares that if he should be bound with new ropes, he would "become weak, and be as another man." But again he breaks the ropes from off his arms like a thread.

A third time, Delilah is pleading with him to reveal to her the secret of his strength. He replies, "If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web." But when she has fastened his hair to the web, and when again she has called, "The Philistines are upon thee, Samson," we find him rising and walking away with the beam and with the web. Samson is greatly enjoying all these experiments, but his confidence is in himself, and when we find a man depending upon his own strength of character in the face of daily temptations, we tremble, for we know he is but a step from defeat and disgrace. Particularly is this true in case he begins to speak lightly of sacred things. Samson's hair was not the source of his strength, but it was a symbol of his consecration; and when a man

begins to speak lightly of the Bible, of the Church, of Christian work, you know that all that is lacking is the appearance in his life of some great temptation, and then comes his pitiful fall. So it was in the case of Samson.

We find Delilah returning to him again. She insists that he cannot love her if he so continues to make sport of her; and now the great hero tells her the secret of his strength. He tells her it is due to his devotion to God; but he has long since left that devotion behind him in his desire to gratify himself; and we are not surprised to find that he is soon asleep, utterly forgetful of his duty, his danger, and of his God. How many men there are who are so sleeping in the hour of temptation; how many men about us are living with no thought of God, and with no sense of their need of his saving power! To such the temptation comes suddenly, and they are taken as Samson was taken. In his unconsciousness, the symbol of his dedication is cut from his head. He is awakened by the cry, "The Philistines are upon thee!" He thinks he can escape as he has escaped before, but "he knew not that Jehovah was departed from him."

Now the Philistines take him; they gouge out his eyes, they bind him with fetters of brass, they compel him to grind in the prison house,

taking the place of a female slave. What a pathetic picture it is to see one who has always been able to resist temptation, to be of service to the people of God,—a man of reputation, of position, and power,—now blinded and helpless, a slave of sin! Yet the pathos of it all is not that the man has fallen so low, but this,—that the name of the Lord is blasphemed. The Philistines declared that the God of Samson had no power; they made sport of the great hero, but more terrible still, they derided the name of his God; and this is the pity, that when a Christian has grown negligent of his duty, and then forgetful of his Lord, and then has fallen into sin, it is not only his own name that is disgraced, but the world is ever saying, "This man was a Christian, this man was a member of the church, this man was a follower of Christ." That is the pity of it all.

"Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven." There is encouragement in these words. They speak to us of repentance, of a new turning toward God, of pardon, of new dedication, of renewed power. The hair was but the symbol of his devotion to God, but when we read that the symbol is reappearing, we know that faith and devotion are present in the heart. It is a great thing to see a young man begin to attend the church which

he has so long neglected. It is wonderfully encouraging to know that one whose life has been blackened by sin is beginning to pray, and is secretly reading the Bible, which has so long been closed. The Bible, and prayer, and church services do not save a man. They may be outward signs, but they suggest to us that a change has come, that the heart is turning toward God, and we know then that there will be new power and new life. And so it was with Samson. We hear him asking that his strength may be restored, and we witness the answer to his prayer. His captors are rejoicing in his misery. They are gathered by thousands in the great temple of Dagon their god, and on the temple roof. The old blind hero asks the boy who is leading him by the hand to let him feel the pillars by which the temple is supported, and now he leans upon the pillars, and in hideous ruin he drags the temple to the ground. He is avenged; he has dealt a fatal blow to the enemies of his God. The name of his God is vindicated. The people of his God are delivered. Samson has triumphed,—but he is dead.

It is possible for a man to be forgiven. One can rise after he has fallen. He can be of service to his fellow Christians. He can vindicate the power of Christ; but he can never occupy the place which he might have held; his life will

never be quite the same again. Samson may regain his strength; Samson can never again be "the judge" and continued deliverer of the people of God. It is this last thought, suggested by the story of Samson, which is embodied in this poem which I wish to read to you in conclusion:—

"I walked through the woodland meadows,
  Where sweet the thrushes sing,
And found in a bed of mosses
  A bird with a broken wing.
I healed its wound, and each morning
  It sang its old sweet strain;
But the bird with the broken pinion
  Never soared as high again.

"I found a young life broken
  By sin's seductive art;
And touched with a Christlike pity
  I took him to my heart.
He lived with a noble purpose,
  And struggled not in vain,
But the life that sin had stricken
  Never soared as high again.
"But the bird with the broken pinion

  Kept another from the snare,
And the life that sin had stricken
  Raised another from despair.
Each ill has its compensation;
  There is healing for every pain;
But the bird with a broken pinion
  Never soars as high again."

VII

THE MESSAGE OF CHRISTMAS

And there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock. And an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this is the sign unto you: Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

Glory to God in the highest,

And on earth peace among men, in whom he is well pleased.

And it came to pass, when the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass, which the Lord has made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found both Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger. And when they saw it, they made known concerning the saying which was spoken to them about this child. And all that heard it wondered at the things which were spoken unto them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, even as it was spoken unto them. Luke 2: 8-20.

VII

THE MESSAGE OF CHRISTMAS

He would be a strange man indeed who would not rejoice in the return of Christmastide. Some have criticised its customs as childish or pagan; "Santa Claus" has been called a wicked fiction, and "mistletoe and yule" have been traced to Druid days. But we love them all,—the trees, the toys, the gifts, the gladness, the greens, the carols, the hymns—for they bring to us a message as beautiful and bright as a voice from heaven; in fact they make us to hear again the very song which the Christmas angels sang.

1. The first note of that message is Joy. That was the very word of the angel: "I bring you good tidings of great joy." And surely of all the festivals of the year, Christmas is most full of gladness, of rejoicing and of good cheer, not only for the rich, but also for the humble and the poor. The angels rejoiced on that first Christmas morning, but the angels said the joy

was not for them alone; it was joy for the shepherds to whom they were speaking, and joy for the whole world. Those shepherds were common men—"everyday men" we would say—busy with their humble tasks; yet to them, first of all, came the gladness of the Saviour's birth. So the Christmas time, as it comes to us, brings a message of cheer for every man; and first of all for the weary toiler at his work.

> "This is the gospel of labor
> Ring it out, oh ye bells of the kirk,
> That the God of love came down from above
> To live with the men who work."

I have been reminded by an old legend that the joy and gladness of this season have benefited even the dumb animals, because of the kindliness that has been brought into the world by the spirit of Christmas. The legend tells us that, when our Saviour was being taken by his parents into Egypt, the cattle came out and knelt down before him in the road. Over there in Devonshire, England, they have a tradition, and the farmers are said to believe it, that at midnight after Christmas eve, the cattle in the stalls kneel down with their heads turned, as far as they can, toward the town of Bethlehem. I like that story and that old legend, because it tells us that everywhere, at Christmas time, where Jesus Christ is known, a spirit of glad-

ness and of rejoicing is to be found. The old Britons used to keep the "Merrie Christmas time" with a wildness of revelry. They would pile high the wood on top of the Yule log, and they would drink the ale out of the skull of some poor slaughtered enemy. But whatever form the Christmas joy may take, let us remember that the source and reason for our rejoicing must depend upon our acceptance of Christ. When we know him well, we can sing the carol and we can rejoice in the spirit of the lines:—

> "God rest ye, merrie gentlemen;
> Upon this Christmas morn,
> The God of all true Christians
> Was of a woman born."

When we take him into our hearts we know something of the joy of the Christmas morning.

II. There is another note which we hear today: it is the note which the angels sounded out last of all; it is perhaps the chief note of the Christmas music. We may possibly call it the sum and substance of the Christmas story; it is, of course, the note of Love. There is joy in our hearts because we know of the love of God; and when the angels were singing of the newborn Christ, their last words were these, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men;" that is, God's love shown to men, and the love of men shown to one another.

I remember an old story of a knight of the Middle Ages, who did not believe in a God, and who thought that he would challenge God, if there was a God, to combat. He went out into the field, full armed, and then looked up and cried: "O God, if there be a God, I challenge thee to mortal combat! Come forth and show whether thou hast the power of which thy priests are boasting." When the poor man had so defied God, we read that a little piece of parchment was seen to float down through the air and fall at his feet. He picked it up and read on it these words, "God is love." God is love. Oh, what madness to challenge a God who is looking down in love and pity! When the knight read the words, he broke his sword and kneeling on the fragments cried out, "Then I serve thee, O God." Whenever a man realizes how much God loves him and what he has done for him, that man is ready, as never before, to open his heart and yield himself to the service of God.

There is then this definite appeal which Christ makes to us at the Christmas time. It is like the story of Silas Marner. It is one of George Eliot's most stirring pictures. You remember that that poor old weaver in his wasted life, angry with all the world, without love in his heart for any one, was hoarding up his treasure, one piece of gold after another, and was hiding it

beneath the floor of his hut. You remember the night in which that gold was stolen, and the frenzy of the poor miser. You remember how, that same night, there was found on his doorstep a little babe, beautiful, appealing, helpless; and how the old man took that little child into the hut. Then little by little his heart opened and he began to love the child and then to care for it. Day after day passed and the child grew up, and you remember how the old man's heart became more tender with every passing year and how he was transformed by the love he felt for that little child.

It is the same story, it is the same appeal that comes at Christmas time—the infinite love of God revealed to us in the gift of the Christ-Child; and when we love his Son, then how life is transformed; how it is transfigured! At this season of the year let us linger a time near Bethlehem; think of its wonderful story revealing God's love, and then see what we can do to show our love to our fellow-men.

"Love came down at Christmas,
  Love all lovely, Love divine,
 Love was born at Christmas,
  Stars and angels gave the sign.

"Love shall be our token,
  Love be yours and love be mine,
 Love to God and all men,
  Love the universal sign."

That is the way Christina Rossetti sang about Christmas time; let love be the message which this day brings to us.

III. There is another note which the angels sounded, and that is the note of *Hope*; and if at no other time of the year we feel hope, it should come to us at the time when word is brought to us anew of a Saviour's birth, of God's love, of God's grace. The angels came to the shepherds, saying, "There is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." Whatever your life may have been, however dark this past year may have seemed to you, however little you may have attained of your ideals, whatever sins you may have committed and whatever sorrow rests upon your heart, wake up on the Christmas morning with a new hope, and say that even as Christ came to be the Saviour, so "there is hope for me." "My poor broken life can be saved, it can be made beautiful by the power of that Saviour." We sing of "the Star of Bethlehem." Now a star ever speaks of hope; and the Christmas angels, their songs were of hope. Why not greet the coming morning with bright expectation, believing that better days are to come as you accept, as your Saviour, "Jesus Christ, the Lord"? Oh, he will be so near to you, God in the flesh, God with man, God with us!

There is an old story which comes to us, a piece of history, I am told, of the time when the Black Death swept over Europe and depopulated whole towns and cities. It seems that in the town of Goldberg absolute silence had been reigning for days. Men had been afraid of each other; men were hesitating even to give one another a cup of cold water, because death was lurking everywhere. The doors were closed, and the windows barred. But one man, as Christmas drew near, remembered the Christmas songs and carols of other days, and when the Christmas eve had deepened to midnight, he unbarred the door of his house and stepped out into the silent street. As he went forth he thought of a carol he loved, and he began to sing:—

> "To-day is born to us a Child,
> God with us;
> His mother is a virgin mild,
> God with us.
> God with us, against us who dare be!"

As the carol floated out on the night wind it fell upon the ear of another man imprisoned in his own home for fear of death. But when he heard the carol he opened his door, and he came out and joined the singer. Together they went through the streets singing,

"God with us, God with us
Against us who dare be!"

When the sound of these two voices was heard, one door after another opened, and men, women, and children came forth until there were twenty-five of them, marching through the streets of that old city. And as they marched they sang,

"God with us, God with us,
Against us who dare be!"

The story runs that of all the twenty-five, in the days of that awful Black Death, not one died. They took courage and cheer from the fact that they were together, remembering that God was with them. I tell you, friends, the message of Christmas is this, that God is with us, and if we will turn our backs upon the days that are past and bury them, if we will come out in God's name and become followers of his Son Jesus Christ, there is victory for us, there is hope for every life. "God is with us," who can be against us? My friends, whatever your passion, whatever your sin, whatever your failure or your fault, look up with hopefulness at Christmas, and say, "God is with us."

IV. The last note I will rëecho is the note of Faith, which I have already suggested; for if Christmas comes to us with a message of hope

and love above all else it comes with this message of trust. Christmas joys remind us of the unseen. It is more easy at Christmas time to believe in the supernatural. Why, we believe in angels at Christmas time. It does not seem to be the fashion of the day to believe in angels. Men class them with fairies. But you know that angels have been sent forth, as we read in the Bible, "to be ministering spirits"; and wherever you are, on the train, in the street, in the home, or in the office, there are angels about you, just as there were angels at the first Christmas, angels to watch over you and keep you and care for you.

It is easier to believe in each other at Christmas time. When the season of good will is passing, we are surprised, again and again, to find the heart that lies beneath many a very forbidding exterior, and to learn how much sympathy there really is in the men and women whom we have hardly dared to trust, and who we never dared think loved us. Above all, it seems easier at Christmas to believe in Christ. Of course there can be no Christmas where there is no Christ. There can be no real joy in the heart, there can be no true love, there can be no eternal hope unless Christ is there. Christmas brings us a glad invitation to receive Christ as our Saviour and our Lord. Oh, let us not delay!

There is a legend that tells us that when the Wise Men were on their way, following that star, they stopped one evening at the home of an old woman, who took them in, cared for them and when they turned to go they said to her, "Would you not like to come with us and find the King?" "Oh, yes," she replied, "but wait until I attend to a few necessary duties." While she was gone the star moved on and the Wise Men followed it. When she came out the Wise Men had gone, and the story runs that she went through all the world, in the years which followed, seeking for the star and seeking for the Wise Men, but seeking in vain.

This Christmas comes with a divine message, to every man and every woman here, to follow on after Jesus Christ. Oh, do not let this message go unheeded! Do not hesitate or say, "Next Christmas I will begin the new life," but say it to-night; and yield yourself to Christ. Open your heart to him, and say, as at Christmas we sing:—

"Thou didst leave thy throne and thy kingly crown
When thou camest to earth for me,
But in Bethlehem's home was there found no room,
For thy holy nativity.
Oh, come to my heart, Lord Jesus,
There is room in my heart for thee."

VIII

"FOUNDED UPON A ROCK"

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VIII

"FOUNDED UPON A ROCK"

"Everyone, therefore, that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock. And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof." Matt. 7:24-27.

Those are the last words of the greatest sermon that was ever preached. They may be the first Christian message of a New Year for some of us; and for some they may possibly suggest the beginning of a new and a truer life. We call this sermon, "The Sermon on the Mount." We might possibly call it "The Sermon of the Kingdom," or "The Sermon of the King," because the great King is describing for us, in this sermon, the character of those who shall enter into his eternal kingdom; and as he comes

to the close of the sermon he declares that only those whom he appoints shall enter in. Therefore a man who refuses to obey him and refuses to hear his word is like a man who is building his house upon the sand. And the man who is willing to hear him, willing to submit to him, willing to obey him, is like a man who is building his house upon a rock.

There may have been no very great difference between the two houses. It was not a question as to the appearance of the two buildings; and the problem that we face to-day is not the question as to whether a Christian man may have a more attractive character than a man who is not a Christian; it is not the question whether a Christian life may be more beautiful than a life which is not called Christian. The question is about the foundation. The question which comes to us to-day is this: On what is a man building his life? On what is he founding his hopes?

Nor does the question emerge as to the character of the storm that came. It was not a question about the storm, but it was a question about the strength to resist the storm. It may not be a very practical question as to whether a Christian has more temptations than a man who is not a Christian. It may not be an important question as to whether a Christian has more

trials than a man who is not a Christian. But the question is this: Is the Christian man better able to resist in the time of temptation? Is the Christian man better able to stand in the time of trial? Is the Christian man better prepared for the day of judgment, than the man who is not a follower of Christ? That is the question.

Our Master, of course, is telling us that a man, whose foundation in life is only his own resolutions, his own strength of character, his own determination, is like a man who built his house upon the sand. Such a life will never stand the test of the storm. But the man who is founding his house upon the Rock is the picture of a man who says, "My life, my hope is built on nothing but Jesus Christ and him alone." That is the difference that is pointed out to us by these two pictures.

As we read the closing sentences of this sermon, the great Preacher suggests to us two or three reasons why men are so foolish as to build on anything else than upon Jesus Christ and his word and his will. First of all he suggests that

1. Some men are indifferent.

He has been urging his followers to enter in at the narrow gate. "There is a broad way and a wide gate; it is easy enough to enter

there; but the broad way and the wide gate, they lead to destruction; and the narrow gate and the narrow way lead to life. It is easy enough to go down to destruction, but it requires a tremendous effort to enter into life." You want to know why some men are not Christians, why their whole lives are built upon sand; it is for this reason: there are some men who are perfectly indifferent to Christ. They say they do not see why we should make so much of religion. They say they are simply "going on in their own way, and it will be all right, by and by." It is the easiest thing in this world to be lost. It is the simplest thing imaginable for a young man or a young woman to drift down to sin and eternal death. You need to do nothing but just fold your hands and drift, that is all. You need only to go out in Philadelphia, and do just as other young men and women do; to make no effort whatsoever,—and you will be lost. Every man or woman will be lost who is making no effort. It is only the man or woman who some day wakes up and says: "I see which way this thing is tending. I need a Saviour"; it is only that man or woman who will be saved in time or eternity.

We hear about a boy who goes down to the Niagara River and sees a boat there. He unloosens it and steps in and pushes it out on

the stream. It drifts away from the shore, slowly at first, but more and more rapidly, until the poor boy is swept on to death. The sad thing is this, that a multitude of boys and girls and young men and women, in Philadelphia, are doing just exactly that sort of thing as they enter upon life. They are just pushing out, and they are sitting down and drifting and drifting and drifting down to eternal death. It is not strange that when the Master closed his sermon he said what folly it was to be indifferent to his message and to his will. Oh, my friends, if you are careless and indifferent to things which concern Christ, believe me, you are going down to absolute death and nothing can save you until you wake up and turn toward him for life!

II. Then our Master gave us another reason why there are some men who are building simply upon the sand. He said there are some who are actually hostile to him and to his work.

I do not suppose there are any men or women here who count themselves enemies of Jesus Christ. But there are such men in the world to-day; and it is absolutely foolish for a man to put his face steadfastly against the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, and still expect to be a pure, good man here, or to be saved hereafter. He cannot do it. You remember

Franklin's experience. He passed through a period in his early life, not only of doubt, but of actual hostility to all religion. He went far enough to observe what was taking place in his own life and in the lives of those friends of his who were opposed to religion. He saw one after another go down, falling beneath the simplest temptations and their lives becoming shipwrecked. Benjamin Franklin came to the point, not of confessing Christ, but of determining that a man who is opposing revealed religion is a man who is cutting the foundation out from beneath the feet of men who would live clean, decent lives. It was on this ground that he advised Thomas Paine to refrain from publishing his "Age of Reason."

The strongest character needs the support of a true religious faith to sustain it in the times of trial. And one who has rejected Christ and refused his salvation will be, in the day of testing, and in the day of judgment, like the man who built his house upon the sand. "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof."

III. Then our Master suggested one other reason why it is that some men are willing to build upon the sand. He tells us that some are self-deceived.

They think they are followers of Christ because they are nominal Christians or have once confessed their faith. It is a very searching word: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Not every one whose name is on a church register, not every one who is supposed to belong to Jesus Christ, not every one that has taken his name upon the lip, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. No. It is not a matter of profession; not a matter of lip service; not a matter of having your name enrolled in the list of those who subscribe to some creed. It is a matter of life. It is a matter of such submission of the will and heart to Jesus Christ that the life will manifest it. That is it. And there are a good many men and women whose hopes are built upon the memory that they once joined the church, or upon the thought that they are regarded by their fellowmen as Christians, or the fact that they have contributed something to some institution or some church—this is building upon the sand. But the rock is Jesus Christ; and the man who is building upon the Rock is the man who wholeheartedly not in a mere profession, but sin-

cerely and honestly yields himself to the service of Jesus Christ—he is building upon a rock.

But possibly some one may say: "Is it not true that a good many men stand the temptations of life who are not professed followers of Christ?" Yes, they do stand for a time. They do stand until they are tempted sorely enough and then they fall. We must remember, too, that the Master is speaking here not merely of the storms and temptations of life, but of the judgment yonder. He is saying, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, who is in heaven." And he adds, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, . . . , and then will I profess unto them. I never knew you, depart from me ye that work iniquity": for he is reminding us that there is a time of judgment; and that he is to be the Judge; and that he is to say whether a man shall enter into the eternal kingdom. How foolish to hope for his approval then, if we refuse to obey him and serve him now!

Then, too, many a man who is living without Christ, is standing pure and true, merely because he has not yet been sufficiently tried and tested. Let the storm burst upon him and he will fall.

"It is easy enough to be pleasant
When life flows along like a song,
But the man worth while is the one who will smile
When everything goes dead wrong;
For the test of the heart is trouble,
And it always comes with the years,
And the smile that is worth the praises of earth
Is the smile that comes through tears.

"It is easy enough to be prudent,
When nothing tempts you to stray,
When without and within no voice of sin
Is luring your soul away,
But it's only a negative virtue
Until it is tried by fire,
And the life that is worth the honor of earth
Is the life that resists desire.

"By the cynic, the sad, and the fallen,
Who had no strength for the strife,
The world's highway is cumbered to-day;
They make up the item of life.
But the virtue that conquers passion
And the sorrow that hides in a smile—
It is these that are worth the homage of earth,
For we find them but once in a while."

I leave the question with you to-day, my friends. What are the great underlying principles of your life? Are you yielding absolutely to Jesus Christ, or are you going out and saying, "I will depend upon myself and will trust in myself alone"? May God grant that we shall turn only to Christ, and put our hope and confidence in him, saying, as we sometimes sing:—

"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;

"I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.

"On Christ, the Solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand."

IX

"THE LAME MAN HEALED"

Now Peter and John were going up into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. And a certain man that was lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the door of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked to receive an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him, with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but what I have, that give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk. And he took him by the right hand, and raised him up: and immediately his feet and his ankle-bones received strength. And leaping up, he stood, and began to walk; and he entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God: and they took knowledge of him, that it was he that sat for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

And as he held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. Acts 3:1-11.

IX

"THE LAME MAN HEALED"

The healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the temple was not only a striking miracle, it was also a suggestive parable. There is the poor man lying just outside the temple courts, but he cannot enter in. Peter is passing by and is seeing him there, and then, in the name of Christ, reaching down his hand and lifting him up and together they are going on into the temple. That is not merely a piece of history. It seems to me that is a very beautiful picture of what is being done this very day, in the name of Christ; the power which is being given by faith in his name, the power by which men can rise and go on to a higher and a better life. There is too the picture of sympathy, by which one can stoop down, and take his brother by the hand, and in the name of Christ lift him up, and then go on with him into a new experience of gladness, and service, and strength.

I. For instance, we might look upon the temple as being the symbol of a life of prayer; and the entering into the temple as a picture of the entrance upon a life of communion and fellowship with God. It was the place of prayer that is the very story. Peter and John were going up to pray. They were passing into the house of God, the place of prayer; and it was then they saw this man lying at the gate, unable to go in, excluded by the law, because he was lame. Then Peter reaches down his hand and lifts that man up, in the name of Jesus Christ; and leads him into the place of prayer.

You know there are some men here who have never been there,—I mean to the place of prayer. There are some here to-day who do not pray, and who are just as truly outside of the temple courts as that poor man, whom Peter found at the beautiful gate of the temple.

I remember very well the case of a certain railroad wreck. A man had been so injured that it was evident there was no possible hope for him. Some one saw his lips were moving, and came near and found that the sufferer was asking for some one to pray. So he turned about and said, "Is there any one here who can pray?" The men were ready to take off their hats and they felt deep sympathy, but there was not a man who could pray. Not one. That poor man's

spirit passed on into eternity, and there was not one who could voice for him a prayer. Why not? What is the trouble? Why do some men not pray, and why do some men feel no joy when you remind them of the continual presence of God? It is because of the sense of unworthiness, it is the consciousness of sin, it is the feeling of dread in the presence of a holy God. It is because he is unknown, who is "the Way," as he is "the Truth," and "the Life." My joy here to-day is to speak the name of Jesus Christ, and to tell you that, whatever your life, whatever your character has been, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth you can to-day rise up and enter into the holy place of prayer. The way has been opened for you through the atoning work of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

It sometimes seems to me that the whole work of redemption, the whole story of the Bible, is just about the way in which men can get back to God. There is the story of man sinning, and, because of his sin, shut out of the garden, where he has been communing with God. Then the story runs on until you see the cross erected on Calvary; and then, when the book is closing, you find that man is back in a paradise with its Tree of Life, and now "the dwelling of God is with men."

God wants you to come back to him. He has made a way for you through the blood of Christ. There is no man here to-day who cannot, as he sits here, lift up his heart in prayer to God, and be sure that God will hear him if he prays in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Oh, that you might rise up at the mention of his name and walk on into the life, where, every day, you could feel, not a dread of God, but a joy that God was with you, and so near that he would help you in your every sorrow, your every perplexity, your every care! In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, you who have been lying at the beautiful gate of the temple, and who have been fearing you never could enter in, I beseech you to rise up now, with faith in Christ, and pass into that life of fellowship and communion and prayer.

II. Then, too, there is a very beautiful picture here of the beginning of a life of real strength, a life of real liberty, a life of real power. Here is a poor man just outside the temple. He is only a burden to his friends. They bring him up every day and lay him there. Then he holds out his hand for alms. He cannot enter in; and he sees afar the ceremonies in the temple. He knows all about them, all about the fasts and the feasts and the festivals, but he cannot go in. He knows he is helpless.

He has not the strength to go in and keep all the law of God which is being observed in that temple. Is not this a picture of more than one man that you know, lying at the gate and looking with wistful eyes upon a life where he could be free from his sin and free from his appetite and passion, free from his very self, wishing he might go on and live as other men live, in the presence of God, and keeping the law of God?

As Peter looks upon the poor man, we hear him say: "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have, that give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." He has something better than gold; and he takes him by the hand and he raises him up and they enter into the temple. Faith in the name of Christ can effect a work like that. We may have everything else in the world, but if we have not faith in Christ we have not strength to live as we should live.

You remember the story of the Pope who was walking with Thomas Aquinas in the beautiful gardens of the Vatican palace, at a time when the church seemed to be living far away from Christ, in unbelief, in impurity, and in moral impotence. You remember his remark as he pointed to the riches about him, "the time has long since passed when we needed to say, 'Silver and gold have I none.' " And the answer came

very promptly, "Yes, and I fear the time has passed when you can say to the man who is helpless, 'Rise up and walk.' "

It is always so; you may have everything in this world that you hold to be good and dear, but if you have not faith in Christ you are unable to lift the man who is lying helpless outside the gates.

I knew of the case of a young man in the university who was addicted to drink, and his parents' hearts were breaking. They enlisted the sympathy of his classmates, and these men did everything in the world for the poor boy. They went to his room and studied with him; they walked with him, and lived with him. They brought every influence upon him, save the influence of Christ, and the more they seemed to strive for him the stronger seemed to be the appetite, and the more hopeless his plight.

I remember another young man, in the university, who all alone, one night, on his knees, at his bedside, yielded himself up to Jesus Christ, and declared that he would depend upon Christ. That young man received strength and power to go on rejoicing into the higher life, It is perfectly possible. Oh, what weak men we are! But there is power in Jesus' name, the divine power of a living Christ.

I was reading of one who was kept by his temper from leading a true life. He was like a man at the gate of the temple. He felt his need. He knew other people who were leading lives of sweetness and kindness, but he had no such power until he turned to Jesus Christ. When he turned to him and confessed him before men, his wife had no sympathy for him; and not only that, she said to herself that she was going to try and see if there was anything in his Christian faith. It is not very hard for a wife to try the patience of a husband, if she wants to, and she wanted to. She made it pretty hard for him and finally one Sunday night, when he had been very long at the church, returning home, he found his door was locked and barred and bolted, and his wife would not open it. Then the old demon seemed to come back, and he was for battering down that door. But he thought of his Saviour, and he asked him to help him control his temper. He waited an hour, he waited two hours. He said afterwards that his Master seemed to be near him, and he kept on talking with him and asking for power. He waited until after one o'clock at night, and then the door was opened and his wife, who had not been sleeping, came out and said, "Oh, Tom, I want you to forgive me!" "I have nothing to forgive," he replied. Then she

burst into tears and said, "Tom, you have just broken my heart, and I wish I had a Saviour like yours." And she found that Saviour. So, too, for every one of us, there is power in the name of Christ, and it is my great blessedness this afternoon to be privileged to speak face to face with you in the name of Christ and tell you, what I believe in my heart, that if you will put your trust in Christ at this hour, you may rise up and walk on into that life, which you have been longing to live. What a great multitude of men I seem to see this afternoon, who have thus risen up and are following after Peter and that poor lame man, on into the temple of God. On and on, and they are passing up yonder and there they will sing as they are learning to sing here, "All hail the power of Jesus' name." They are to join that great blood-washed throng of those who to-day are rejoicing around the throne of God: "Saved by grace;" saved by faith in the name of Christ.

III. Well, that is all true enough. But what I want to say to you last of all, I think best of all, is this. The part of the picture which perhaps you specially need to-day is the part which speaks not so much of divine power,—you need that, some here especially need it,—but, Christian workers, members of Christian churches, perhaps the thing you need to-day,

as you look out upon the helpless lives about you, is the beautiful picture of Peter, as he stoops down to take that poor man by the hand and lift him up; a picture of human sympathy. Why do you suppose he lifted him up? To strengthen the man's feet? No. To strengthen the man's faith. He wanted the man to feel that something was being done. And when the man heard him speak of Jesus, and then felt the grasp of Peter's hand, he began to think that something was going to happen. And something did happen. Peter strengthened the faith of that man and he rose, with faith in Christ, and walked on into the temple.

There is some man here in West Philadelphia waiting for you, waiting for you to stretch out a hand and say: "Come, we will go on together into better life. You have tried it alone, but, come, we will go on together in the name of Christ." It is the hand of cheer, the hand of sympathy, that men need. The assurance that you love them and care for them is what they are waiting for.

You remember the story told by Henry Drummond, of the shipwreck on the coast of Cornwall. A steamer had gone down, in the night, and the life-saving captain had sent this very unusual report: "Disastrous wreck last

night. Forty-two bodies washed ashore. We rendered all the help we could, through a speaking trumpet." That is all the help they gave, through a speaking trumpet. My friends don't you think some of us go at the work of saving men, through a speaking trumpet? Are we not speaking at long range? What we should do is just what Peter did. Some friend of yours is lying at the beautiful gate of the temple, and has not power to enter in. Go and take him by the hand and show your love for him; and when you do that, you can be sure he will rise up with faith in Christ, and walk on with you into the temple of a truer and higher life. Men want to know we love them, and they will come with us.

I remember another incident from the shores of Cornwall. This was the story of an old fisherman, named Moses. It seems that when he was out one day with his boat, in some way or other, another man got afoul of his nets. This other man began to swear, and Moses asked him to stop swearing as it hurt him very much. But he swore all the louder, and cut Moses' nets all to pieces, and went on into the harbor. A few days later, while this man was drinking at a tavern his boat got loose, and Moses stepped into his own boat and went out on the rough sea and brought back this enemy's boat to shore. When the man came out, he was

told what had been done. He turned and said, "Why did you do that?" "Well," said Moses, "I could not help doing it." "Why, don't you know I was the one who cut your nets?" "Yes, but I could not help doing it because I loved you." "What kind of a man are you anyway?" "I am a Christian." "Well, Moses," he said, "I never saw a Christian before. What is a Christian anyway?" A Christian is a man who loves his neighbor just as he loves himself." That fisherman threw his arms around the neck of old Moses and said, "I wish I were a Christian, too." Moses told him he could be, and that he would help him. To-day, there is no firmer, truer follower of Jesus Christ in that little village of Cornwall than the man who was saved because Moses showed him how he loved him for Christ's sake.

Why not show our love? There was that man in our own country—a man fallen into the very depths and hopelessness of sin—and somebody stretched out a hand to him and lifted him up out of the pit, in the name of Christ, showing him his love. He taught that man how to stand upon a rock; and that man began to speak to others and thousands were helped and encouraged through his work. I mean John B. Gough. What a blessed thing it was to be able to stoop down and take that man by the

hand, and by a simple act of love draw him to his feet until, in the name of Christ, he went on into a higher, a truer, a helpful life! God grant us sympathy and love to stretch out the hand to the man who has fallen.

"There are lonely hearts to cherish,
While the days are going by;
There are weary souls who perish,
While the days are going by.

"If a smile we can renew,
As our journey we pursue,
Oh, the good we all may do,
While the days are going by!

"There's no time for idle scorning,
While the days are going by;
Let your face be like the morning,
While the days are going by.

"Oh, the world is full of sighs,
Full of sad and weeping eyes;
Help your fallen brother rise,
While the days are going by."

X

ANDREW

Again on the morrow John was standing, and two of his disciples; and he looked upon Jesus as he walked, and saith, Behold, the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. And Jesus turned, and beheld them following, and saith unto them. What seek ye? And they said unto him, Rabbi (which is to say, being interpreted, Teacher), where abidest thou? He saith unto them, Come, and ye shall see. They came therefore and saw where he abode; and they abode with him that day: it was about the tenth hour. One of the two that heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He findeth first his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah (which is, being interpreted, Christ). He brought him unto Jesus. Jesus looked upon him, and said, Thou art Simon the son of John: thou shalt be called Cephas (which is by interpretation, Peter). John 1:35-42.

Jesus therefore lifting up his eyes, and seeing that a great multitude cometh unto him, saith unto Philip, Whence are we to buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred shillings' worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, who hath five barley loaves, and two fishes: but what are these among so many? Jesus said, Make the people sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. Jesus therefore took the loaves; and having given thanks, he distributed to them that were set down; likewise also of the fishes as much as they would. John 6:5-11.

Now there were certain Greeks among those that went up to worship at the feast: these therefore came to Philip, who was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: Andrew cometh, and Philip, and they tell Jesus. And Jesus answereth them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will the Father honor. John 12:20-26.

X

ANDREW

Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was the first disciple to bring another man to Christ. In fact, he always seemed to be doing that sort of thing. We can hardly recall him in any other circumstances. His life is written for us in three brief chapters, and he is in each case concerned in the matter of introducing some one to his Lord. In the first scene, he is bringing his own brother; in the second, he is bringing to Christ a small boy, who is carrying a few barley loaves and fishes. There is only one third scene in his life, which is drawn with any distinctness; and here he is endeavoring to bring to Jesus certain Greeks who have come to worship in Jerusalem, and who may be regarded as representing the nations of the world. Here then is a man whose life as thus depicted is representative of those Christians who are seeking to bring to Christ those in their own households, and those in their own nation, and

those who are living in the uttermost parts of the earth.

Andrew is the typical personal worker. It is no wonder that men who are leagued together with the purpose of saving their fellow-men, have called their societies, "The Brotherhood of St. Andrew," or the "Brotherhood of Andrew and Philip." This, too, is the supreme aim of the Christian Association. For this purpose it was formed; this has been its greatest achievement. We are using all our splendid equipment not merely for working in the physical, social, and educational departments, but with the design of bringing men by means of these influences to a personal knowledge of Christ. It therefore will surely be an inspiration and an aid to us in our work, if we bear in mind some of the characteristics of a true personal worker, suggested by the life of Andrew.

1. Courage is an absolute necessity. It is suggested to us by the very name Andrew, for this name means "manly," and the essential feature in manliness is courage. When Tom Hughes wrote "The Manliness of Christ," he selected this one feature in our Saviour's character. He practically wrote of the courage of Christ; for in his view courage and manliness seemed to be much the same thing.

Andrew seemed to be what his name suggests. He brought his own brother to Christ; that was a striking proof of his courage. It is not an easy thing to address a gathering of a thousand men, but it is a much more difficult thing to sit down and speak to your brother about the condition of his soul; it requires courage, and that too of a very high order.

The courage of Andrew seems to have been due to the strength of his conviction. We hear him saying, "We have found the Christ." There was no doubt in his own mind. He was sure that he knew the Saviour. He had talked with him, he had lived with him, and now he can speak from a personal knowledge, and with a courage born of personal experience. Possibly our hesitation in undertaking personal work has been due to the fact, that our own knowledge of Christ is so imperfect, and our own experience so incomplete.

You may remember the old story of the poor mechanic, who was so deeply concerned about the spiritual condition of his wealthy employer. After much thought and prayer, he resolved to visit the wealthy skeptic in his own home, and when at last he was ushered into the presence of the proud unbeliever, he was so frightened that he forgot what he had expected to say, but with tears streaming

down his cheeks he was simply able to utter these words: "Oh, sir! I was so, so much concerned about your soul!" Some time after this his employer confessed his faith in Christ, and in doing so he said, "I could have answered any arguments which might have been advanced, but I could not withstand that man's earnestness." If we are convinced of our own salvation, and of the peril of our friends, we shall not so long hesitate about telling them that "we have found the Christ."

The conscience, however, must be clean. Our own lives must be pure. The reason why it is usually so difficult to speak with a brother is, that our brother knows us so well. We remember that he is familiar with all our weaknesses, our failures, and our faults. Yet if we are sincere, and he knows we are seeking to do what is right; if, best of all, he sees the power of Christ manifested in our daily living, he is the one man in the world upon whom our influence will tell for the most. When John B. Gough came to the close of his career, after speaking to tens of thousands of men, he was delivering an address here in Philadelphia, at our Academy of Music. Lifting his hand with an impressive gesture, he cried passionately, "Young men, keep your records clean." Let that exhortation ring in our hearts, if we are

resolving to-day to undertake personal work for Jesus Christ.

A short time ago, a political reformer was leading a great campaign in a western state. The bitterest of his enemies was seeking some ground of attack, and he urged one of his colleagues to go to the town, in which the reformer had spent his early years, to discover some discreditable fact which could be used against him; but the reply came immediately, "There is no use of our going there, that man's record is absolutely clean." No wonder the man could speak with dauntless courage, and no wonder he led in a victorious fight. Much more is it true that if we are to be of real service to others in the name of Christ, our lives must be free from reproach, consistent, sincere.

Courage implies Perseverance. Obviously, a man of courage will not be discouraged. Have you ever remarked the persistence of an insurance agent? I read one report which stated that during one year, seventeen per cent of the policies written had been solicited within that year; eighteen per cent had been solicited during three years; while the remainder, or sixty-five per cent, had been solicited more or less continuously during a period of from three to ten years. One agent was about to undergo an operation, and he wrote to his superior offi-

cer that he regretted the necessity of spending four weeks in a hospital, but he said, he hoped to insure the surgeon, and at least one of the nurses, "and," he added, "a man can do a great deal by correspondence." What a spirit that would be to manifest in Christian work! Yet just such perseverance is needed, and sometimes it is shown. There are two engineers present this afternoon, one of whom was brought to Christ by the brave effort of his fellow, who sits beside him. One Sunday after another, he would call for his friend, and bring him to the gospel service. Month after month passed by. He would not be discouraged, and at last he had the joy of seeing the answer to his prayer, and of reaping the reward of his labor, as he beheld the one for whom he had been working, publicly accepting and confessing Christ as his Saviour and his Lord.

II. We need Confidence in Christ. Our courage is not to spring from trust in self, but is to have its source in our belief that our Saviour will work through us for the salvation of men. It is this faith which is suggested by the second chapter in the life of Andrew. There was need of bread to feed five thousand men. Our Saviour had suggested that the disciples should supply this need. Philip had spoken of the impossibility of meeting the de-

mand; but Andrew is the one who is heard saying, "There is a lad here, who hath five barley loaves, and two fishes." It is also true that he added, "But what are these among so many?" It is quite probable that his faith did not anticipate the great miracle which our Saviour had in mind; yet when we read the story, we cannot but feel that something unusual was expected by Andrew, and we cannot fail to have our own faith strengthened, when we see how much our Lord accomplished with a gift so small. Andrew did all that was in his power when he brought the boy to Christ, but Christ used the boy in working the miracle which brought relief to five thousand men. Are we willing to do the little thing which is within our power, believing that through us a great miracle can be wrought? That is surely a very familiar story, but always an encouraging one, which tells us of the experience of Mr. Edward Kimball of Boston. He was teaching a Sunday-school class in the Mount Vernon Street Church. Among the boys was one from the country, who was not even able to find the places in the Bible; but Mr. Kimball became interested in him, and one day resolved to find him, and to ask him to accept Christ. As he drew near to the store in which the boy was employed, he hardly knew what to say, but, as the

story runs, he asked the Lord to use his simple word to transform the life of this scholar When he entered the store, he found the boy employed in wrapping up boots and placing them on a shelf. He afterwards could hardly remember what he said, but it was something like this, "Do you not wish to yield your life to the service of Christ?" The reply came, firmly, "I will," and the decision was made. It seemed like a very little thing, but years after, when that boy had become known to the world as the great evangelist, D. L. Moody, it must have been a joy to Mr. Kimball to remember the little thing he had done. It was a great thing when measured by the thousands who were ultimately affected by his work. How joyous Andrew must have felt on the day of Pentecost, when he knew that three thousand men had been saved by the preaching of that brother whom he, himself, had brought to Christ! Some brighter day, you and I will be surprised to learn the result of those efforts which we have made in dependence upon Christ, as the result is measured in souls saved, and in lives transformed.

III. Above all, we need Consecration if we are to be used in personal work. By consecration, we mean an absolute yielding of self to the service of our Lord. This characteristic is

suggested to us in the last scene of the life of Andrew. He has brought word to Christ that certain Greeks desired to see him; and the Lord has made answer, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." That was a strange answer to Andrew's request; yet possibly the meaning was this, that only a crucified Saviour could be a real saviour, as the Master added, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself." It may also have meant, that only a man who has yielded his life to the service of his Lord can be used to save his fellow-men, for our Saviour added, "He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." Surely our Saviour meant that if one is to truly serve him, he must take up his cross and come after him. It is interesting to remember the tradition that St. Andrew was crucified, and it is rather significant that the only apostle whose name is associated with a cross is Andrew, and all of us are familiar with the "St. Andrew's cross." Perhaps it can symbolize for us the truth which I am suggesting; namely, the necessity of self-sacrifice in carrying on personal work in the name of Christ. We must take up the cross. It will mean the loss of time; it will mean the expendi-

ture of effort; it will involve disappointment, and labor, and pain; but it is worth the price, if by sacrificing self we can save a soul.

A few days ago, a great convention was being held, and four thousand young Christians were asking the great question, "How can the world be evangelized in this generation?" A gavel was handed to the presiding officer by a representative of the Christian Associations of Japan, whose words I should like to quote in closing. "The head of this gavel," he said, "was brought from the grave of Joseph Neesima, the great Japanese hero, and Neesima once said, 'I have learned what is meant by the Old Testament story of the tree which made the bitter water sweet. The tree which will sweeten the life of the world is the life of a consecrated man. If you wish to take out of the world the pain, the woe, and the distress, it will only be as you give up your life to the service of others in the name of Christ.'" The speaker then added, "The head of this gavel came from '203 Metre Mill' outside of Port Arthur. Again and again, the Japanese had taken possession of that hill, and had been driven back with terrible slaughter; but when finally the position had been captured and the guns had been mounted there, the fall of Port Arthur was assured. Japan is the 203 Metre Hill of the Orient; if it

can be taken for Christ, victory is sure; but if it is to be captured, we must have men of the same spirit as those Japanese soldiers. They had willingly offered their lives for the service of the emperor. They were absolutely fearless, and gladly yielded up life in the service of the master whom they served." Such a complete surrender of self must be made by us. It must henceforth be our supreme desire to be of service in saving men. Then at last that will be true of us which a distinguished Englishman wrote of his father:—

> "Thou wouldst not be saved alone
> Oh, my dear father, alone,
> Conquer and come to the goal,
> Leaving the rest in the wild.
> Therefore to thee it was given
> Many to save with thyself;
> And at the end of thy day
> Oh, faithful shepherd, to come
> Bringing thy sheep in thy hand."

XI

"THE CALL OF MATTHEW"

And after these things he went forth, and beheld a publican, named Levi, sitting at the place of toll, and said unto him, Follow me. And he forsook all, and rose up and followed him.

And Levi made him a great feast in his house: and there was a great multitude of publicans and of others that were sitting at meat with them. And the Pharisees and their scribes murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with the publicans and sinners? And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are in health have no need of a physician; but they that are sick. I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. Luke 5:27-32.

XI

"THE CALL OF MATTHEW"

There is something absolutely fascinating in the sight of a life which is being transformed by the power of Jesus Christ. There is something equally reassuring and encouraging and inspiring in the sight of such a change, because it always seems to say to you and me that the selfsame power of Christ will be exerted toward us if we will put our whole trust in him. For instance, there is a man seated yonder, whose name is Matthew. He is an outcast; he is hated and despised. While he is engrossed in his usual occupation, at the receipt of custom, Jesus draws near and says, "Follow me." The man rises up immediately and follows after Christ, and becomes an intimate friend of that divine and sinless Saviour. Then, too, he becomes more and more like Christ, and, at last, when the earthly work of Christ is finished, this man becomes the biographer of his Master, and writes the life of Jesus, that gospel which

begins the New Testament; and in all the ages to come that man, who was such a great sinner, is known as "Matthew the saint."

When we look upon a sight of that kind we seem to hear something saying: "That is possible for you. If you too will follow this Saviour he will do the same for you. He will transform you into his likeness, and use you in his service, and your name will be written in the honor roll of the saints of the living God." Is not that a reassuring story?

I do not suppose that Matthew, when the story opened, was as good as most of us are to-day, probably somewhat worse; though I have sometimes imagined that he may not have been quite so bad as some have suggested. I mean to say that it is very easy to form an unkind opinion of a man who is a politician, or in public life. When a man was a politician, in the olden time, and when he was called "a publican" and "a receiver of customs," it was commonly supposed that he must be a rascal, and that he was not worthy of anything save contempt. I do not know just how bad a man Matthew was, but I think this, he was probably something better than his reputation,—though that is not saying much for his character. But even if he were worse, he would have been no exception. Most people are a good deal worse

than they are supposed to be. Now that sounds very unkind. I remember the beautiful words of the poet who expressed the wish that we might be able "to see ourselves as others see us." I imagine it would be a pretty serious thing for us if others could see us as we see ourselves. If they knew all our evil thoughts it might be a bad thing for us. Our reputations would go very rapidly. Suppose that in our case, as we have come up here this afternoon, well dressed and careless and content; suppose that every thought of every heart here was laid bare in the presence of all this great audience—all the jealousy, the unkindness, the impurity, the unbelief, the doubts, the religious indifference—suppose that all these things were known? Yet all these things are forming our characters, or are the outcome of our characters, and they are all known to God.

So I would that we might begin to look upon ourselves as God looks upon us, and to believe that he knows all these things, in order that we might feel our absolute need, as men and women, of a power outside ourselves, to enable us to control these thoughts,—some power which may change our lives and mold our characters, that we may become, in truth, the children of God.

I suppose, when Matthew the publican was seated at his place of business, on that particular day when Jesus came by, he knew he had a bad reputation, but I believe he knew also that he had an evil heart, and so, when an opportunity came, of receiving into his life a power which would transform his life, we find he is willing at once to accept that opportunity.

It was a very simple invitation that came--merely this, "Follow me." That was all—no words of quotation from the Old Testament, no sermon, no pleading, no promises, no conditions—simply this, "Follow me, follow me."

I am very certain that every man here this afternoon has heard that call. Each one of us has at some time been urged to follow Jesus Christ. You know what the call implies. You understand that it means the turning away from every sinful thing, it means the taking of Christ as the one who died for your sin, to follow him and trust in him for power, and to seek to please him in all things. I am sure you have heard a call like that. It has come in earlier years, or it has come in times of peril, or in times of pain, and it seems that during these passing days, in the city of Philadelphia, that call from Jesus' lips, "Follow me," has been sounding out as we have not heard it before for years—not simply because a great mission

is being held here, but because God's Spirit is moving throughout the city. There is not a man or woman who has not in some way been brought face to face with the question of their personal relation to Christ. Probably there is no one of us to whom the call has not come as clearly, as definitely, as truly, as it came to Matthew of old: "Follow me."

What we need is not a clearer call to follow Christ; what we need is more definite decision. Seated at the receipt of custom, he hears these two words, "Follow me," and then, "he forsook all, and rose up and followed him." Notice, it does not say that he "rose up," and "forsook all and followed him." It says, "He forsook all, and rose up." That is to say, while he was seated there at the receipt of custom, at the place of his usual daily task, he hears the words, "Follow me," and then and there, while still seated, before he had time to rise, he resolved that he would give up whatever he needed to give up, that he might follow Jesus Christ. It was a decision made instantly, as he heard the call.

I know that the question has been raised as to whether men believe or should believe in "sudden conversions." This conversion of Matthew was rather sudden. Probably all conversions are sudden—not if we mean to include all that

led up to the conversions. We are not to doubt that Matthew had heard of Jesus before. Jesus was then living in Capernaum. Matthew may have known much about him; but a certain time came, when he heard Jesus say to him, "Follow me"; and at that time he made his definite resolution to follow him. We do not claim that conversions are sudden if by a conversion you mean all the change of character that comes to one after he has begun to follow Christ. But, if you mean that there comes a time when a man hears the call and when he responds, you will find that there is a moment, which is only a moment of decision. "Follow me." "He forsook all, and rose up and followed him."

I would, as you hear the voice speaking to you to-day that you might say, "Lord Jesus, I follow on."

> "Saviour, I follow on guided by thee,
> Seeing not the hand that leadeth me.
> Hushed be my heart and still,
> Fear I no further ill,
> Only to do thy will, my will shall be."

That was a sudden decision on the part of Matthew; but it was a sincere decision, and you can prove its sincerity by this one fact; namely, that he at once desired to confess his faith in Christ. He sends out invitations to all his friends. He gathers them into his own house

for a great feast, and when they are all seated there, who is the guest of honor? Who? Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth. He is seated beside Matthew; and Matthew is saying to all his friends, "Here is my new friend, here is my Master and my Lord." It was a beautiful, open, honest confession of his faith in Christ. And do you not think that when a man really puts his trust in Christ,—if it is a sincere thing, if it is a real conversion, if the man desires to forsake his sin and become a new man,—do you not think it perfectly natural for him to confess that faith of his heart? You have been asked more than once whether it is necessary to join a church in order to be saved; and some one will say, "No, it is not necessary." "Must you stand up in public and say you are a Christian?" Perhaps not, my friends. But let me say this: While we are saved by our simple faith in Christ, aside from every other condition, if that faith is as sincere as it is simple, I cannot see how it will have any other result, first of all, than to make you wish to be known as a follower of Jesus Christ. Do not raise the question in your own case, "Can I be saved if I do not confess my faith in Christ?" but ask yourself this question, "Have I faith in Christ if I do not wish to confess him?" I do say that you should allow a very serious doubt to

be raised in your heart if you think you trust in Christ and are not eager to have all your friends know just where you stand. Real faith, a devoted faith, a faith which will depend upon Christ for time and eternity, is the faith that leads a man to do exactly what Matthew did; namely, to let the world know just exactly where he stands in relation to Jesus Christ.

I wonder how many men there are here to-day who have never been at a communion table, who have never observed the Supper of our Lord? I wonder if there are not some men here who are church members, who have been away a long time from the table of our Lord? You may do practically what Levi did if you want to begin a Christian life, or if you want to renew your confession of faith. There will be a feast spread, and your fellow Christians will be sitting around the table of the Lord, some Sabbath in the near future. Why not take your place there, and by that step openly, honestly and manfully say, "I belong to Jesus Christ, whose death we show forth by broken bread and outpoured wine"? How many men will resolve to-day to make such a confession? Do as Levi did, make a great feast, or sit down at such a blessed feast with those who love your Master and mine.

Now I notice as the story closes that, as Levi

has gathered these people in his home—publicans among them, notorious sinners among them, but Jesus in their midst,—I notice that the Pharisees have something unkind to say. You can be sure if you are to confess your faith in Christ some Pharisee will have something very unkind to say. Some man who is not as good as you will point the finger and say: "Is he a Christian? Does he go to church?" Mark you, he is not as good as you. He is a Pharisee; for a sincere and honest man will rejoice in every good step taken by any other honest man. A sincere man will rejoice when he sees his brother following Christ, even though he himself may be far away from the Master. These Pharisees were saying, "Is it possible that this Jesus eats with publicans and with sinners?" That intended criticism gave Jesus the opportunity of uttering a sentence which closes this story, but which has been a wonderful help to countless men. Do you remember what Jesus answered? Listen to these lovely words, so full of inspiration: "They that are in health have no need of a physician; but they that are sick. I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." Are you not good enough to say that you will take Christ as a Saviour? Are you not good enough to partake of the broken body and shed blood? My

dear friends, Jesus came to save sinners. If men had been good he never would have come. If you and I think we are good without his aid, I fear there is no Saviour for us; because he did not come to save good people; he came to save sinners. But if you and I are conscious that we are sinners, then here is the blessed Saviour standing so near and saying: "Now come, follow me. I have come into this world to save sinners." And he saved that man Matthew, that publican, to make every one feel that no matter how low he may be in public estimation, no matter how deep he may be in sin, he can be saved. That is the meaning, that is the inspiration, of the story. If you hear the call, follow on after Christ.

There was a young man over in Dublin, a few years ago, who had wonderful skill as a sleight of hand performer. He was amusing crowded houses night after night. But, in order to fulfill his engagements, he was being thrown into the company of men and women whose lips were stained with impurity and whose lives were black with sin. He felt he was not in the right place. One night he heard a Christian worker speaking about Christ. That night, in his room, he knelt down to pray, —a thing he had not done before, for years. And as he knelt there he seemed to see a vision

of the Saviour, of whom his sainted mother had often spoken to him. And this Christ seemed to say, "Follow me, follow me." But he said to himself: "I am not worthy to be a Christian I hate the life I am leading, but I am not able to follow Christ." Then there came to him this verse: "I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance"; and on his knees, he dedicated himself to the service of Jesus Christ.

He came across to New York and began his studies as a medical student, and when he was graduated he said: "I will devote myself to the service of Jesus Christ, and help those in need, because I love him." He went back to Ireland as a medical missionary, helping the poor and the needy, and then, learning of the greater need in central Africa, where they had no physicians, and where there were millions of men dying in their woe, he said, "I will go down to Africa." He went to Africa and worked there on the Congo; and soon in a lonely grave his body was lying beneath the sands. But he followed his Master, and the story is not over. Up yonder there is a brighter part to the story of that life, so brief and so beautiful, of one who followed Christ.

Last Monday morning I was speaking with the Christian worker who had been instrument-

al in bringing this young man to Christ; and, as I close, I want to tell you, in a few words, the story of his own call and conversion.

He was at the time a British sailor. He had been brought up in a lovely Christian home in old England, but he longed for adventure and he ran away from home and enlisted in the navy. Then he became wild and reckless and sinful; but God intended him to be a follower of his blessed Son. He called him in one way after another, but there was no heed given to the call. On one occasion, in the midst of a terrific storm, the man-of-war on which he was sailing was lifted on the crest of a wave and, in the darkness, he saw a great hulk loom up beside them. The two vessels just grazed one another. So near to death, storm, tempest, peril,—and yet no heed to the call.

One bright Sunday morning, with a company of sailors, he rowed ashore to a little English village. It was early springtime. Out under the blue skies, amid the fragrant flowers, in the Sabbath quiet, he wandered into a cemetery. He looked on the different tombstones and read the inscriptions, about one and another who had passed on into glory. My friend said, "I was just wondering, as I looked at those stones, whether there was any chance that I would ever enter into heaven; and I knew there must first

be a great change in my life. I left the graveyard," he continued, "and walked down the street and drew near to the chapel. The windows were open and I heard the children singing this hymn:—

> 'Around the throne of God in heaven,
> Thousands of children stand.'

"That hymn was the hymn we used to sing at home with mother and with my sisters and brothers. A voice seemed to come into my heart saying, 'Follow me, follow me.' I went back to the ship, got a little Bible, went down into the hold of the vessel, and lay there with that Bible till I had read much of the story of Christ, and there I gave myself up to his service." Did he then hide his light and go on living just as before? He did not. No, Matthew makes a great feast when he confesses Christ. So this new follower of Christ met the men on that vessel and let it be known that he had decided to lead a Christian life. He had ridicule and unkindness to endure, but he was true to his Master. He lived to become a Christian physician, and in this country and in England he has been used of God to assist in sending one man after another out to distant lands to labor for Christ, who loved him and gave himself for him.

That was a simple call, but the answer came and he followed on. This afternoon, as you sit here in the presence of the Master, if you will yield yourself to become a follower of his, he will transform your life, and he will make you of real service to your fellow-men and will bring you at last into the kingdom of glory with exceeding joy.

XII

"THE WALK TO EMMAUS"

And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was threescore furlongs from Jerusalem. And they communed with each other of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, while they communed and questioned together, that Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, What communications are these that ye have one with another, as ye walk? And they stood still, looking sad. And one of them, named Cleopas, answering said unto him, Dost thou alone sojourn in Jerusalem and not know the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, The things concerning Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. And he said unto them, O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they were going: and he made as though he would go further. And they constrained him, saying, Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is now far spent. And he went in to abide with them. And it came to pass, when he had sat down with them to meat, he took the bread and blessed; and breaking it he gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. Luke 24: 13-20, 25-31.

XII

"THE WALK TO EMMAUS"

It must have been just about this time in the afternoon of that first Lord's Day, which we call Easter, when two men were seen going out of the northern gate of the Holy City and starting on their way to the little village of Emmaus. Their hearts were full of sorrow and they showed their anxiety and their distress by their countenances and by the way in which they were discussing a certain great problem. As they walk they are suddenly joined by a third person, Jesus, the risen Christ; but their "eyes were holden" so they do not recognize him, and he is himself disguised. (Mark said, "He was manifested in another form.") As he greets them he asks them what it is they are discussing so earnestly. They turn in great surprise with downcast faces and ask him who he can be. "Is he a stranger? Has he been living in Jerusalem all alone? How does it happen he does not know the things that have been taking

place during the past three days?" "What things?" "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth. He was a great prophet. We thought him to be the Saviour who would redeem Israel; but the chief priests have taken him and crucified him, and it is the third day since these things happened. And some women who went out to his grave this morning came back and told us his body was gone, and that they had seen a vision of angels who said he had risen. And some of us went and found what the women said was true, but him we saw not."

Then Jesus turns, as you remember, with his loving rebuke: "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!" He then refers to the Scriptures, and shows how perfectly had been foretold the necessity of the death of the Saviour and also his resurrection on the third day. While they talk they reach the little town of Emmaus, and as he seems to be passing on, they stop him with those familiar words: "Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is now far spent." So as the darkness deepens he enters the house with them. He is seated at the table. He takes bread and blesses it and breaks it, and gives it to them. Suddenly their eyes are opened, and they recognize that it is Jesus with whom they have been walking and talking. But

instantly he vanishes out of their sight. Then they rise with great joy and hasten back to the Holy City to tell his disciples that they have seen the risen Christ.

Such is our Scripture lesson this afternoon; and I want to dwell upon the story long enough to emphasize one or two helpful truths.

First of all we notice that the striking feature in this scene, and the most pathetic one, is the misery of those men, on the happiest day earth had ever known. The angels of God are singing and they have come to the tomb to tell the good news. Mary has heard it and her heart is full of joy. But here are these two men; they have heard the glad tidings; they are talking about Jesus, walking with Jesus and speaking to Jesus; but they are sad as they walk, and their hearts are full of grief. That is the first feature that interests me, because I rather think that some of us are not quite as happy as we ought to be to-day. I mean that on the very Sunday when all the world is rejoicing in a risen, living Lord, some of us have neither perfect peace, nor perfect joy, nor an unclouded hope.

I spoke with a dear friend this noon who told me he had been wondering, to-day, whether it was worth while to live and struggle and suffer and mourn. He was disheartened, discouraged,

in despair. I do not suppose any of us feel quite like that, but there are some shadows on all our hearts; there is in every mind something of foreboding of the future and something of anxiety about the present, some worry about our homes, or our business, on this very day of days, a day of joy and thanksgiving and of gladness and hope.

But why were those men sad on that day? Because they did not believe; and unbelief is the cause of all our gloom. They did not believe the words which Christ had spoken to them. He had often told them that he would die and rise again. They did not believe what he said, no wonder they were sad on Easter day. Doubt brings darkness. I do not suppose any one here this afternoon can have much real joy unless he is believing in Jesus Christ. Unbelief has no cheer. Infidelity sings no songs. Unless you have accepted the words of Jesus, unless through him you have found peace with God, you cannot have peace, nor comfort, nor abiding hope.

And then they did not believe the word which was written in the Scriptures. The Saviour had said: "Oh foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!" I am very sure that as long as we are unwilling to accept God's word as a divine revelation we

will never have peace of heart and mind. Never. Because, the great problems that need to be solved will be unsolved for us: the problem of pardon and peace, the problem that death presents, the problem of the immortality of the soul. Every great problem finds its solution in the word of God, and unless we are willing to receive that as eternal truth, I do not see how the pathway of life can be full of sunlight and gladness and peace.

They had not believed the word of the angels. Remember what they said: "Certain women went to the tomb this morning and they found the body was gone, but angels told them that Jesus was alive." Had they believed the angels' message, their hearts had been full of joy. God is sending us messages to-day, just as he sent the glad tidings by the angels of old. These anthems bring a message. These flowers are bringing their message. All the circumstances which combine to remind us that this is Easter, are messages which God is using to tell us of a risen, living Lord; and if we do not enjoy perfect peace and perfect gladness and unclouded sunlight to-day, it must be because we do not in our hearts believe the messages which have come, not merely of a risen Christ but of a living and present Christ. That is it. I do not believe that a shadow could remain in our

hearts, if we believed Jesus Christ to be just as truly here, present in this room, and walking with us as we return to our homes, as he was with those disciples at Emmaus. It would banish every fear and all our worry and all our anxiety and all our grief, if we believed in our hearts, what every one confesses with the lips, that Christ, the risen living Lord, is present with us to-day. He knows all about our sorrows, and as we go out into the night he will go with us and walk with us all the way.

I suppose in after years those disciples looked back upon that walk to Emmaus with thanksgiving; but I think it must have also been with something of regret, that, on that afternoon, they had so long failed to recognize that Jesus had been walking with them. I wonder whether some of us may not look back upon this day with regret when we afterwards remember how little we realized the presence of Christ on this Easter Sunday, and how little comfort we found in the presence of our Lord.

Perhaps some one is saying to me: "Well, how can I believe? How can I be sure? How can I feel that which I would like to feel, and realize the presence in which I profess to believe?" Just this one word further, then, before we separate. Walk even as those disciples walked, with

love in your hearts for Christ, and a heart yearning to know more about Christ. Walk, and you will find as you walk, more and more light, and a stronger and stronger faith.

I read of a man who came to Dr. Torrey and said he was an infidel and could not believe. He had heard sermons and had read the Bible, but he could get no light. Said Dr. Torrey, "You know the difference between right and wrong?" "Oh, yes, I am sure I do." "Well, are you willing to start out now and do the right every day?" "Oh, yes, I am willing to try that." "Very well. Now are you willing to do another thing? Are you willing to take the Bible and open it every day and read something in it every day?" "I will promise to do that." "Will you also promise that as you read, and before you read, you will look up and say, 'Oh, God, if there be a God, help me to understand these truths'?" "Well," said the skeptic, "I am willing to try, but I don't believe I could feel as you feel." He tried it. Are you surprised to learn that not very long after he came back with a smile on his face and joy in his heart saying, "I see the whole thing now. I seem to be swept along by a flood of emotion. I feel like shouting"? I tell you, friends, when a man really gets his eyes opened to see Jesus Christ as a living,

present Saviour, he cannot help feeling like shouting. He cannot fail to feel joy and to meet the difficulties of life with a new courage. If the matter of faith seems a little dim to you to-day, do not be discouraged. Seek for light. Try to learn more about Christ. Live as you think Christ would have you live; live as though he were present, as he is, every hour of every day. Go to those places where you will hear about Christ. Go with those people who love Christ. I have no doubt that some day, as you walk with Christ or as he breaks for you the bread of life, your eyes will be opened and you will see more clearly than you have ever seen before the truth of his loving, gracious, abiding presence.

This is the word of encouragement I wanted to give you to-day. Do not be disheartened, though the way seems dim and the truth hard to realize. Press on. All of us see through a glass darkly, but some day we shall "see face to face." I like to think of that promise that we are going to see him face to face. You remember that hymn, one stanza of which is so encouraging to us:—

> "I need thy presence every passing hour:
> What but thy grace can foil the Tempter's power?
> Who like thyself my guide and stay can be?
> Through cloud and sunshine, oh, abide with me."

You know why that was written? It was written because a man had read the words of those disciples of Emmaus: "Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is now far spent." Henry Francis Lyte read those words. They were in his mind one Sabbath evening, the last evening he ever spent with his beloved parishioners. He had labored among them, he had poured out his life for them, and now his day was drawing to a close. He seemed to realize it. He conducted a communion service. The bread was broken in the presence of the disciples, and the Lord seemed to be consciously present. When for the last time he had pronounced the benediction, he went back to his little home, there by the sea, and in the deepening twilight he sat down and took his pen and wrote these lines, with that thought and that prayer, "Abide with me."

"Abide with me! Fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide:
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me."

He did not know how near his life was to its end, but he wrote this stanza:—

"Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O thou who changest not, abide with me."

A few days later he left England and went to the continent in search of health, but in a few weeks he crossed "the narrow sea." He saw his Master face to face, yonder, in the glory land.

I would that the hymn he left us might be your prayer at this evening hour. Your life may not be ebbing out; the day may not be drawing to its close, but, if you will pray with upturned face, to the Saviour, who stands near you: "Abide with me, abide with me"; if you will take him into your home and life as they received him on that Easter evening; if you will say to Christ to-day: "Blessed Lord Jesus, though I do not seem to realize thy presence, though I do not understand a great deal that is written about you, I want you to come into my heart; I want you to come into my life:" —if that is your prayer, if you are willing to take Christ as your Guest and Friend and Master and Lord, then every morning and every evening his face will grow brighter and brighter before you; and some day you will be surprised to find that, in the darkness that is deepening, when with failing vision you are looking out upon your friends, when they are saying, "Yes, he is slipping away from us now;" when all the earth has grown still and dim, I tell you, some day, your eyes will be truly open-

ed, and you will look upon the glorious face of Jesus Christ your Saviour. That vision will not grow dim. In Emmaus, as soon as they recognized him, he disappeared. Not so for you and me. At eventide, or when the darkness is deepening to midnight, of a sudden there will be a burst of light, and the bright shining of the Saviour's face. That glory will never fade through all eternity.

"That will be glory for me, glory for me, glory for me;
When by his grace I shall look on his face
That will be glory, yes, glory for me."