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Being a Preacher

By James I. Vance, D.D.

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Being a Preacher

A Study of the Claims of
the Christian Ministry

By

JAMES I. VANCE, D. D., LL.D.

*Author of "In the Breaking of the Bread," "The Rise
of a Soul," "Tendency," "The Life of Service,"
"The Young Man Foursquare," "The Eternal
in Man," "The College of Apostles," etc.*



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*To my classmates in the old
Hampden Sidney days, when
the VIA SACRA was a quiet
walk, with the church at one
end and the library at the other
and the Unseen Presence all
the way*

Foreword

WHILE the chapters which follow were delivered first to a group of students for the ministry, they were prepared in the hope that they might reach those who have not yet settled the question of their life-work, and lead them seriously to consider becoming preachers.

This is not the whole aim of the book, however. There has been some restlessness in recent years in the ranks of the ministry. Some have turned aside from the holy calling to engage in a form of secular activity; like the disciples after the crucifixion, when Peter said: "I go a-fishing," and they replied: "We also go with thee."

It may be that this restlessness is a part of the aftermath of the World War; but whatever its cause, it is to be deplored.

To such men, the writer would like to bring back the glory of the first hour when "they forsook all and followed him."

And to all, whether ordained ministers, or candidates in training, or young men considering the choice of a life-work,—to all, whether grouped under pulpit or pew, these chapters are meant to be an effort to present the unsurpassed opportunity to live a life offered by the ministry, and the worth to God and man of a preacher of the Gospel.

J. I. V.

Nashville, Tenn.

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I

A POOR BUSINESS, BUT A GREAT CALLING

"**P**REACHING is a poor business," a chance acquaintance in the person of a minister from Continental Europe said to me one day on an American railroad train. He was "doing" the United States. He was planning to go home and write a book giving his impressions of America. He asked many questions, seeking to accumulate material for his forthcoming literary venture. He had put me through his questionnaire on preachers and the Church, being especially curious to know what salaries were paid the clergy in the United States. He closed the conversation with a sigh, as he said: "In Europe, preaching is a poor business. The pay is small."

It is a poor business anywhere, measured by the pay, by the financial returns, by the cold cash to be made out of it. Measured by this standard, the gospel ministry is without charms. The preacher is in a poor business, whether on Fifth Avenue or in a prairie shack, whether in impoverished Europe or among American plutocrats. He who turns preacher to earn a living has been misled, but he who comes in to live a life has scored.

A POOR BUSINESS

There is not much money in preaching the Gospel. The salary of the average minister is less than a thousand dollars a year. There are men who can neither read nor write, but who earn at common labour a larger wage than is paid to many an earnest, consecrated, hard-working, well-equipped, and college-bred preacher of the Gospel. Preachers and teachers are notoriously underpaid. Any effort on their part to increase their stipend is likely to be misunderstood. Occasionally a preacher is brave enough to face the problem as did the pastor of the leading church of his denomination in one of our big American cities. He called his officers together and told them that he could not live decently on what they were paying him, that they must either increase his salary or allow him to retire to a cheaper field. The average preacher would rather starve than discredit his work by seeming to love money. American churches may not be as much to blame as those of Continental Europe in this matter of the preacher's stipend. However, when ability is taken into consideration they cannot escape blame. From the standpoint of the wages paid, the holy calling is a poor business.

It requires a long and rather expensive course of preparation. The preacher must be educated. He should be a college graduate, and then spend three years in some theological seminary. He must

dress and live on a scale that will not humiliate his parish, nor lead the godless to conclude that the saints are parsimonious in the provision they make for the servant of the Lord.

The duties of the ministry are exhausting and laborious. No work is more nerve-exhausting. The preacher's day is twenty-four hours long, and his week lasts seven full days. Sunday is his hardest day. He must do far more than unearth a time-stained manuscript and "drop it down on the people's heads two times each day in seven." To be sure he sometimes gets a vacation. But for that, he must go to the wall.

A Jewish tailor who was rather proud of his assortment of styles urged my wife to have her preacher-husband visit his shop and look over his goods. She said she would tell me, but she feared I might be too busy to come. "Busy?" he said, lifting his hands and his eyebrows. "I thought he was occupied only two hours in the week." And that is a popular conception of what a preacher has to do. There are preachers who merit such a characterization. A lumberman in a mountain camp in Western North Carolina, finding day labour irksome, told his friends that he felt called to preach. He emigrated to Virginia, where in a few months he became the pastor of a little church of a "persuasion" which need not be named. Returning for a brief visit to the lumber camp, he was asked by his old friends how he liked being

a preacher. "Fine!" he said. "I never expect to work any more!" But a man who deserves the name of minister will find his hands full.

The ability demanded for the making of a preacher is of a high order. He must possess a pleasant personality, and must be able to meet and mingle with all classes and be liked by all. He must have common sense without which all sense is nonsense, business sense, book sense, and nonsense. He must be a good mixer. He must possess initiative and energy. He must be a master of assemblies and understand how to handle, both in public and in private, all kinds of people, especially eccentrics. He must be able to preach three lively, interesting, instructive and eloquent discourses a week. He must draw a crowd and make daily as many visits as the average doctor. All this and more than all this he must do for his meagre stipend, and frequently he must not only earn but collect that before he can possess it. I am speaking out of experience. In my first charge the good people undertook to pay their pastor eight hundred dollars and a house. The house was there, but the remainder of the stipend, like some of our railroad trains, ran late. The treasurer was always good enough Monday morning to let his pastor have the collections of the preceding Sabbath. This sustained hope until additional help arrived. And with all this, every church expects to have for its pastor a pulpiteer, a star of the first magnitude.

Preaching is a poor business. It is about the poorest business in the world.

A GREAT CALLING

But preaching is a great calling. The difference between a business and a calling is that in a business one is trying to earn a living, and in a calling one is trying to live a life. In a business the effort is to see how much money you can make. In a calling the effort is to see how much good you can do. In a business one is trying to see how much he can get out of the world. In a calling he is trying to see how much he can put into the world. In a business he is thinking of profits and dividends. In a calling he is thinking of service. In a business he is building his house on the sand, and when the storm breaks it falls. But in a calling he is building on the rock and he can face all storms unafraid. In business one leaves all that he has behind him when he dies, and is a pauper forever. In a calling he takes everything with him, and is rich forever.

Of course one may make his business his calling. He may sell goods and manufacture ploughs and run a farm and handle a railroad and write insurance and mine coal and transform raw materials into useful products for the glory of God. Then his business becomes his calling. Then his effort is not to see how much money he can make but how much good he can do, how much service he can

render. This lifts business to its highest level. It is where the day labourer at a meagre wage climbs among the stars, for it is here that man becomes a "worker together with God."

Christ's kingdom needs people in all the walks of life. Preachers are not the only people God calls. He calls bankers and lawyers and doctors and editors and stenographers and men of affairs and wage-earners to serve Him, to dedicate their work to His glory. One day a man was shot down on the streets in Chicago in a cowardly assault. He lingered, suffering great pain all day and died with the day. His preacher was at his side all the while, and said: "Whether you are to go or stay, can you say: 'O God, thy will be done'?" With a quiet smile, he replied: "Of course I can. I have no use for my life but to serve the will of God." This is the only way for a Christian man to consider his work, whatever his vocation may be. The supreme question for him to ask is: How can I best invest my life for God's glory? When one reaches that high point, light breaks and he begins to discover the particular thing God has for him to do in the world.

Never until he makes this discovery will he be satisfied. There are men who have found their business but missed their calling. They are restless. They prosper, but are not satisfied. Some of them drift from one thing to another, and wonder why they are so restless. They have not found

a certain thing in life they are fitted to do best. There is also some certain thing in which they can best glorify God. The two are usually identical, and when one discovers what it is, his work becomes a joy and life a success. The great thing is to find this. It is discovered to man by his Master, and the discovery comes to those who make a full surrender and who wait on the altar stairs of prayer.

THE GOSPEL MINISTRY

While one may make any business a calling, the greatest calling is the gospel ministry. There is no investment of life that counts more for God's glory and man's good than this. There is no calling that offers such opportunity for high and disinterested service, none that demands such sacrifices and yields such poor material compensation, but in the end piles up such reward.

The preacher ministers to the spiritual in human life. Man is essentially a spirit. His deepest moods are religious. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." The preacher deals not with man merely as a social unit, as something having a reputation, seeking fame, possessing tastes, swept by moods, holding views. He deals with the man himself.

The preacher has a line of eternal values. He offers salvation. He presents that which puts fallen character on its feet. He handles the

dynamic current that changes character and fixes destiny. It is something to build a house, but it is greater to build a character. It is something to cultivate a farm, to develop natural resources, to open mines and navigate rivers; but to improve people is far greater. It is something to found governments and enact laws, but to produce citizens who respect laws, who fear God, who stand four-square and toil to establish in time that "kingdom that cometh not with observation" is to be at work on the biggest task open to mortals.

The preacher has a remedy for sin. Sin is the trouble with the world,—not wages, not bad laws, not sectarianism, not alcohol, but sin. The preacher has the cure for sin. It is something to cure the body, to fight typhoid and smallpox and cholera, but it is greater to fight sin, to be a doctor to the soul. To save a soul from death is sublime. It is worth enduring poverty and contempt, hunger and cold, and all trial, to turn one soul from the dark to the light, to lead one wayward prodigal from the far country back to the Father's house.

The preacher has the message that will transform society, that will cure social ills, that will settle disputes between labour and capital, that will end war and heal race hatred, and abolish national suspicions and antagonisms and make men brothers. He has the Golden Rule and the power to make it more than a maxim. World upheavals and social unrest are not the despair of the Chris-

tian minister. They open the door. They create a market for him. He has a remedy and the only remedy for a sick world. If disarmament is ever to come, men must first arm, and the armour they must wear is none other than that of a Christian soldier. The treaty that is not backed up by the faithful teaching and practicing of the principles of Christ will soon be found to be but a mere scrap of paper.

More than any other man, the preacher is making a better world. It is his business to make the earth a decent place to live in. Society dreams of new heavens and a new earth, but how is the dream to come true? How is the vision to be translated into reality? The gospel preacher is the man of all men who holds the key to the future. He is the prophet of the only social order that will ever make human life satisfied. He is not making his country the richest, the most powerful, the most enterprising. He is just making it the best, the securest, the happiest, the most enduring.

This is the work of a preacher, of an humble and unpretentious preacher of the Gospel. His stipend may be a mere pittance, barely enough to keep soul and body together. His family may need to practice the sternest economy to maintain appearances before a congregation that is often more critical than considerate. He may never be known beyond the confines of his little parish. He may be neither eloquent nor profound. But he is a man

who has harnessed his ability to the greatest calling on earth and is moving the world up-hill.

THE CALL

It is a calling which every young man should at least seriously consider. What shall I do with my life? is the biggest question that faces youth. Why not invest it in the gospel ministry? Why not be a preacher? Of course, if you are looking for merely a business, it will not interest you. But if you are seeking a calling, it is worthy of your most careful consideration. If you have made up your mind to drop down into nothing but a money-grubber, the gospel ministry will have no charms for you. But I would remind you that the money road is strewn with wrecks. When will we learn what a cheap and worthless thing money is? It cannot buy happiness. Some of the loneliest people in the world are those who have amassed vast fortunes, but who instead of owning what they have, are owned.

If you are out not to earn a living, but to live a life, think of being a preacher. Perhaps you are saying that you cannot preach, that you have never been called, that you have never felt that mysterious moving in your soul which the old preachers talk about, but which nobody seems to understand. What is a call? It is not an uncanny sort of thing. It is not a ghostly visitor. It is not a miracle portent. It is not a sweeping down of the supernatu-

ral until the soul is seized and mastered in some fine frenzy and surrenders to the spell of a mood of mysticism that would better be spelled with an "i" than a "y."

Neither is a call the projection of life along the line of least resistance; because one has tried a number of other things and failed, it does not follow infallibly that the Lord is calling him to preach. The ministry is not a slag dump. It is not the last resort for stuff that has been found of no value anywhere. The ancient custom of noble families to schedule for holy orders a stupid son who seemed fit for nothing else has long since been tabooed. Only the best will do for the biggest calling open to mortals.

Neither is a young man to conclude that the man from Macedonia is shouting to him across the Golden Horn and saying: "Come over and help us," because somebody has whispered in his ear that he has the gift of oratory. It takes more than an orator to make a preacher. Besides, oratory is more than declamation. Some brains are needed, and back of brains, convictions that are hot enough ever and again to flare into flame.

In my native town there was a lawsuit. The opposing counsel were two young lawyers who had but recently been admitted to the bar. One had the gift of gab and was a fluent declaimer. He made a beautiful speech which won applause from his friends who had come to hear his effort. The

other was a stutterer who submitted his case without argument. The court awarded the verdict to the stutterer's client, whereupon his lawyer said to the opposing counsel: "D-d-do-don't you w-wish you couldn't talk, too?"

To be sure it has pleased the Lord "by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." But preaching is more than speaking. One is not to be excluded if he possess the gift of oratory, but the kingdom of God needs more than pulpiteers, as many a church has learned through sad experience.

But true oratory is not flamboyant declamation. It is just talking. It is telling your story so that people can understand what you mean. The truth merely needs to be told. It needs a voice. John the Baptist was a voice crying in the wilderness. Moses said: "O Lord, I am not eloquent." But God said: "Certainly I will be with thee." He says as much to every man called to be a preacher. God becomes the preacher's mouthpiece and wisdom, and it is wonderful what He can do with a man of ordinary gifts.

The preacher is a man with a message rather than a man with a good delivery. Even Balaam's ass could preach when he had something to say, and the preacher who is minus a message is worth less to the kingdom than was that poor beast.

In the Bible the call to the gospel ministry presents itself in various ways. It sometimes regis-

ters itself as an overmastering conviction. This is the way it came to Paul, who said: "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." He felt that he would be damned if he did not preach. His soul was involved. His salvation was at stake for time and for eternity. There are those who have felt this kind of a call, but not all. This great conviction is not essential. It is splendid to have it. It is something that may come later as the years pass and one digs deeper into his work and gets that experience which comes from a life of service. But no one should hold back because he lacks it at the start, nor be greatly cast down because he lacks it by the way. There are differences in temperament, and because a young man is unable to say with Paul: "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel," let him not conclude that he is without a call. It may come to him another way.

Sometimes it is a vision of need. Thus the call came to Isaiah. God said: "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" Someone was needed. Isaiah stepped to the front and said: "Here am I, Lord, send me." This is the kind of call the Saviour is suggesting when He points to the fields that are white unto the harvest, and bids His disciples pray for labourers to be thrust forth into the harvest. It is a picture of need and of urgency built on need. The need for preachers to-day is unprecedented. Every other vocation is crowded. The ministry is calling and clamouring for recruits.

Every denomination has vacant pulpits. In 1921 more preachers died than were graduated from theological seminaries. Little can be done when a church becomes vacant but to rob a sister church of its pastor. Young men are needed in the sublimest calling open to mortals. This need summons. It sounds like a challenge. It is eloquent with urgency. It makes its demands on the young manhood of America. Down from the morning of the twentieth century the voice of God calls: "Whom shall I send and who will go for us"?

Sometimes the call is just a sense of opportunity. This was the way it came to most of Christ's disciples. Jesus stood and called: "Come ye after me and I will make ye to become fishers of men." Suddenly to those Galilean fishermen life widened out. Here was their chance to live a world life. It is the chance God is ever bringing to men. The gospel ministry offers the opportunity to plunge into the world currents, to get out of the eddies, to have a hand in building the new earth. The preacher is not simply selling cars or cattle or land, but creating civilization. He is saving souls. He is shaping destinies. He is comforting sorrow and leading the lost back to God. If he is doing this, what does it matter whether he make money or not, whether fame shout his name?

"The Master praises,
What are men?"

Is it too much to ask the young men of America carefully to consider this form of life investment? What shall one do with his life? What shall he consider in settling the question of his life-work? Is he to seek a business or a calling? Is he to think of the salary he is to get or the service he may render? Is he seeking a soft bed or has he felt the spell of a cross?

Are there not enough young men in America who are willing to be mustered into the service of God and humanity in the gospel ministry? "How shall they hear without a preacher?" is a question that was sent ringing into the life of the greatest city on earth centuries ago. It is sounding still. It is a big thing to give a million dollars to the kingdom. It is a vastly bigger thing to give a life, and this bigger gift of a life is within the reach of one whose earthly possessions may be no more than those of the lad by the sea long ago.

II

THE PREACHER AND A BANKRUPT WORLD

IN the first chapter of Romans, Paul is gazing at a world on fire. The conflagration burns to heaven. It threatens to consume hope itself. Civilization is on the rocks. Society is bankrupt, its credit is gone, and its treasury is empty.

There is no darker picture than this which Paul paints in his letter to the people living in the world's capital, and who saw daily with their own eyes the truth of what he said. He seems to make an inventory of the world's insolvency. He names one after another the things which have brought about the breakdown of civilization. Swiftly he sketches the ruin of the race.

He says the world is bankrupt because it has fallen into the hands of plunderers, of ungodly and unrighteous men, who by their wickedness hinder truth, and against whose impious deeds the wrath of God is loosed. It is not because these robbers of human hope and happiness are ignorant, for whatever is to be known of God has been made

✓ plain to them. Their infamy is that they treat truth with contempt. They do not care. They defy the Almighty, and laugh to scorn His everlasting power and Divine being.

✓ He characterizes them as a lot of fools absorbed with futile speculations until their ignorant minds grow dark as night, and their evil hearts are black as hell. These are the cattle who have climbed into power. These are the men who are rushing the world to its doom.

They have gone so far as to begin to make gods for themselves. They have exchanged the glory of the immortal God for the likeness of mortal man. They have gone further than this, and degraded the Deity to a level with the beasts, for sometimes their god is a bird, and sometimes a dog or a cow, and sometimes a snake.

It is not strange that such people live like animals, and that, casting all restraints aside, they give themselves over to an orgy of sexual vice. For people are never better than their gods. The world fills up with moral perverts. Mankind becomes a race of degenerates. Lust flames and every reprobate instinct has the right of way until Paul says: "They are filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, being full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understand-

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ing, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful, who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

Could there be a darker picture than this? It is a bankrupt world. Who would want to live in such a world? Hell has run over, and inundated earth with its filth.

THE WORLD STILL BANKRUPT

✓ It is still a bankrupt world. One must say of the twentieth century what Paul said of the first. The picture might be changed a bit here and there, for the world has grown older in sin and misery, and is seamed deeper with lines of despair. But the title of the picture remains the same. It is still a bankrupt world. Look at it.

There is Russia. Can it be possible that such folly has gone on under the world's eyes in the twentieth century, or is it a nightmare, a bad dream? A nation has been plundered, assassinated, a hundred million people in less than five years have been stripped and brought to beggary, with the world standing by and watching the flames burn, but not daring to fight the fire; and in every nation there smoulders that which has destroyed Russia. It waits but the chance to break into flame. Once lit, it will burn down and consume human happiness and hope.

There are the debts that have unloaded on war-mad nations until credit is gone, until money has become worthless chaff, sheaves and piles of paper camouflaged with promises that can never be kept. Place Austria alongside of Russia. Her plight is really worse. Her sun is setting never to rise, and her famed capital has become a city whose gaiety is gone and whose citizens are stripped and gaunt with despair.

There is the strife and jealousy and suspicion which declines to subside, and which is not only threatening, but producing new wars. One would think man had learned his lesson, that the beggared peoples had enough, that the world was cured forever of the folly of war. But there is nothing to encourage such a dream.

The League of Nations to which many of the forward-looking men and women of the world had tied their hope sleeps in its grave, slain by the hand of the one nation the world thought would be stoutest in its defense, and over its grave the insolent Turk spits on the American flag. Who believes that the Turk would have dared undertake a war for the recovery of Constantinople had the League of Nations been ratified by the United States Senate?

Then there are the tattered remnants of peoples who once dared to hope. Men, women, and children are starving to death. They have nothing with which to sustain and succour physical life.

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They are dying out not by families and villages, but by nations. It seems impossible that such a thing should be in our day, but it has come. For more than three years the daily papers have carried the story of famine sufferers until the headlines have become stale.

If we turn from these war-lamed, starving, dying nations to our own, what greets us but industrial unrest, social discontent, the strife and clash of classes, lawlessness, contempt for the decisions of our courts, mob violence and race riots, strikes and clamour and hate? Opportunity is dying out before our eyes, because we have been foolish enough with our own hands to kindle the fires that burn up hope.

Add to all this the ravages of disease, the falling away of moral restraints, the prevalence of sexual vice and its inescapable penalties, the increase of moral perverts and degenerates, the filling up of insane asylums, the imperilling of the present and future integrity of the race, until conditions are created which a twentieth century reporter might write up as Paul wrote to Rome two thousand years ago. In 1920 in New York City there were 679 homicides and one conviction. The number of cases of dishonesty reported showed an increase of seventy-one per cent. Of crimes committed, ninety per cent. were by people under twenty-five years of age. It is not going too far to label ours, too, a bankrupt world.

BANKRUPT DESPITE ALL THIS

The world is bankrupt despite the fact that government is being administered under the best form in human history. We have gotten away from despotisms and tyrannies to republics. The yoke of oppression has been torn off, and men are free. If government can cure national bankruptcy, things should be mending.

Our material prosperity is also abundant. The world grows great crops. We have learned to exploit our natural resources. We are experts in agriculture and irrigation. We can match the seasons and the climate and the soil with our cleverness. There is plenty of bread. But with fields of plenty the famished and starving races continue to blacken and die.

Society is full of unrest despite the fact that labour is better paid than ever. Not only has slavery been wiped out and labour emancipated, but it has been enfranchised. It now dictates. Yet discontent was never more in evidence, nor human greed more grasping.

It is a bankrupt world despite the progress science has made in meeting and mastering the problems of life. The veil has lifted. Secrets are disclosed. We seem to know about all that needs to be known. But how poor and weak we are! We continue to stagger on under our heavy load. Our bodies rot out with disease, and our hearts

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still cry for the rest and peace which seem so slow and far.

We have conquered the air and harnessed the invisible forces of the world. We have wiped out distance and talked around the earth. We have sent the human voice on mysterious radio waves out into misty space and all but stormed the gates of heaven itself. All this and much more than all this man has achieved. And yet there tarries on the map a broken and bankrupt world whose streets are thronged with misery and want, out of the windows of whose homes look faces wan and worn with long disappointment, and whose inmates, gazing like prisoners of hope through barred windows, pray for a day that does not come.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

What is to be said in the presence of a bankrupt world? The striking thing is that Paul was not cast down. He painted his picture, and he did it with a steady hand. He talks about the situation, but he speaks in level tones. He looks on, but he is not scared. He faced the ruin of a world, and he did so with a soul that was buoyant with hope. It was not because he was queer enough to be elated by defeat, nor because he was so callous that human suffering failed to impress him. Never was there a man more human. He was serene because he believed he had the secret of making the bankrupt world solvent.

As he looked on, he said: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." He declared that he was not ready to salvage civilization. He was out to save it. He felt that he had something that could do what government was futile to accomplish, what prosperity was unable to bring to pass, what science and education and invention and trade were powerless to produce, what the miracle-working powers of steam and electricity and radio had failed even to suggest. He had the Gospel. It was the power of God unto salvation.

He believed the Gospel could get civilization off the rocks, that it could rebuild a society in ruins, that it could put out the fires that were burning up the world and restore to sanity a race crazed with lust for power, mad with passion for pleasure, and steeped in sexual excess. He believed he had something that could quell the storm and bring peace, that could strike a light in the blinding darkness and show the lost a path back home, something that could make the bankrupt world solvent and its people safe and friendly and happy.

He believed this so thoroughly that he went bankrupt for the sake of his convictions. He gave up all he had for the chance to preach the Gospel to a broken world. That is the story. He said: "I am not ashamed of the gospel." He meant that he believed in the Gospel as he believed in God Himself, that he was ready to pay any price, to put

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in pawn any chance for fame or gain or ease, to welcome bonds and prison cells and hunger and cold, and death if needs be, just that he might go out and preach to the bankrupt world the living Gospel which is "the power of God unto salvation."

Was he mistaken? One must do more than say it to prove it. Are we reminded of the sight which still faces eyes keen and kind enough to see human misery and woe, the sight of a bankrupt world notwithstanding men have been preaching Paul's Gospel for two thousand years? Still it is true that wherever men have received and practiced this Gospel, and in so far, strange assets have begun to take shape and form, and men have dared to hope that some day the broken world might liquidate, and civilization hold up its head.

Does someone recite the fact that the Gospel, so far from preventing war, seems to foster it? For the very nations that so recently plunged into the bloodiest war of all time were the so-called Christian nations. But they went to war not because of their Christianity. It was in spite of it that they fought. Had they faithfully practiced the teachings of Christ there would have been no war. You have not given your doctor a square deal until you take his medicine. You have not been fair to the Man of Galilee until you practice His Gospel. It waits to be practiced. Jesus waits for mankind to give the Sermon on the Mount one honest trial.

When it does, this broken world will become solvent.

THE MIRACLE OF THE GOSPEL

How can the Gospel accomplish this? By shaming and smiting sin to its death. Sin is the worm that gnaws at the heart of the world until the tree of life withers and rots to its roots. Sin must be slain. This is what Paul means when he says: "The wrath of God is revealed against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hinder the truth with their unrighteousness." It would be an awful thing for God to look on at sin with unconcern, for Him to see this riot of immorality and not turn loose the lightning of His anger. The Gospel makes man afraid to do wrong. It tells him that he must clean up his life, that he must quit plundering and be decent.

The Gospel makes the bankrupt world solvent by keeping hope alive. We are saved by hope. Hope is seeing what the world is going to be when God has His way with it, and believing that He will certainly some day have His way with it. Hope is not the futile speculation of fools. It is not a song of mortal man chanted to a bird god or a cow god or a snake god or a new notion god. It is not expectation built on human discoveries and inventions and achievements. Hope is a vision of the white throne of the Almighty. It is a sight of God building His world in the shadows. It is sensing

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morning at midnight. Sidney Lanier was the apostle of hope as he lay on his dying couch amid fits of violent coughing, with a temperature of 103, dying of tuberculosis, and wrote "Sunrise":

"Oh, never the mast-high run of the seas
Of traffic shall hide thee,
Never the hell-coloured smoke of the factories
Hide thee,
Never the reek of the time's fen-politics
Hide thee,
And ever my heart through the night
Shall with knowledge abide thee,
And ever by day shall my spirit, as one that hath
tried thee,
Labour at leisure in art,—till yonder beside thee
My soul shall float, friend Sun,
The day being done."

The Gospel reveals this sight and keeps hope alive, and by doing so enables suffering humanity to wait through the long night, ever and again shouting against its black wall of baffling shadows: "The morning cometh!"

The Gospel gets civilization off of the rocks by changing human nature. The fundamental need is not to change conditions but people. Change people and they will change conditions. What is needed is not a better world to dwell in, but a better race to inhabit the world we have; not larger opportunities, but worthier efforts to improve present

opportunities. The Gospel changes the individual. It makes man a partaker of the Divine nature. It changes the social order by changing the social unit. It makes the world solvent by making man trustworthy.

The Gospel puts out the fires that are burning up the world by supplying inward moral restraints when outward restraints fall away. The world moves toward freedom. Man can never be satisfied with anything short of this. But freedom becomes license without self-mastery and self-control. This is the tragedy in Russia. A nation has gone over the precipice because there was nothing to hold when despotism released its grip. The Gospel teaches men to restrain themselves, to curb their animal appetites and passions, to use, but not abuse, liberty.

The Gospel saves the world by substituting the law of love for the law of hate, the Golden Rule of good-will for the iron rule of greed, brotherhood for competition, the Sermon on the Mount for a selfish cult, service for slavery, the cross for the crown. Here is the only cure for industrial discontent and the clash of class interests. Love is the cure. Oh, that the stupid, selfish world would stop long enough to listen to Jesus!

These are some of the things which Paul had in mind when he said: "I am not ashamed of the gospel." This is why he could look on that picture of misery with a steady eye, and speak in even

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tones. The bankrupt world was not his despair. It was his opportunity. He had the cure. It did not depress him. It challenged him. He was the one man on earth who could make it solvent.

BEING A PREACHER

Do you begin to see what it means to be a Christian, to incarnate the Gospel, to embody in one's self the Sermon on the Mount, to practice the Golden Rule, to translate into human life the teachings of Jesus?

Do we begin to see what it means to invest what we have in the proclamation of the Gospel, to give our money that the bankrupt world may start up in business again, to give to society in ruins that which will heal the world's open sore? "Then shall the lame man leap as an hind, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing." Then, when he hears the good news of the Gospel! There is no investment to compare with this. There is none that yields such returns. Here is the thing that is dynamic for redemption. If we are out just to salvage civilization, to scrap the wreck, we may stop at the half-way place. But if it is salvation we are after, if it is a new world, able to meet its obligations and pay one hundred cents on the dollar, we must push on to Calvary.

Do we begin to see what it means to invest what we are in the proclamation of the Gospel, what it means to be a preacher, to spend life doing the one

thing that makes a bankrupt world solvent? It is a calling to fill angels with envy. Yes, the pay is small, but the reward is measureless and the task is divine. It is enough to make a man strip off every earthly ambition and be willing to face fire and flood and hunger and chains and death just for the chance to preach the Gospel.

Would you like to do the biggest thing level to a man's reach? Here it is, a preacher of the Gospel, poor, underpaid, oftentimes obscure, "in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness," but a world-builder; a man in bonds, clanking his chain, gazing through the grated window of a prison cell, but an "ambassador in bonds," so poor that he cannot afford to lose an old cloak left at Troas, and yet so rich that he can feed and clothe with joy and hope and courage the worn and weary world.

It is great to be a preacher. It is sublime! It brushes the stars. "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" "Here am I, Lord. Send me!"

III

THE SUMMONS TO SERVICE

IF one is concerned for what he can get out of life, the claims of the gospel ministry are strong, but if he is concerned for what he can put into life, those claims become well-nigh irresistible. If one is thinking of what he can make the world do for him, he will not seriously consider becoming a preacher, but if he has a passion for service, a longing to be useful, a fiery zeal to do something for others, the glamour of the preacher's calling will capture his imagination and draw like a magnet.

“It is my ambition,” said a man who was being inaugurated as Governor of a great State, “to become the most useful servant in this commonwealth.” It is this ambition that feeds the preacher's vocation. It is the chance to serve that appeals. It is not the stipend nor the position nor the earthly honours nor even the crown which is said to be waiting in the other world. It is that open door through which one may walk into the heart of a weary and broken world. If one is out for gain or place or power, the appeal will fall on

deaf ears, but if his passion be for service, whatever his gifts or attainments, the gospel ministry will sound a call and sing a song and satisfy.

This is the outstanding feature of the holy calling. The ministry is just a word to picture service. The greatest preacher in the New Testament church, in the opening sentence of his greatest book, announces himself as a servant—"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ." And the theme of the chapters which follow in the Epistle to the Romans is "the life of service." The Master Himself declared: "I am among you as one that serveth." Christ's glory was not that He came to be ministered unto, but to minister; not to be served, but to serve. If service was spacious enough for the vocation of a God, it will not cramp mortals. If it is the height on which Jesus lived, man can climb no higher. He has entered upon the sublimest calling open to men who follows in the radiant steps of Him Who lived to serve.

Nor let us fancy that because service is the vocation of a God it therefore divorces itself from lowly deeds and menial tasks. A servant does not go through life with his head in the air. The preacher who feels that his calling invests him with a sanctity and a dignity that must not be soiled by contacts with the cheap and sordid side of life needs a vision. He needs to stand by and look on while Jesus girds Himself with a towel and washes His disciples' feet.

“Stoop, stoop, proud man, the gate of Heaven is low,

And he who enters in thereat must bow.”

Jesus dragged heaven down to earth, and lifted earth to heaven, too, in that act of menial service when He washed His disciples' feet. It points the way for all who would follow Him. Ours is a holy calling because it is a human calling. It is a holy calling, but not an arrogant calling. Nothing must be shunned that serves. What a glorious thing for one of great gifts and rare scholarship to get his shoulder under the load of ignorance and poverty! What a sight to see a sage serve a child! It makes one think of Jesus.

But while the appeal of the ministry from the standpoint of service has a sweep that takes in all the lowly tasks and humble places of the common life, it also has a reach that ranks the ministry as the supreme vocation for some of society's sublimest adventures. To be sure, the preacher works in a realm where forces are more or less intangible, and where products cannot be pigeonholed nor catalogued in the statistics of the senses. For this reason, people with a crude and shallow diagnosis of values sometimes pronounce the preacher a non-producer. If we stop with corn and cotton and pig-iron and turpentine, the fling has merit; but if we consider character and justice and freedom and good-will, the products of the ministry belong to big business.

One afternoon I was on a trolley car going out of Atlanta to Decatur to preach next morning the baccalaureate sermon for Agnes Scott College. My suitcase was beside me. The man who sat across the aisle looked friendly, grew sociable, and said: "Are you a travelling man?" "I am," I replied. "What line?" "I am a preacher. I travel for God. I am in the business of religion." He seemed taken a bit aback, and then rallied with the remark: "Preacher, you're in a big business. You're in the biggest business in the world." And so I was. And so is every preacher.

It was never a bigger business than to-day. The preacher's opportunity is great. The gate is wide open. It is as great as it was in the days of Paul and Peter and John. All that Christ promised to them He promises to the preacher of to-day. He has never taken back aught that He ever said. The present-day minister has the same Christ and the same Gospel and faces the same needy world.

Indeed, I wonder if his opportunity is not larger, for personality has a reach about it never possessed before. All the inventions and discoveries that make the modern world what it is but equip personality for a wider work and a larger influence. Who will question but God means that these be used in His service? In a sense more real than ever before the field is the world, and every preacher, however retired and inconspicuous his pulpit, makes his impression on world life.

Nor is this all. The preacher's opportunity is enhanced by the fact that men are becoming more and more convinced that the only thing that will save society as well as the individual is the Gospel of Christ. Roger Babson may not be orthodox from the standpoint of some theological creeds, but he is certainly orthodox and sound in his diagnosis of world need when he declares that what the world needs most to-day is a revival of old-fashioned religion.

There are signs that it is coming. There are communities that within recent months have experienced their greatest spiritual awakening. The man on the street is alert to spiritual values. Business men are discussing religion perhaps as never before. "If a church official in this town," remarked a leading citizen, "talks for ten minutes with a business acquaintance on any subject, and before he closes fails to say something about the church and religion, people begin to suspect his earnestness and genuineness as a Christian." All of this goes to increase the preacher's opportunity. There is practically no limit to his chance to-day. It is sky-high.

If it was a great thing to be a preacher in the days of Peter and Paul, of Chrysostom and Augustine, it is not less so now. He may be an ordinary man with a starvation stipend and mediocre gifts, in a sluggish parish of drab souls, in a one-street town, but there in such drab surroundings and to

such narrow minds to tell the story that brings heaven down to their doorstep and lengthens their little Main Street out into God's great white way is to practice a calling that brushes the stars. For the preacher even in such surroundings is building his life into the tallest task this side the throne of God.

SALVATION

The preacher is in the business of salvation. Man is essentially a spirit. He has a body, but is a soul, and it takes a soul to lift a body. Hence his supreme experience must always be that spiritual change which we call salvation. His life must center right, and life can center right only as it centers in its Maker. Therefore, the first and constant and deepest need of every human being is to get saved. Every other program of social progress and personal betterment waits on this.

We may differ in our philosophy and theology of salvation, but I doubt if we can differ much as to its necessity. The highest authority says to man: "You must be born again." It is important for the individual to treat his body right, to keep physically fit; to treat his mind right, to be educated; to treat his surroundings right, to be trained so as to function safely as a social unit; but it is more important that he treat himself right and get saved. Back of all else and qualifying for every duty and privilege is salvation. When one gets

saved he ceases to be a peril or a problem or even a liability, and becomes an asset. He has found himself, and henceforth society does not need to be taxed to watch him and make him behave.

The preacher is in the business of getting people saved. Salvation is his specialty. He and he alone has the message which possesses the strange power of making people new creatures, of enabling them to become partakers of the Divine nature, of leading men into sonship and heirship and companionship with God. He may not be able to tell his town how to pave streets or conduct schools or run the government, but he can show people how to get saved, how to fight sin in themselves and in their surroundings, how to triumph over temptation, how to build character, how to become, how to be patient under trial and strong under strain and courageous in danger and serene in death. Doing these, he has served; giving them a Saviour, he has given them something more precious than gold and more satisfying than place and power.

DEMOCRACY

The preacher is in the business of democracy. Democracy is a world in which people do as they please, in which it has gotten rid not only of kings but of classes. Only the people are left, and their sole remaining restraint is what the people please. Democracy is at once the most perilous and the most satisfying, the most fascinating and the most

terrifying form under which society can exist, and the drift of the race is hopelessly toward democracy. The world was never freer than it is to-day. Many of the old restraints are gone. The remaining seem going. Many of the barriers which have blocked the road to greed of gain and lust for power are down. It is but a question of time when the rest will go.

What is to hold the world as its dream of democracy becomes an increasing reality? It is evident that as men are less and less controlled from without, they must be more and more controlled from within; that as the individual is less and less restrained by society, he must learn more and more to restrain himself. Society has had many lessons of the folly of tearing down without and failing to build up within. Russia is the latest example. Bolshevism has made the world turn sick with horror at the madness of a democracy that was nothing but a red riot of unbridled lust, that said: "Let us be free!" but did not say: "Let us become!"

Who is to tame a mad world? Who is to say the word that will save liberty from becoming license? Who is to cry: "Rein in and slow down!" as the race riots on toward freedom, driving perilously near the brink of anarchy? Who is to build these inner restraints as the outer restraints break and the outer barriers fall? Who is to lay his hand to the task of building the character that will stand the strain of democracy, that will make de-

mocracy safe? If the preacher does not do it, it will not be done. If religion fails, society is doomed. But as surely as there is a God in heaven, and as surely as there are men on earth to preach His truth, religion need not and will not fail.

This is the second great service the Christian minister renders the world. He is the statesman of democracy. His task is to make it safe for men to be free, to make it possible for the world to take off its chains and tear down its tyrannies and end its despotisms and have emancipation. Yes,

“In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across
the sea,
With a glory in His bosom which transfigures you
and me;
As He died to make men holy, let us live to make
men free,
While God is marching on.”

BROTHERHOOD

The preacher is in the business of brotherhood, of building a democracy in which people are not just citizens jealous of their rights, but brothers concerned for their duties, bearing one another's burdens, and so fulfilling the law of Christ.

Man's dream for the world is democracy, but God's dream for the world is brotherhood. He wants more than a congregation. He wants a family. The longing for brotherhood cries in the

heart of mankind. It beats in the pulses of the race kin. It clamours in our longing for fellowship. It moans out of human weakness and need. It sings in joys that double and sorrows that dwindle as they are shared. It shows itself in a thousand orders and organizations where little groups band themselves together and by rules and signs try to shut out the world and shut in their own. It reveals itself in nationalism, which is brotherhood waving a flag and saying: "The strength of the wolf is the pack." It is the soul and center of the Christian Church, which started in a fellowship where the members had all things in common, "neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own," of the church all of whose creeds and symbols are a travesty if its people do not love one another. But brotherhood must be racial. You cannot build it out of a segment of mankind. Where is the builder of human brotherhood? Where is there one with a message strong enough to cement humanity?

It is not enough to say: "Be brotherly." It does not suffice to long for such comradeship, or even to predict it. We may sing with Robert Burns:

"It's coming yet for a' that,
That man to man the warl' o'er
Shall brithers be, and a' that."

But the song will not work the miracle. It is not

enough to call to a barren bed of desert sand: "Be flushed with a living stream," but if you can open a spring in the hills, you may have a river that will not run dry. If we are to have brotherhood, we must have people who are brotherly, who have the fountain of brotherhood in their hearts, who have discovered that they are brothers because they have found that God is their Father. Then when you tell them to be brotherly, they will not stare at you and go on tearing at each others' throats. Then when you preach the Golden Rule, you will find that in the redeemed life resides the power to translate the rule from a stagy motto into a transforming experience.

This is what the preacher makes possible. He not only proclaims brotherhood; he makes it a reality. He not only tells men to get together; he shows them how to assemble. He reveals to them the only Figure on the skyline tall enough for world leadership and behind Whom the race can march on, keeping step and keeping faith together. He announces One Who is not only a Saviour for sinners, but Who is also the elder Brother of mankind, and whose humanity is so big, so capacious, so all-inclusive, so representative, so international, so racial, that all men find themselves in Him.

This is the chance to serve which comes to the humblest preacher in a mountain glen or a city slum as well as to the most gifted minister in a cathedral pulpit. Let him know that he is helping

men to be brothers. Whether he helps them to do anything else or not, if he has made people a bit kinder, he has made this life worth while, and heaven a surer heritage.

Nor is this all. Not only is brotherhood beyond salvation and democracy, but we are coming to see that there is something beyond even brotherhood. There is a higher peak that shows out of the clouds as the race climbs on. It is what we call

CIVILIZATION

The preacher is in the business of civilization. Jesus has a better name for it. He called it the kingdom. The kingdom is society organized and unfolding in harmony with the teachings of Jesus. It is man related to God and his fellows not in terms of ill-will, but of good-will. It is democracy governing itself with the single simple law: "Love one another." It is brotherhood translating its mood of fellowship into constructive programs of international and racial concern. It is the realization of God's dream for His world.

It will take a long time to achieve civilization. It will take forever. The race as well as the individual may say: "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Civilization is the kingdom of whose increase there is no end. We know something of a tree that lives for a hundred years and then rots down into mother earth, of a nation that grows for a thousand years and then disintegrates and is

wiped from the map, of a planet that grows for a million years and then breaks up into dust and swims out on the ether sea, of a sun that waxes and blazes for a billion millenniums and then flickers in its socket and dies from the sky. But here in this kingdom is something that is to increase forever, that is to go on getting better through all eternity.

We are just on the edge of civilization. When we look back toward the jungle, it seems far. But when we look on toward the glory, we find that we have scarcely made a start. Who can tell what is waiting for humanity along the road that winds and winds ever toward the plains of peace and the heights of redemption? "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard ——"

And the preacher is the prophet of civilization. He is the ambassador of the kingdom of God, "of whose increase there is no end." No wonder Paul shook his fetters and said: "I am not ashamed of my chains." No wonder he lifted his head and said: "I am an ambassador in bonds!" It is what any courageous servant of Christ may say. He is in the business of the King of Kings. Call him a non-producer? Why, he sows the seed for the only golden harvest the world will ever have! His output is civilization. He may be like the miner who toils underground by the light of his little lamp, but he produces the fuel that warms the world. He may be like the labourer who toils out

of sight digging a place for foundation stones, but the house will stand on the spot where his pick struck fire from the rock. He may be like the stoker in the hold of the ship as it swims the sea, sweating his life out on the edge of hell that his cargo may reach port; like that star that hung for a season over a cradle in Bethlehem and then faded from the firmament forever, but it was there long enough to point pilgrims to Him Who is the way, the truth, and the life.

TO BE A PREACHER

It is great to be a preacher,—just an inconspicuous, obscure, commonplace preacher of the everlasting Gospel of the blessed God!

It is something, I suppose, to be an earthly king, although the vocation has almost gone out of fashion. It is something to be a statesman and write the laws for a nation's safety and welfare. It is something to be a soldier and go on where heroism flames like a burnished sun and life is laid down for a glorious cause. It is something to be an inventor, a discoverer, a pioneer, a pathfinder and road-builder and map-maker; but it is greater to be a preacher. The preacher is in the biggest business in the world,—in the business of salvation, of democracy, of brotherhood, of civilization. I would not exchange my pulpit and my Bible and my Christ for all the world can offer. It is the one vocation that has no time limit.

“Crowns and thrones may perish,
Kingdoms rise and wane,
But the cross of Jesus
Constant will remain.”

The preacher is in the biggest business in the world because he is a servant. There is nothing beyond service. When the present King of Great Britain was crowned in Westminster Abbey, the sermon of the occasion was preached from the text: “I am among you as one that serveth.” That night as one of the commissioners from Australia was making his way back to his hotel from a coronation function, he lost his way in London and found himself in one of the worst of the city’s slums. As he went down the narrow, shabby street in the early hours of the morning, he found a lad and a little girl sitting on a doorstep. The boy had taken off his coat and wrapped it around his little sister to protect her against the cold of the chilly London night. Whether it be under a king’s crown in Westminster Abbey or under the ragged jacket of a lad on a stone step in a London slum, the greatest thing in England or the world is service. As Dr. Van Dyke was saying good-bye to Lord Tennyson, he handed him a volume of poems presented by the poet and asked Lord Tennyson to write on the fly-leaf the lines which he treasured most among all that he had written. And when the book was given back to him, this is what Dr. Van Dyke read:

“Love took up the harp of life
And smote on all the chords with might,
Smote the chord of self, which trembling,
Passed in music out of sight.”

What the world needs to-day is people whose vocation is a passion for service; who are not thinking of what they own, but of what they owe; who are content with obscurity; who deliberately choose poverty as their stipend, and who are not ashamed to die with the print of the nails in their hands and feet.

And so the preacher's road is the winding thorn-path to the cross-crowned hill. He has his Calvary. But beyond the rugged, rocky heights of Calvary he has his Olivet, whose brow, turbaned in the white clouds of ascension glory, waits for Him Who went away, but is coming back, and Who will come as He went, in the same old way, still saying: “I am among you as one that serveth.”

IV

THE PREACHER AND HIS MESSAGE

WE were a little group of preachers and laymen meeting in Richmond, Virginia, to consider a matter that had been referred to us by the General Assembly of our church. One afternoon we visited Union Theological Seminary, the leading school of Southern Presbyterians for training ministers. We were shown around the grounds and through the buildings, and came to the library on whose walls hung the portraits of a number of the former students of the institution.

One of our group was the distinguished Chief Justice of a Southern State. As we drove away, he turned to me and said: "I would give twenty thousand dollars to have my portrait where yours hangs there in the Seminary library." Then with a sigh he added: "Yours is the greatest calling in the world. The regret of my life is that I did not become a preacher instead of a lawyer."

The opinion of such a man is not to be lightly set aside, especially when it coincides with that of the best and wisest Man who ever walked the earth and worked among men. "Tell John," Jesus said, "the poor have the gospel preached to them."

This was the strongest credential Christ could give. It was the clearest proof that God had come to earth,—not that blind men saw and lame men walked, not that lepers were cleansed and deaf ears unstopped, not even that graves were opened and the dead raised up, but that the poor had the Gospel preached to them. The good news was being proclaimed. “Go and tell John that,” said Jesus. “He will understand. He has spent his life in this business. He has been just a voice crying in the wilderness. He knows the worth of a message. Go back and tell him that the poor have the gospel preached to them, and he will laugh at Herod, for he will know that while they may bind the messenger, the message is not bound.”

ALL THAT THE CHURCH HAS

All that the Church has is a message. This is all that it had at the first. When Christianity started, there was no organization. The elaborate machine which has grown into what we now call the Christian Church did not exist. There was an ornate system of worship under the Old Testament dispensation which headed up in the temple at Jerusalem, but it was arrayed against Christ’s disciples. It had applauded Christ’s death.

At the start the Church was without rituals and creeds. All these things, whether they be good or bad, have been worked out since. The Church may boast of imposing spectacles and magnificent

pageants and powerful traditions, but it had none of these when it started. It was without money or schools, without books or religious press, without buildings and church courts and conferences. All that little group of men had was a message. They called it the Gospel, the good news, the evangel.

This is all the Church has ever had. It has sought much else, and often its search has been successful, but sooner or later it has discovered that what it sought outside of its message was fools' gold. It has sought the patronage and protection of the state only to learn that a state-fed church cannot save a lost world. It has sought numbers and wealth and scholarship, only to discover that without the message these are mere straw assets. It has sought to build stately churches and imposing cathedrals, and it has seen them become the tombs of religion, without the Gospel.

All that the Church has to-day is its message. Silence that, and the Christian Church goes out of business. Let that ring clear and true, and you may burn down every church and wipe out all the elaborate machinery that has been built about it, you may strip it of its wealth and numbers and influence, but if it still have left a voice to tell the old, old story of Jesus and His love, it remains in possession of all that it ever had and of all that it needs to bring the lost world back to God.

The message is dynamic, potential. It produces all the rest. What the root is to the tree, what the sun is to earth and sky, the message is to the kingdom. Those early Christians went out with their message. They went up against a hostile world with the Gospel. They proclaimed the good news and the world surrendered.

BACK OF THE MESSAGE

It is a message with a life behind it, the fairest and finest, the most beautiful and benevolent, at once the gentlest and the most resistless the world has ever known. Behind the Gospel is Christ. The Gospel is not merely something Jesus said or taught or did or had. It is Christ Himself. The message was an incarnation. It was great with all that Christ said and did and had and was, and its authority was sealed by His resurrection from the dead. Many a promoter of some new cult or religion has found himself in the same predicament as the man who felt that he had invented a perfectly good religion, but somehow he could get no one to accept it. He was told to get himself crucified, to remain in the grave for three days and then rise from the dead, and his success would be assured. The message Christ gave those men was that kind of a message. It was written in the life-beats and heart-throbs of the Son of God. No wonder it was electric with omnipotence.

It is a message with Christian experience behind

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it. The disciples were not telling a strange tale, or even a story which they had learned out of a book. Their message was out of their own lives. It was not conjecture. To them the Gospel was not a great "perhaps." It was certitude. It was easier for them to doubt their own existence than their message. The preacher was able to say: "I know whom I have believed." You cannot shut the mouth of such a preacher. You may burn him, but the very flames will take from his parched tongue the song and carry it on. You may bury him, but over his grave will stand the angel of the resurrection saying: "He is not here; he is risen." And so the gospel message is in a class by itself. No argument of man or devil can make headway against it. Its polemic is the conviction of a soul that has experienced its reality.

It is a message with the sublimest moments in human history behind it. Calvary is there in the background of the message. Will the weary world ever tire of the cross and the story of the love that knew no bounds, the old, old story of Jesus and His love? It is the heart story of the race. It is easier for night watchers to tire of the morning, or for thirsty lips to tire of the fountain that slakes their thirst, or for the starving to tire of bread.

"In the cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o'er the wrecks of time,
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime."

There in the background of the message is the cross-crowned hill and the Son of God dying to save the lost.

Pentecost is there in the background. It is a message of power as well as love. Pentecost is there with its baptism of fire and its gift of tongues and its pledge of conquest. The message was charged with the voltage of heaven. There in the background of the message is the little group waiting in the upper room, until suddenly Pentecost is fully come, and the Holy Ghost descends, and they speak with tongues, and they have been speaking ever since, and the thing they have proclaimed has turned the world upside down, for behind the message is the throne of God.

The empty tomb is there, too. It is a message of life as well as of power and love, the message of Him Who has conquered death. Why should the preachers be afraid? Ever and again as they deliver the message, Jesus seems to come to them as He came through the shut door to show His hands and feet scarred with the nails of the cross, as He showed them to Thomas; to stand on some sea-shore as He stood that morning by the lakeside and called to them and gave them the secret of victory. All this flames in the message. No wonder the world cannot stop the Gospel. Bars are powerless to confine and flames to consume the truth Christ's servants preach.

To-day it is a vindicated message. The Gospel

is no longer an experiment. Wherever it has been preached the results claimed have followed. Real human progress dates from the hour the disciples went out to proclaim the message. About all there is of value in human civilization is due to the influence of the Gospel on the lives of men. It is a message that has stood the test of twenty centuries. It has been fiercely fought and bitterly persecuted, but to-day there is nothing more evident than that all future human progress must be in line with the teachings of Christ.

Such is the message Jesus wants us to give the lost world. Who would want a better? It is a message incarnated in the finest life the world has known, demonstrated in human experience, with the cross and the fiery baptism of heaven and the empty tomb in the background, the message that has been vindicated by two thousand years of conflict and achievement. Out there in the future ahead of the message is the goal of a redeemed world, and everyone who preaches the Gospel is helping humanity toward the goal. It is a glorious message. Just to have the chance to proclaim it is enough to set a soul afire.

PROCLAMATION

All that the message needs is proclamation. It does not need proof. It proves itself. You do not need to prove the soil that grows the grain that feeds the world. You do not need to prove the

spring that quenches your thirst. You need only to dip a cup of crystal and drink. You do not need to prove the sun that shines in the sky. You do not need to prove the Gospel. It is axiomatic. It is not apologetics nor polemics that is needed. It is proclamation. "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

It is not defense the message needs. We are to "contend earnestly for the truth once delivered to the saints," but our most valiant contending is an adequate proclamation of the truth. We must not take ourselves too seriously, as though God's throne would fall down if we let go. The Almighty does not desire us to strain ourselves to that extent. God takes care that His truth is not destroyed. The preacher need not be nervous about the message. The preacher who is, is like a man who would say to the Mississippi River: "I am afraid you are going to run dry, and so I will empty my pint cup into the stream." But the father of waters replies: "Do not fear for me; I feed from a thousand rivers and a hundred thousand springs." He is like a man who would say to the sky: "I am afraid you will fall down, and so I am going to prop up the sky with my arm." But the dome of heaven replies: "Little man, do not fear for me; I am leaning on the shoulder of the Almighty." He is like a man who would say to the blazing sun: "I am worried about you, O Sun; I am afraid you will go out, and so I'll strike a light." But the

mighty sun replies: "Dismiss your anxiety; I was here before you came, and I shall be shining when the shadow of death has fallen over you." The message is God's truth. It is the power of God unto salvation. It needs no defense.

All that it needs is to be told. It must have a preacher. "How shall they hear without a preacher?" It does not need the tricks of the orator or the actor or the rhetorician. Its appeal is not in the moving eloquence of the speaker. Its power is not in the dramatic proclivities of the messenger. Its efficacy is not in the stilted phrases of the herald. It is the truth that saves. It is the message that makes men free.

Hence "it has pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." To human wisdom the method often seems utter folly, especially when some preachers are heard. How can God expect to reach a lost world with a performance so dull and stale and lifeless? He will never do it if He is depending on the gifts of the preacher. The power is in the message. Let the message be clearly and faithfully told so that those who hear may understand, and hell's foundations quiver.

It is still just a voice for which God asks, just someone to go out and tell the message. This is all there was of John the Baptist. He was a "voice crying in the wilderness." All Christ asked His disciples to do was to go into all the world and

preach the Gospel to every creature. It is all He asks for to-day. He seeks a voice. It was for this that He gave to man the marvellous gift of speech. He was preparing for the proclamation of the message. What a surrender if lips are dumb! What a condemnation for the voice to be fluent on every other theme, but silent when it comes to the gospel message! Shall we be eloquent in trade and politics, in literature and art and adventure, but mute when God needs lips to speak the truth that saves?

STICKING TO THE MESSAGE

If the Church is to win, it must stick to its message. Nothing can ever take the place of preaching. People who are alarmed over a tendency which they are pleased to call "sermonolatry" are needlessly alarmed. It is probably true that Protestantism would be stronger if it paid more attention to worship in church services, but Christianity is a religion that makes its appeal to the intelligence, to the heart, and not merely to the eye. It centers in convictions. It asks for faith, not feeling. It is always and preëminently a message, and between this message, faithfully preached, and true worship there can be no contradiction. Preaching and worship supplement each other.

✓ An institutional church can never take the place of a preaching church. There need be no hostility to institutional features, provided the community

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to which the church ministers needs a soup-kitchen or a play-hall or a kindergarten and cannot get them in any other way, but the world will never be saved by food and fresh air and entertainment.

✓ Human nature is not to be changed by changing its surroundings any more than a dirty, stagnant pond is to be purified by planting flowers on the bank, any more than smallpox is to be cured by wallpaper or typhoid fever with scenery. These things may make the patient cheerful, and in so far as they do, are to be commended, but the Christian Church is in the business of salvation. If people are to be saved, there is but one thing that can accomplish the result. It is the Gospel.

✓ It is the Gospel that is to be preached. It is amazing how many sermons can run their course without once encountering gospel truth. There are preachers who take ordination vows to preach the Gospel, but they seem shy of the task. They are afraid the sermon may be dull if they make it too religious. If they only knew how hungry the lost world is for the Gospel they would not be shy. In one of our churches the minister was preaching his farewell sermon. It had not been a happy pastorate. The sermon was iconoclastic. It was destructive of about all that devout faith holds dear. As two of the elders walked down the steps after the service, one remarked to the other: "What did you think of the sermon?" to which the other replied: "I feel like the Irish tramp whose breakfast

had been stolen by a dog when the man's back was turned. Discovering his loss, the tramp sighed and said: 'I thank God my appetite is left!''

There are preachers who feed the hungry souls of men on current events or civic righteousness or moral reform or new thought. No wonder their churches are empty, or if filled, filled with a curious crowd of people who have no thought of God before them.

Jesus did not commission His disciples to be moral reformers or social agitators. He did not encourage them to enter politics and straighten the crooked and cleanse the foul. He did not send them out to muck-rake and hold up to the public gaze the putrid filth of dirty cities. He sent them out to preach the Gospel. Paul had an excellent opportunity to discuss slavery when he sent Onesimus back to Philemon, but he said not a word about it, for he had a bigger message. He had the Gospel. He knew that when men received the Gospel slavery would be abolished as well as all other wrongs which sin had brought into an estranged world.

If the Church is to win, it must stick to its message. This is all that it needs to do. The churches that are vigorous and growing are those that are faithful to the Gospel. That preacher does not fail who has a message. The Christian Church has the best thing in the world for man's soul. There is nothing that can compare with it,

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and the Church needs only to be true to its spiritual mission. It is when it goes out on side issues that it encounters failure. If the Church is engaged in entertaining people, the theater can easily put it out of business. If it is trying to give the news, the press can easily outdistance it. If its goal is social reform and civic righteousness, there are clubs that travel on quicker trains. But when it comes to the message that shows the lost soul how to get right with God, the Church stands without a competitor. The Church has the Gospel, and its sole and supreme task is to proclaim the message.

A BIG PROGRAM

This does not mean a narrow program, although at first sight to some it may seem narrow. When I started as a preacher I had one sermon. I regarded it as a masterpiece. To me it was exhaustive. To the people it was probably exhausting. Into it I had packed all that I knew. I did not see how I could ever make another sermon. There was no material left. But I soon discovered that truth's shore line is like the ever-enlarging zone of a circle. The further you travel along the diameter, the bigger grows the domain covered by the circumference. Life is infinite in its variety, and the preacher's message is the application of truth to life's endless need. Hence the more he uses, the fuller grows his locker.

Of course the Gospel can be given a narrow in-

terpretation. It can be stripped of flesh and blood until nothing is left but the bare bones. "We must do something for McNeilly Church," said one of the brethren at the ministers' meeting on a Monday morning. "Things are going in a bad way. That young pastor ignores the Confession of Faith and rarely speaks of the catechism. The people are not getting our doctrines." "What are they getting?" someone asked. "He is giving them nothing but just the plain, simple Gospel," replied the anxious and perturbed brother. "The plain, simple Gospel? Can you beat it?" he was asked.

The plain, simple Gospel is not so bad, and when you sense its sweep, not so narrow. It is narrow if reduced to a sectarian scheme for avoiding eternal punishment, if offered as an insurance against fire hereafter. But the Gospel as Christ gave it is great. It is the message of the love of God, a love that is "broader than the measure of man's mind." "Oh, to be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." The extent of the Gospel is stated in John 3: 16. "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have everlasting life." When one has sounded the depths and measured the heights and reached out to the cir-

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cumference of "so loved," he will begin to have some idea of the boundless sweep of the gospel message. Let us consider some of the things contained in the message.

PERSONAL REDEMPTION

Individual salvation is there. This is where we must start. We shall never get a better world until we get a better man, and we shall never get a better man until he is redeemed. Unregenerate human nature is what it has always been. It is as cold and brutal and animal two thousand years after Christ as it was two thousand years before Christ. The deepest need in every human life is to get saved, to get into fellowship with God, to secure the forgiveness of sin and be born again.

The Christian minister has the message of salvation. He is the only preacher who has. Neither is there salvation in any other, for "there is none other name under heaven whereby we must be saved." He has the message that puts a fallen man on his feet. His is the only Gospel. There are plenty of religions, but only one Gospel, only one religion with a cure for sin, only one that can save.

What more glorious career than to go forth into the world on the crusade of salvation? It is something to make money. It is far greater to make character. It is something to heal the sick body. It is sublime to heal the sick soul. It is something to give bread to the hungry, but to make men par-

takers of the divine nature is to go on a mission that heaven covets. This is the business of the preacher, and he need never be in despair. To his Gospel there are no hopeless cases.

William James says that the object of a college education is to enable us to recognize a real man when we see one. The preacher is in a bigger business than education. The purpose of the Gospel is not to recognize but to produce real men.

FATHERHOOD

The Gospel is the message that God is our Father. It was this that Jesus came to reveal. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." This was the sight He showed the world on Calvary's cross. God is wiser than a judge, mightier than a king, greater than a creator, holier than a saint. He is the heavenly Father.

This is no narrow message. It is no item of transitory interest to be flashed on the wires of the world and forgotten. The question: What is God? burns at the heart of humanity. How does God feel toward me? is an inquiry that cannot be set aside. The man who preaches the Gospel has the answer to that question. He has the message that rests the weary world. The greatest discovery a man can make is that God is his Father. To make that discovery is to be saved.

BROTHERS

It is the message that men are brothers. If

they have the same father they must be brothers. Human brotherhood will never come to stay save as it comes in the gospel way, for the bond of brotherhood is more than to have the same colour or the same speech, or to belong to the same nation or sect. It is bigger than the tie of trade or class. Brotherhood is a big phrase. Sometimes it is treated as a small thing, and selfish cliques call themselves brotherhoods. But brotherhood must become racial.

The gospel message preaches racial brotherhood, and when we get that, alienations will be healed, wars will cease, strikes will be over, mankind will be one family. It is a glorious thing to proclaim such a message. The Christian preacher is the evangelist of reconciliation to the strife-torn world.

THE KINGDOM

The Gospel is the message of the kingdom. It is social as well as individual. It widens out until it concerns itself with all life. As men embrace the message they discover that it sweeps the totality of all life's relations, that to be a Christian is to be a citizen of the kingdom, and that to be a citizen is to begin to build a new world, and that to build a new world is to tear down what is bad and build in what is good, is to fight all that God hates and foster and promote all that God loves.

Thus the gospel program widens out into a world program. It takes in everything. It is a message

of hope to all who are fallen. It means daybreak to the weak races of the world, and opportunity to those who have ceased to hope.

He who preaches the Gospel is the prophet of the kingdom, of society organized in harmony with the Sermon on the Mount, of human relationships regulated by the Golden Rule. It is the message of the kingdom "of whose increase there shall be no end." No wonder John was content to be just a voice crying in the wilderness. No wonder Paul said: "I am not ashamed of the gospel."

BEING A PREACHER

It is a great thing to be a voice for God. It is something to make money, to write books, to develop mines, to enact laws, but to be a voice crying in the wilderness sounding the message that changes the desert into a garden and makes the wilderness bud and blossom as the rose is to enter the great vocation. What matters it if like John one lose his head, if like Paul one languish in prison? He has released the message before which the dark line of evil retires and the dawn line of hope brightens.

✓ The preacher's calling is to proclaim the message that saves the soul and brings to the individual his sublimest experience, that reveals the face of God as the Father of mankind and leads the race to its greatest discovery, that proclaims the brotherhood of man as well as the Fatherhood of God, and pre-

sents the law of love and the Golden Rule as the statesmanship of a fear-free, warless world, and that paints on the sky of the future the kingdom, the divine goal of human endeavour, and the social order that shall come down from God out of heaven when men have learned to "learn war no more."

✓ This is the door that opens to a young man who dedicates his life to the gospel ministry. Could there be a door of wider influence? This is the investment of life one makes who becomes a ✓ preacher. What investment could pay bigger dividends? This is the career on which he enters who hears the call to preach, and becomes a voice for God. What career can be sublimer in its summons, more satisfying in its service, or more lasting in its results?

James Keir Hardie, the English labour leader, after thirty years as a member of the British Parliament, said: "If I could start again in life, I would not be a politician. I would be a preacher, because I believe that as a preacher I could be of the greatest service to the world."

The chance to be a preacher faces every young man who stands at the door of life trying to decide the path he will take. He makes a choice that will have no regrets, who elects this path that leads ever toward a brightening sky.

V

THE MAN BEHIND THE MESSAGE

“**A**RMS and the man I sing” is the way the ancient world wrote its creed. It was a day when the world was short on arms. Weapons were crude. Tools were few. Things were scarce. Baggage was light. And so according to the law of supply and demand, arms ranked higher than personality and led the procession.

But the world has made marvellous progress in the invention and manufacture of tools. Arms have become not only so plentiful but so deadly that the horrors of war stagger the imagination and defy description. Man has a tool for almost everything that needs to be done. It is the age of the machine, and the day is rapidly approaching when Mr. Edison’s prophecy will come true and man will do by machinery all that he now does by hand, the only need for the man being to stand by and see that the machine keeps going. The world is no longer short on arms. Tools are not scarcer than men. Things are common. Baggage is great. Were the world to write its creed to-day, it would put personality first,—not “arms and a man,” but “a man and his tools.”

The supreme need of the world is personality.

There can be no substitute for life. No weapon that was ever invented can ever take the place of a soldier. No organization can become the proxy of personality. The greatest thing God ever made is human personality. It is that strange, mysterious thing which makes one what he is, which creates individualism. God never made two men exactly alike. Heredity is what one gets from his forebears. Environment is what he gets from his surroundings. And personality is what he gets from his Maker. It is made up of the three elements of judgment, emotion, and volition. The relation of these three to each other creates individualism. When judgment is in the ascendancy, we have the conservative type; when emotion, the enthusiast; and when volition, the fanatic. The outstanding importance of the man confronts us in whatever direction we may turn.

It is the man that decides the day in politics. Parties may hold conventions and attempt to mislead the people with platforms which were never intended to be kept, but the important thing is: Who stands on the platform? If a demagogue struts and squeaks, no one has any confidence in him. What is needed is a man who possesses not only leadership but character, and who can be trusted.

The same thing is true in society. The safety of society resides not in our institutions, but in the character of the people who manage them; not in

our wealth and opportunity, but in the kind of men who handle them. In business life credit is based on confidence, and confidence is the product of integrity. Put a plunger at the head of a bank, and the market value of its stock sags. To stabilize business transactions, faith is needed, and faith is born not of dollars, but of the character of the men who handle the dollars.

All this is preëminently true when it comes to religion. In the church, it is the man who saves the day. It is not his sect nor his robe nor his methods. It is the man. We have seen a church divided, and when the right man came, the divisions were healed. We have seen a church cold and inactive, but when the right man came, the frost passed. Sometimes a church has seemed absolutely dead, but with the coming of the right man, life began to stir beneath the ribs of death. There is only one problem in the church, only one problem in the world. It is the problem of finding the right man.

This is the conviction that backs up the theme of this chapter,—the man behind the message. The man is behind the message. The two cannot be divorced. The preacher may say to the people what a groggy father said to his son: “Do not look at what I am; listen to what I say.” Nevertheless, the people will insist on looking, and nine-tenths of them will believe their eyes sooner than their ears. The preacher is the moving picture of his business.

He says something two or three times a week, but the film of his daily life is a continuous performance. He is behind his message as the powder is behind the ball.

The message is all right. It is as perfect as ✓ God can make it. The preacher need not be nervous about his message. It will take care of itself. ✓ It needs neither favour nor patronage, for it is "the power of God unto salvation." It is the only ✓ remedy for a sick world. All that it needs is a man to proclaim it. That is all it had at the beginning. To His first disciples, Jesus said: "Go and preach the gospel," and as they went preaching, they found that somehow the message they proclaimed had power to climb the mountains and swim the seas and conquer the world. The Church has never been short on a message. But if a shabby man be placed behind a great message, it is like putting wet powder behind the ball. You cannot shoot lead with sawdust. The Church cannot make much headway with a message projected by a jellyfish ministry, with apostles and prophets and evangelists whose spines are made of spaghetti.

"God give us men!" This must ever be the prayer of the Church. Nowhere is manhood in greater demand, because nowhere is the genuine so precious or the counterfeit so dangerous or loss so disastrous. The divine plan lays the emphasis on the man behind the message. It is the plan of revelation. The Bible has a Hero. "In the volume

of the book it is written of me." On the pages of the Bible come to meet us great men who are what they declare. It is the plan of evangelization. The message is to be carried by men, not by angels. The doctrines of religion are people. When they are divorced from human life, they become mere dogmas. It is the plan of conquest. "Ye are the temple of the Holy Ghost." Christ's church is a human life. His polemic is not a book, nor a cathedral, not a ritual nor a creed. "A man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

✓ The unanswerable argument for the truth of the Christian religion is a holy life. It makes a plea for God that neither man nor devil can refute, and the clearest interpretation of the Bible is one who daily lives its teachings. "What is your favourite version of the Bible?" was asked of a group of boys in the Sunday school. Some said: "The King James." Others: "The Authorized." Some liked Moffatt's New Testament. One lad said: "I like my mother's version best. She lives it." There is no finer exposition of the Scriptures than a holy life.

✓ All of this but lays increasing emphasis on the importance of the right kind of man behind the message. If the man is rotten, no matter how sound his doctrine may be, it cannot save the day. ✓ He is the big fact in his ministry,—not his college,

not his degrees, not his parish, but the man himself. He is more important than any sermon he ever preaches, than any service he ever conducts, than any duty he ever performs. If this be true, what kind of a man should he be?

A MAN

He must be first and foremost and always a man. Colleges and theological seminaries and church courts can do much, but they cannot make a preacher without a real man to begin with. He must be a manly man. Religion has suffered too much from the feminine type of men in holy orders. Red blood is needed in the gospel ministry as in any other vocation, perhaps more.

The preacher must possess the measures and make-up of a personality that will lead the people by what the man is as well as by what he says. Every man who speaks for God should have the kind of greatness David referred to when he said: "Thy gentleness hath made me great."

It is not what one has that makes him great. It is not the amount of his baggage nor the size of his stipend nor the numbers of his crowd. To be sure, the world frequently estimates preachers by the yard-stick and the multiplication table. The first question asked about a certain minister who was being considered for a vacant church was: "Does he have crowds?" The inquiry had to be answered in the negative. The preacher was not

considered further. The fact that he had souls was of minor importance.

Three small boys were talking to each other about their respective fathers. One was the son of a professional ball player, one of an actor, and one of a preacher. All were hero worshippers. The first said: "My father is a pitcher; he gets fifteen thousand dollars a year." The second said: "My father is an actor; he gets fifty thousand dollars a year." The third: "My father is a preacher, and it takes twelve men to take up the collection!" They were measuring human greatness by a popular standard, but the man behind the message must have more than a packed house and a fat stipend.

Neither is it what one does that makes him great. It is not the character nor the number of his activities that is important. He must be more than an organizer. A small man sometimes gets attached to a big movement.

Nor is it what one knows that fits him for his task. Knowledge and greatness are far from being synonymous. Science may boast of its achievements, but a really great scientist is not boastful. He is never cocksure, because the more he knows, the more he knows he does not know. Knowledge is merely a method of discovering how ignorant we are. Because one has memorized the dictionary and mastered the encyclopedia, it does not follow that he is ready for his degree.

It is what a man is that makes him great.

Greatness is on the inside. It is a quality of personality. It is an attribute of character, an asset of the soul. Socrates was great, but not rich. Marshal Foch was not made great by the World War. It was his greatness that the World War revealed. Jesus Christ was great not because of what He had, not because of what He said, not because of what He did, but because of what He was. And so the supreme qualifications for the great vocation are to be looked for in the man himself.

✓ The man behind the message should be physically fit. It is a great help to inherit a good physique, to have a sound digestion, to possess nerves and muscles and blood cells that function perfectly. ✓ The preacher is wise who cares for his body. Physical vigour is magnetic. Of course the man of God is not to be estimated by *avoirdupois* and gastronomic feats, but the old idea that a saint is *sallow-visaged* and *dyspeptic* has passed out not to return. It is a red-blooded saint whom the world of to-day admires.

And the world is not wrong. Physical fitness reacts on the preacher's ability to do his work. It vitally affects all his contacts with the community. It has much to do with his outlook on life. It powerfully affects his theological views, and determines to an extent the character of his message. This is not saying that a lame body may not become the King's messenger. Paul had a thorn in

the flesh, whatever it was, and often some shut-in through holy intercessions rules the world from a bed of invalidism, and by the sheer glory of spiritual contact shapes the coming kingdom.

The human body, however, when it came from God's hands unmarred by sin, was perfect. Perhaps in no calling are these lines of Browning's more applicable than in the preacher's:

“Let us not always say
In spite of flesh to-day
I strove, made way, gained ground
upon the whole,
As the bird wings and sings
Let us say: All good things are ours
Nor soul helps flesh more now than
flesh helps soul.”

✓ The man behind the message should be intellectually alert. Religion appeals to the head as well as to the heart. Its truths are profound and its system sublime. It does not degrade the intellect in order to exalt the heart. And so the preacher must be a thinker. He needs to be an intellectual leader. If his opinions are to command respect, they must not be half-baked. Perhaps not so much as formerly, but to an extent, the preacher is still the dominie. He may be a man of mediocre ability, but he must be intellectually active, mentally well-trained, and above all, honest in his mental processes.

✓ The preacher must be morally clean. He will

not be, without a battle. The very nature of his calling makes him an easy mark for attacks that imperil his moral integrity. The tragic collapse of a minister whose morals have sagged and surrendered under temptation is one of the saddest calamities to befall Christ's cause.

The preacher must fight for his morals. Even the Lord's anointed is not safe. Some of the most gifted have slipped and fallen. So saintly a man as Charles H. Spurgeon declared that he had in his nature tendencies which, had they not been held in restraint by God's gracious hand, would have carried him into the deepest hell.

The minister's character is his capital, and his character is not what he is in his pulpit, on dress parade. It is what he is without an audience. This question of morals is bigger. It means lofty ideals and clean speech and sense enough not to be spoiled by flattery. The preacher who tells a questionable story is probably a worse influence than his brother who is doctrinally unsound. His foolish friends will be inclined to tell their pastor, especially in the earlier years of his service, that he is a wonder. Unless he is level-headed and has a good share of common sense, he will be tempted to believe them, and conclude that he is something when he is nothing. Every preacher needs one good critic who kindly but firmly will tell him to his face the truth. Well be it for him if his wife is such a critic.

The question of morals cuts deeper still. It means moral earnestness. It demands that one take his work seriously. It calls for self-effacement on one hand, and for such aggressiveness on the other as enables the preacher to say: "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."

✓ The man behind the message must be spiritually sound. Popularity may be to him a blessing or a curse. It all depends upon how it is acquired. If he is just a good fellow coming down to the world's level and going its gaits, so far as a preacher may without scandal, he has capitulated.

✓ What men seek in a minister is a lifting fellowship. In order to give it, the preacher must meet men on a spiritual basis. Spirituality is not to be confounded with piosity. It must not be made offensive. It is just the life-mood of one who dwells under the spell of the eternal in unbroken fellowship with God, and to whom the great realities are spiritual. He is a poor man behind his message if there be nothing about him to suggest his Lord.

Man is essentially a spirit, not a body. He has certain sense experiences, but he himself lies soaking in a spiritual atmosphere, and there alone abiding reality is found. If his minister can give him no fellowship in this spiritual realm, there is failure at the point of greatest need. If he can talk to his people about trade and politics and wages and recreation and never lift them to the heights where

the soul feels the winds which blow from God, the preacher is not a sky-pilot at all.

Physically fit, mentally alert, morally clean, spiritually sound,—these are some of the measures of a manly man, and these must build themselves into the make-up of one who would successfully proclaim the gospel message.

In all of this the preacher must be natural, not a copy, not an imitator, not an eccentric, but true to himself. He must possess sincerity, striving to practice what he preaches. He must be his message, and not merely say it. He must possess simplicity. The great are always simple, great art, great songs, great sermons, great men. A great preacher is one who can be understood by a child, who can bring big truths within reach of little people. He must be approachable and friendly, not so democratic as to be familiar, for familiarity soon turns to contempt, and yet remembering that his Master was the most democratic of men, living in the open where any needy life could reach Him, and also remembering that the disciple is not greater than his Lord. He must be useful. Whatever he does or fails to do, he must go about doing good. He must not be so absorbed with his sermons as to forget his people, for his sermon is not the end of his ministry, but merely a means to an end.

Nor can we stop here in our discussion of the man behind the message. We have not gone yet

far beneath the surface. We must take the subject to higher levels, and give the preacher a finer setting, if he is to make his calling the sublimest vocation open to mortals. The man behind the message must be more than a man, than a manly man, than one of earth's great men.

BEHIND HIM

He must have something behind him. He must have God at his back. He must deserve the name which stilted ecclesiasticism sometimes gives a preacher. In the true sense of the word he must be a divine.

Christianity does not start with man. It starts with God. The Bible does not open with "In the beginning, man," but "In the beginning, God." God is not the result of culture. He is not a by-product of human civilization. Religion is not something which man has evolved as the race has crept out of the jungle and slowly crawled up the scale of being. God is the original and ultimate fact of the universe.

It is nice for the preacher to love everybody, to be good-natured and gentle and kind, a sort of peripatetic Abou Ben Adhem saying: "Write me as one who loves his fellow-men." But if that mood is to last long and get far, it must be fed. He who strives to do good in the world merely because he loves people is in peril of a set-back when he encounters unlovable people. Altruistic

impulses must be nourished from a higher source than human gratitude. The great servants of the world are not Abou Ben Adhems saying: "Write me as one who loves his fellow-men," but St. Pauls saying: "The love of Christ constraineth me."

I know a crystal spring on a mountainside that gushes out from under a great overhanging rock at an altitude of some six thousand feet above the sea. Its crystal waters are nearly ice cold as they meet the outer air. Around the spot stand hemlocks and balsams with thick clumps of rhododendron and ivy. Between the broad slabs of mountain granite that floor the stream which starts there, great beds of fern are growing. It is the birthplace of a mighty river that runs down the valley and through the meadows and across the plains to the distant sea. How long would the river run if that spring on the skyline and others like it that feed the stream were to run dry? It is so with the stream of human love that gladdens and blesses life. It must be fed. It must run out of the heart of God. No one can last long as a lover of men who refuses to be a lover of God.

The preacher's attitude to God settles the question of power. Until that is settled, other things must wait. The size of his ministry will be not the size of his preparation or opportunity, not the size of his ability or scholarship, but the size of his power. It is with personality as with everything else. Power comes first.

The big question for a factory is not location or equipment or raw materials or labour or transportation facilities or an open market. All these are vastly important, but there is one thing absolutely essential. It is power. The size of the factory is the size of the power plant. If you would double the factory, you must increase the power.

It is the same with personality. Power comes first,—not culture nor brains nor position nor possessions, but power. The size of a man is the size of his power. This is true in an especial sense of the preacher. Spiritual power is his biggest asset. It is the one thing the Saviour promised the first preachers of His Gospel, and it is a promise which stands for all who come after them in the line of heralds and evangelists. “Ye shall have power.” Christ did not promise His Church wealth or numbers or station. He did not say: “You shall have influence,” but He did say: “You shall have power.”

The secret of powerⁱⁿ is personality, like the secret of power everywhere else, is contact. It is when the wire, whether large or small, ties up to the dynamo at the power house, that it becomes charged and transformed. It is when human personality ties up to the Supreme Dynamo and taps the measureless resources of power in God Himself that the voltage of the Almighty discharges through the ministry of a man.

Here is where some preachers have failed. They are brilliant, learned, eloquent. They have all that the schools can give them. But they lack power. They are not in fellowship with God. They are not in contact with the Almighty. Their pulpits are powerless, and their ministry is sterile of results.

The man is behind the message as the powder is behind the ball, but there must be something behind the powder. Yonder on the deck of a super-dreadnought a sixteen-inch gun points its tower of gleaming steel at the fort on the shore. The sweating marines have swung the huge shell in place, and the engine of destruction is trained with deadly precision on the foe. But it is harmless thus far. A bird may perch in the gun's mouth and sing to its mate. A baby may sit astride the big cannon and ride it as he would a toy. Timid women may gather about the huge weapon of war free of fear. Then one spark of electric fire leaps, and the shell roars, and the fort falls.

It is the spark of fire from off the altar that the preacher needs to wake his ministry into power. It is what the Master promised His disciples when He said: "All power is given unto me, and lo, I am with you always."

BESIDE HIM

The man behind the message must have something beside him. He must have his fellow-man

at his side. Like his Saviour, he must live where anybody can get at him, where the hunted can find him and the weak can reach him and the needy can lean on him. He must be more than a divine. He must be a human.

One of the most striking things about Jesus was this. He was human. He called Himself "Son of man." One day He asked His disciples: "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" Peter said: "Thou art the Son of God," which seems to have been Peter's way of saying: "Lord, thou art so much the Son of man that we believe thou art the Son of God. Thou art so human we believe thou art divine."

Men need a God for a Saviour, but they need a man, too, else God would never have become flesh. The old myth of Theseus and Ariadne recites how when Theseus was about to enter the mystic labyrinth in search of the monster, Ariadne tied a silken thread to his arm and let it unwind as he went deeper and deeper into the labyrinth. As she told him good-bye, she said: "When you meet the monster and are struggling with him and feel the pressure of this silken leash upon your arm, I want you to know that I am thinking about you." The story goes on to say that at last when Theseus grappled with his antagonist, the gentle pressure of Ariadne's silken thread made his arm stronger and his heart more courageous, and helped him to win the victory.

It is something like this that God has done in the human ministry of Jesus. He has bound Himself to us by the better than silken leash. He has become flesh of our flesh and blood of our blood. In the midst of life's conflict, we can feel the gentle pressure of His love and know that He is near:

“ 'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for! my
flesh that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it; O Saul, it
shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee, a Man like
to me
Thou shalt love and be loved by forever; a Hand
like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of the new life to thee!
See the Christ stand! ”

It was because the world needed a human Saviour that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and the preacher who would lead the world back to God must be human enough to interpret the Son of man to men. He must be more than a scholarly recluse, a hermit saint. He must be a friend of man. If he is invisible for six days in the week, he is likely to be incomprehensible on the seventh. He needs himself this contact with people. His sermons must be humanized if they are to reach sinners and comfort saints and help the weary world up-hill. The people need a shepherd who can be touched with the feeling of their infirmities, who shares the common lot, who instead of shunning trouble, seeks it.

The man behind the message must be a friend of God, but he must be a friend of man, too. His religion is a sham unless he finds it in his heart to pray: "Write me as one who loves his fellow-men." "If a man say: 'I love God,' and hateth his brother, he is a liar, for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" Thus the gentle St. John uses a short and ugly word to characterize the ministry that is so absorbed with eternity as to forget time, that is so divine it cannot be human.

The world needs a friend, and if the man who is supposed to expound the religion of love fails to be friendly, he has failed at the point of common need. The earth is full of lonely people. Solitude is hell. In a wretched tenement in a great city they found a woman who had taken her own life. In her arms was a dead dog. When the dog died, her last friend was gone, and existence became unendurable. The preacher who would help the world must live close to it. His house must be an open door.

"Then why should I sit in the scorner's seat,
Or hurl the cynic's ban?
Let me live in my house by the side of the road,
And be a friend to man."

BEFORE HIM

The man behind the message must have something before him. He must keep the needy world

in sight. He must see what Christ always saw when He looked out on life, what He saw that day when He beheld the multitude and was moved with compassion because they were as sheep not having a shepherd, what He saw that day when He stooped down and wrote in the sand, and said to a girl of the streets waiting to be sentenced: "Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more."

The preacher who cannot be stirred by the spectacle of human need would best quit preaching until God opens blind eyes. His message will lack heart as well as power unless he loves people and carries in his arms the woes and sorrows of a hurt world.

But he must see more than the wreck. He must look past ruin to redemption and catch sight of what the world will be when God has His way with it. He needs vision to see shining before him, splendid and glorious, the coming kingdom. Without this vision, his message will dwindle and change from a shout of hope to a wail of despair. Of all men the Christian minister should be an optimist, a prophet of the morning, an apostle of the dawn. He must see the wreck, but he must look past it to the coming kingdom. This vision will save him from being spoiled by success or depressed by defeat. A great soul is one who can sweat drops of blood in Gethsemane, and say: "Thy will be done," and also one who can rise from the rent tomb calling to a few common fish-

ermen with his heart on his lips: "Do you love me?" Such composure as this comes only to those who lean on God and have caught a clear vision of what is waiting for the world at the end of the road.

The world needs a preacher who does not worship success, who has seen far enough into the unseen to discover that failures are often life's supreme achievements. He must have some of the spirit Paul had when he said: "A great and effectual door is open unto me, and there are many adversaries," some of the unconquerable enthusiasm Christ means to give when He says: "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but courage, I have overcome the world!"

WITHIN HIM

The man behind the message must have his message not only on his lips, but in his heart. Of course he must be a converted man. He is not likely to lead his people where he does not go himself. An unconverted preacher can deliver sermons, but they lack realism. They are without prophetic fire. There is a difference between a preacher and a pulpiteer. To the pulpiteer the sermon is a performance. To the preacher it is his soul going out in speech.

"What is the subject of your sermon for next Sunday?" was the question a certain minister's wife was in the habit of asking her husband. One

day she startled him by asking: "What is the object of your sermon?" It changed his ministry. Preaching is a passion, not a performance, to the man whose soul is afire for God and for the salvation of souls, but unless this fire burns within him, his message will dwindle to dull routine.

The preacher must not stop with his conversion. He needs to get acquainted with God, to acquire, not an easy familiarity, but that sacred intimacy which comes from the practice of the prayer life. "I never like a man," says one of Barrie's characters, "who speaks of God in his prayers as if the Almighty were just around the corner." To know God is not to be devoid of reverence, but to know Him aright is to face Him without fear.

There is more than this sacred intimacy for the preacher to build into his personal experience. "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" was the question which Paul asked of the Ephesian elders, and which every preacher should be able to answer for himself with an unqualified affirmative. If he is to have the gift of tongues and preach with power, his heart must become the temple of the Holy Ghost.

Above all else, the man behind the message must so have the cross as a personal experience that he can say: "I am crucified with Christ." It is well to have the cross as a conviction, to believe in the story of Christ's suffering, to subscribe to the atonement, to sing of the green hill far away; but

we sin against the cross if we make it a mere dogma.

It must be the preacher's profoundest experience,—not the cross on the church spire, not the cross in gold and precious stones, not the cross in a cathedral window, but the cross in a consecrated life is the sign of a conquering ministry. "I bear about in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus," said the greatest of preachers.

This is what drives and burns its way through the hard, skeptical, sarcastic, sinning world. This is what sustains the messenger, and gives reality to his message. When Calvary has become a personal experience, when its passion has been dissolved into the preacher's blood and he can say: "I die daily," it is finished. There is nothing left to fear, and already the chant of victory is singing down from the glory heights.

There is a lovely story told of Chinese Gordon's last day in London before sailing for Egypt. It was the Sabbath, and he spent the day going from church to church receiving the communion as often as he could. He wanted the tragedy of Calvary to stamp itself with undying power on his soul, for he was going out to his Calvary, too, and he went out unafraid. "Tell all Khartoum," was his dying message, "that Gordon knows not fear, because God made him without fear."

And so the man behind the message must be a knight of the Holy Grail. He must be a soldier of the Cross!

VI

THE PREACHER IN ACTION

THE preacher is not a piece of pious statuary in the temple of the Lord. The day of special privileges for the clergy is gone. Let us not lament the fact, but rather rejoice. Time was when a minister was respected because of the cloth he wore. Now if he wins and retains respect, it must be for what he is, for the good he does, and for the service he renders. "Paul a servant of Jesus Christ," was the way a great preacher introduced himself to Rome, and twenty centuries later it is the only kind of introduction that gets the right of way.

Therefore the preacher must not pose. He must be a man of action, and his activities are not to be protected by special legislation. No eight-hour day for him. Whenever the call comes for his services at any hour of day or night, he must be ready. He must live where he is easily accessible to the people. The manse must be "a house by the side of the road," and the preacher must be "a friend of man."

The old prophets were fond of calling themselves "the Lord's standing servants." It was an Eastern custom for the monarch always to have at

least one servant standing near the throne, so that when a message was to be sent or a deed done, the servant would not even need to arise to do the king's business. It is such speedy and eager service the old prophet would give the King of Kings when he said: "As the Lord God of hosts liveth before whom I stand." It is what every preacher should be, a standing servant, not a saint in repose, but a man of action, not reluctant and exclusive, wasting life in some holy retreat or dimly lighted cell, but ready and eager to make his life count for God and men.

As a man of action, there are three aspects of his calling to consider,—his resources, his methods, and his contacts.

RESOURCES

What are the resources for the preacher in action? On what may he draw to do his work? His is the greatest calling. As he seeks to discharge its high duties, what has he in hand with which to meet his obligations? What is a preacher's working capital?

The first to be named are his gifts, or his gift. One of the striking things about the gospel ministry is that it can capitalize any gift one may possess, and use it for the proclamation of the Gospel and the building of the kingdom. It is a mistake to conclude that before one can be a successful preacher he must have the gift of eloquence. Ora-

tory is not to be despised. Speaking ability is to be cultivated. But some of the world's most successful preachers have not possessed this gift.

"Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent," was the way Moses tried to evade the call. But God said: "Certainly I will be with thee." He says the same to everyone who goes forth in His name. When lips that stammer are touched with a live coal from off the altar the message will flame. When tongues that were dumb are baptized with Pentecostal power the people will hear in their own language the wonderful works of God.

There are diversities of gifts, but the gospel ministry needs them all, and can use them, in giving a bankrupt world the message of salvation. One man has business ability, another organizing genius, another personal magnetism, another the gift of teaching, and another the gift of exhortation. One possesses initiative, another executive ability, one vision, and another caution. One is especially successful in developing the spiritual life of believers, and another in leading the unsaved to a decision. One has the gift of promoting fellowship in the church, and another of relating the church to the community. All are needed, and all these gifts and many others find full room for finest service in the great calling.

Is not this what Paul meant when he wrote to the church in Corinth and said: "To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the

word of knowledge by the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit"? "Gifts of healing," "miracles," "prophecy," "discerning of spirits," "divers kinds of tongues," "interpretation of tongues." "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit dividing to every man severally as he will."

If you will stand on the pier at Lambert's Point and look out on Hampton Roads, you can see the boats going in all directions. Some are bound for the docks and some for the open sea. Some are steaming up near-by rivers to discharge their cargoes at quiet little landings, and some will not drop anchor until they have crossed world oceans and reached busy ports where people with strange faces and foreign tongues await their coming.

But it is the same power that drives them all, whether they sail north or south, or east or west, or far or near. It is the way each boat applies the power that determines the direction, and the same holds in human life. There are many gifts; there is but one Spirit. Each life has its definite mission. It will move on to its accomplishment as its gifts are surrendered to the dominion and driving power of God's Spirit.

The work is wide. The ports of human life are many. "The field is the world." "There is glory enough for us all," whatever our gift may be. The humblest talent may be dedicated to God and capitalized in the work of world redemption. God has

made no two trees alike, no two leaves on the same tree exactly alike, nor has He made two human lives alike. Each personality possesses its individual gift, and somewhere a port is waiting for a sail whose waters were charted of God for my frail bark. May it not wait in vain!

The preacher's preparation for the great calling is a part of his working capital. Because the first heralds of the cross were called from their boats and nets to follow Christ and fish for men, some conclude that anyone anywhere and at any time, without further preparation or professional training, may qualify to be a preacher. It is a mistake.

It is this idea that has released on the world the half-baked revivalist whose motives may be the best, but whose message is oftentimes one-sided and inadequate. It is this idea also that is responsible for the multiplication of individualistic groups of religionists whose spiritual development is retarded because under-nourished, and whose pious activities are devoted largely to controversy and the promotion of some small quite sectarian issue.

It is true that one needs but to know the Saviour to become a witness, but to be a preacher he needs to know his message, and to escape being switched from fundamentals to side-issues and non-essentials, he needs to know his message well. True, the first preachers were Galilean fishermen, but they spent three years in the school of Christ under the

tuition of the Master Himself. They were prepared.

The young preacher makes a mistake who is so eager to get to his work that he shortens his period of preparation. He is to be a leader of men in a realm where the mind thinks its highest thoughts, the soul is suffused by its sublimest aspirations, the heart is stirred by its profoundest convictions, the will is motivated by the noblest purposes, and life functions in activities at once the most human and the most divine. He must be no novice.

He must be "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." He will do well to seek his preparation at the feet of scholars as renowned for their piety as for their learning, who can teach him the letter of the law, but who will not fail to impart to him its spirit, and who will send him out to a needy world not only knowing, but knowing that he knows.

A preacher thus prepared will not be found cultivating doubts instead of faiths, undermining the message he was called to proclaim. He will not give men a stone when they ask for bread. He will have not negations but positions. It is such a preacher with a positive message for whom men wait to show them the road to God. They will follow him, but "a stranger will they not follow."

A third element in the preacher's working capital is hard work. He must not be expecting miracles

to relieve him of the necessity of doing with his might whatsoever his hands find to do. Work, work, work, is the preacher's program, work of head and heart, of hands and feet, of soul and sympathy. There must be enlisted in his calling every power and fibre of his being. He must have no stale hours. He is in a business not where men wear out, but burn out, and the flame must be kept bright.

He will get tired, but he must never grow weary, never so tired that he loses his enthusiasm, his faith, his courage, his glow. He must never be so weary but he is ready when need rings his doorbell or sin cries to be shown the way from the far country back home. He has meat to eat that the world knows not of. He must therefore not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season he will reap if he faints not.

Sometime everything surrenders to work. It is not the man of genius who wins, but the steady worker. It is not the brilliant pulpiteer, but the honest worker who toils on, declining to do shoddy work, turning aside from the lure of easy paths, deaf to calls that would take him from his task, steadfast in the determination to do his best. His gifts may be mediocre, but if his work be thorough and sincere, he cannot fail.

It was not a curse, but a blessing, when God said to man at the gate of the lost Eden: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." Work builds a

new Eden. Work is a secret of Paradise regained. God works, and His servants are co-workers with Him.

“This is the gospel of labour,
Ring it, ye bells of the kirk,
The Lord of love came down from
above
To live with the men who work.”

But the preacher has more than all this in his resources. We have not yet tapped his real reservoir of power. His greatest assets are unseen. They are spiritual, and he acquires them through faith. The preacher in action must be a man of prayer. He must be practical, a strenuous worker, but he must be spiritual, a devout mystic. He must live in constant, unbroken fellowship with God.

“Lo, I am with you always,” was Christ’s word to the first band as they broke away. It is this Unseen Presence that enriches and underwrites the gospel ministry. Here is where the preacher finds his renewal. Here is his source of strength and courage. “All power is given unto me, and lo, I am with you always.” From his knees and that contact the preacher rises ready and unafraid.

In the English and Scotch universities it used to be the custom for lower classmen to engage in horse-play at the expense of dignitaries who were on the stage at commencement seasons to receive honorary degrees. On David Livingstone’s return

from sixteen years of stern work in Africa, the University of Glasgow desired to confer on him the degree of Doctor of Laws. The students had come equipped for the usual frolic, but when Livingstone stood before them, his gaunt form worn by his life in the bush, his face seamed with lines of suffering and care, and bronzed by the hot African sun, his arm lamed by a lion's bite, hanging limp and helpless at his side, they forgot to tease, and standing, cheered the tanned and fever-marked hero of the desert. Livingstone began to plead with them to devote their lives to the work which had taken him to Africa. They grew thoughtful, and then a hush that could be felt came over those gay students as he said: "Shall I tell you what sustained me in my exiled life among strangers whose language I did not understand? It was this that confronted me at all times. 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.' "

This is the guerdon of every true herald of the cross, whether in the bush of an African wilderness or amid the congested and restless throngs of a great city. The preacher in action is never alone. As he goes on, he is ever attended by the Unseen, and as he goes on, the way clears, the dark becomes plain, the difficult easy, and the impossible actual, for the Unseen Who walks and works with him has already overcome the world.

METHODS

The preacher does not learn to preach out of books any more than the lawyer or doctor or merchant or mechanic. He learns to preach by being a preacher. This is not taking back what was said about the value of preparation. It is merely remembering that training ceases to be a frozen asset and becomes liquid power as it is used. David went on going and growing. It is the way with the servant of the Lord. He grows as he goes, and he goes as he grows. He will find the clouds lifting and the skies clearing as he rides into the storm, but he will do well to move to his work in an orderly way.

While he is divinely attended, he is but one man. He goes up against a not always friendly world. He faces an age of doubt. He must encounter criticism, indifference, hostility. The powers of evil never sleep. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world." This is nothing to lament. It elated Paul, who in a gay way said: "A great and effectual door is open unto me, and there are many adversaries."

Since, however, the field of foes is so full and there is so much to be done, there must be no waste. The preacher must assemble his resources so as to make them count for the most. He must economize his time, his strength, his voice, his nervous energy, his every power and gift and as-

set, so as to make his capital yield the largest returns. He is in the King's business, and there should be no lost motion in his ministry.

✓ There are two things he will need to keep to the fore, however he may organize his work and whatever may be his program of service. He must cultivate a sense of values. All kinds of opportunities will offer. He will be asked to speak on every sort of an occasion, and to lend his time and influence to a variety of movements. Some of these are a waste of time. Others are important, but not from the standpoint of his mission. Still others offer a real chance for service, while a few are big with opportunity. He must select the best. He cannot afford to fritter away his energies on things that do not count. Many a preacher has been busy, but when he has summed up the day's activities, they total nothing. He has crowded his calendar with engagements of no value to the kingdom.

✓ The other particular on which he should be on guard is always to meet people on a spiritual basis. This does not mean that he is to be everlastingly talking religion, but he is a minister to the souls of men, and if he ignore this, he is a disappointment. People expect him to drag them up toward heights that are finer and cleaner. He has sold out for a poor price if, to win a sort of popularity, he has run with the crowd. "You have talked to me about everything else," said a dying business man

to his preacher, "but I wanted you to say something about my soul and the future."

The preacher must be a student. He cannot hope to lead unless he is abreast of the thought of his day. I do not mean that he must accept all that his age holds, but he must know what people are thinking, and interpret his message in the language of life.

He must have more on his library table than the morning paper, the *Ladies' Home Journal*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*. An intellect fed on such pabulum will never stir the world, and yet how can a minister be a student in this age? The days of miracles are over. Some give it up. They devote themselves to doing good. They are good mixers. But their sermons are thin, and the congregations soon take on the consistency of the sermon.

This is not saying that the preacher should be bookish. Certainly he should not be what college boys call "a greasy grind," "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought"; but if he is to keep from repeating himself, if he is to command the respect of his congregation, if he is to capture and hold the intellectual people of his community, and if he is to be honest with himself and avoid the perils which yawn for the crank and the fanatic, the preacher must be a student. He need not be afraid of going over the heads of the people. He is in greater danger of staying under their feet.

What of the sermon? This is the storm center of the preacher's concern. It deserves all the concern it gets, for the preacher who fails in his sermon fails. His people will stand almost anything but slack work in sermon preparation. He may fail as an organizer, as a pastor, as a "mixer," as a social star, as a community builder, but if the sermon scores, the preacher wins. The preacher will be pondering the "sermon" until the trumpet sounds, and what requires volumes cannot be treated in a paragraph. Nevertheless, at least the place of the sermon in the preacher's program may be set down here. He must cultivate the sermonic mood, ever on the outlook for themes and illustrations, and having an imagination that swiftly and keenly responds to life. His pulpit is his throne. Some preachers have ruled the land more nearly than kings and presidents—John Calvin, John Knox, John Wesley. It was a preacher in the person of Dr. Palmer of New Orleans who with a single sermon dealt a death blow to the iniquitous Louisiana state lottery.

The preacher should respect his pulpit. It is where he stands to speak for God, where God authenticates His servant. It is the place where heaven and earth meet. It should be entered reverently, but not with ostentatious devotion. It is no place for a mountebank, an actor, or even an entertainer. It is at home only to an ambassador of the most high God.

In delivering his message, the preacher should be free from eccentricities and from pulpit tricks and mannerisms. The most effective form of public speaking is the conversational. It holds the attention, and it does not tire. There are preachers who mistake noise for power, and who remind one of that line in Horace: "If I can't bend the gods above, I'll rouse all hell below." These sons of thunder should remember that "The shallows murmur, but the deeps are dumb."

There are three methods of delivering a sermon,—memoriter, reading, and extemporaneous. The memory method is the poorest, the extemporaneous the best. Each preacher must work out his own salvation in these matters, and if he decides to be an extemporaneous preacher, he will work it out with fear and trembling.

For the first two years of my ministry, I suffered severely from cramp colic after the Sunday night service. My wife, who was a novice at housekeeping, worried greatly, fearing that the preacher was not being properly rationed. I now know it was nerves. I was trying to learn to preach without a manuscript.

The preacher is wise who selects great themes for his sermons. He may not have a great sermon, but if the theme be great, it will lift the sermon. He should be especially on his guard against topics which belittle the message. Here are some sermon topics which have been advertised as Sunday

themes: "The Ass Tied at the Door Without;" "Swat the Fly;" "Three White Mice;" "Psycho-Metric Reading;" "The Doll-Makers of Nuremburg;" "A Man with His Nose Out of Joint;" "Wobbling;" "My Mother-in-law;" "A Big Hug;" "Street Car Ventilation;" "Two Looks at Another Man's Wife." It is a dull trout that can be caught with such flies.

The aim of the sermon is the matter of chief importance. Aim marks the difference between a machine and a slag dump, between the universe and chaos. It was because God had a purpose that nothing became something and the void was filled. To be sure God can work wonders with any sort of a sermon. But for this, the preacher's plight would be hopeless. Charles H. Spurgeon at the close of a sermon which he felt to be an utter failure is said to have prayed: "O Lord, Thou art great; Thou canst do all things; Thou canst make something out of nothing; bless that sermon." It is a prayer all preachers need often to offer.

The true aim of preaching is to bring men into saving fellowship with God through Jesus Christ, and to develop them until their characters are Christlike and their activities are devoted to a life of service. This is the test of a sermon. Failing here, however profound or eloquent it may be, it has failed. Succeeding here, whatever it may have lacked it has been saying "a gude word for Jesus Christ."

The preacher has not finished when he has delivered his sermon. He is more than a preacher. He is always a witness, which means that God has called him to do more than deliver a discourse. He has called him to be a soul-winner, and in the vast majority of cases, he will find that it is not the sermon but the personal touch that wins his man.

The preacher who is not a personal worker will find his pulpit becoming an ice-pack. His sermons, though intellectual, will be cold. It is the message hot from the heart, that is afire with the passion for souls, that burns its way home. And so the preacher's methods are woefully incomplete if they make no provision for personal evangelism. Greater perhaps than any sermon Christ ever preached was what He said to a sinning woman as He sat one day on the coping of Jacob's well and told her about the water of life. He saved her, and through her the town was saved.

CONTACTS

The third aspect of his work to consider as the preacher gets into action is that of contacts. Someone has said that religion is just right relations. It is that, and probably much more. If the preacher is to do his best work, he must not only translate all his assets into liquid power, he must not only use the best methods in building his program, but he must relate himself aright to all

whom he would influence and use for God and the kingdom.

✓ The preacher's "inner circle" is composed of his church officials. It is of prime importance that he relate himself aright to them. They should become his greatest human comfort. They may become his despair and defeat. It is for the preacher himself largely to decide.

He will have all kinds of types and temperaments to deal with. There will be radicals and conservatives, liberals and reactionaries, high churchmen and low, the man who feels that the way it has been done is good enough for him and the man whose constant prayer is for something unusual. It is likely that among them will be at least one whose right to a seat is like that of the Scotchman who said he could "sit in the sassion and object whenever anything was proposed."

✓ To make these men his friends, to capture their loyalty, to secure their support of his leadership, and to use their varied gifts in the work of the church is the preacher's task. He needs to be "wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove." Yet the case is not so difficult as it might seem. Usually these men are not only ready but eager to follow a real leader whom they discover to be not a time-server, but sincerely devoted to Christ's work.

He should be patient, and he must be fair. The official meetings are no place for ministerial ar-

rogance. The fact that the man in the pulpit speaks *ex cathedra* unconsciously tends to make him feel that all his deliverances are to be accepted without dissent. With his officers he should counsel, not command. He may often be within his constitutional rights, but it is not wise to fall back on rights as a last resort. It is good to possess power, but he is wise who declines to use all the power he possesses.

Let the preacher be careful to stick to the constitution, to do things in an orderly way, to decline to go over the heads of people to whom certain work has been assigned. Only thus can he hope to build up a strong organization.

There should be no effort to carry measures by methods that are more political than religious. Each member of the Board should be given the fullest opportunity for expressing his views. Then when the vote is taken it will be easy to secure team work from a minority which is not disgruntled over having been suppressed.

The great secret, however, of harmony in church administration is prayer. It is in the spiritual atmosphere that men see eye to eye. The preacher must be a spiritual leader, and not an ecclesiastical oligarch. In moments when a situation is tense and the tide of human passion is rising, if he can bring in the Man of Galilee, the storm will cease.

Behind these church officers is the church itself,

and the preacher must make the right contact with his flock. He will do this by cultivating the feeling that it is his flock and that he is the under shepherd. There is no lovelier picture of the relations which should exist between preacher and people than this which Jesus has given of the shepherd and his flock. He must know his sheep by name and lead them out, feeding them by day and watching by night, carrying them on his heart and in his prayers, and sharing with them in fullest measure the common lot of life.

No bargain-driving here, for it is a labour of love. What his people will not do for him through love he would best do without. He may often be left with little in the locker, but he should remember that the servant is not greater than his Lord. Christ never stood on His rights. The preacher must think more of the work than of his private or professional fortunes. His stipend is his least concern. Others are to look after that, and should they fail, he must remember that he labours not for a corruptible crown.

Much is said about an underpaid ministry. The labourer is worthy of his hire, but the preacher who drops down into a hired man has turned a great calling into a poor business. He deserves to be decently supported, but if he is not, he must make the best of it, and keep in mind that he follows a cross, and that it is not a cross of gold.

In his contacts with his people his concern

should be not what he can get from them, but what he can do for them, not how he can use them for himself, but how he can develop them in Christian character and service until they will lay all that they have and are at his Master's feet to be used for the spread of the Gospel.

The church of course is not the preacher's field. It is his force. But to become his force he must have made it to an extent his field. He must study individual lives, and match talents to lines of service. He must cultivate interests and enlist life and possessions. He must capture the imagination of youth with the heroic aspects of Christian endeavour. He must chain the attention of cold, calculating business to the investments offered by the Gospel. And then in the hospital and sick room, in the house of sorrow and in the hour of trouble and misfortune he must minister to human hearts followed by a divine hand that the fruits of grace may grow and ripen. Doing this, he will be a happy minister, and sometimes can say to his people what Paul wrote to the church in Corinth: "I rejoice that in everything I am of good courage concerning you."

The preacher's relations to other denominations is one of his important contacts. He should be loyal to his own, but not to the extent of being intolerant. There never was a time when Christ's cause was served by sectarianism. The world will not be saved by bigots who

“Grunt up a solemn lengthened groan,
And damn a’ parties but their own.”

It is poor salesmanship to try to promote your own business by running down that of your competitor. He has the true secret of success in religion as well as in business who rests his case on the service rendered. If my creed is better than his it must show better results. Is not this what Christ meant when He said: “By their fruits ye shall know them”?

“He drew a circle that shut me out,—
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout,
But love and I had the wit to win,
We drew a circle that took him in.”

Never be drawn into controversy. Preach a positive message, and if assailed, follow Ole Bull’s plan. He was once offered space in the *New York Herald* to answer his detractors, but declined, saying: “I think it is best that they write against me and I play against them.” There is no finer defense than for one steadily and faithfully to do his work.

It is a mistake, however, for the preacher to regard other Christian denominations as competitors. They are merely other divisions of the one great army. The Captain is one, the cause is one, and all fight a common foe. It is a strange spirit that declines to coöperate with other churches in Christian work, and it is a heart that is both small

and cold that lacks interest in the growth and prosperity of all believers.

The preacher in the right sense of the word should be a man of the town. He is a community builder, and while his work is definitely spiritual, he has contacts with groups whose lines cross and parallel his, and whose goal is to secure conditions of human welfare which come as by-products of the Gospel. He should be a sympathetic friend to all who labour to build a better town. He must join with these and make his contribution to the common good. He does not cease to be a preacher because he lends a hand to social reform and civic righteousness and industrial fair play. He has not betrayed his pulpit nor surrendered his message because he has taken his place among these who are the foes of injustice and the friends of the weak. He is merely showing that he has a Gospel which not only talks but works.

Certainly the preacher should not neglect his church for the community. If he deserts his own people, who will shepherd them? But a church that has to be coddled is in a bad way. Because the church pays the minister's salary, it does not own him. He belongs to his Master, and when he drops down into nothing but the centerpiece of a little coterie of church people, he ceases to be the shepherd of the flock and becomes its ewe lamb.

If the church could only see it, the best thing for its own interests is to have a leader who de-

clines to narrow his activities to ecclesiastical matters. The church is the means, not the end, of the Christian religion. It has a social mission. The old prophets did not hesitate to push out. They would be called political reformers if they were on earth to-day. Christ Himself dealt heavy blows to class hatred and social injustice and official corruption. How can a preacher whose soul is afire with a passion for righteousness stay dumb when all around him there are wrongs which cry to high heaven for redress? Some have delivered wonderful sermons to the saints. They have fed the souls of the godly. They have come and gone, but the world never knew they were there. They have left the community as they found it. It is safe to say that the devil does not lose any sleep over these brethren.

It is the preacher who is a fighter that Satan fears, a man who uses his pulpit to shape public opinion against organized iniquity, who cries aloud and spares not in the war on commercialized vice and industrial injustice, and who is to be counted on for a man's full part in every scheme to make kinder and cleaner and safer, as well as more Christian, the community in which he dwells.

The preacher's zone widens beyond even this. John Wesley said the world was his parish. Every preacher should make his skyline as spacious. Christianity is a world religion. Christ's dream was world conquest. The preacher who is not

baptized with missionary fervour is a stranger to the very genius of the Gospel.

He must carry the world in his heart and lead his people in their gifts and prayers and ministries to the ends of the earth. The Church, after all, is just a missionary society. It exists to evangelize the world. When it has fully and faithfully done this, the consummation will be at hand.

The preacher in action, therefore, is not a provincial. He is a cosmopolitan, a man of the world, the statesman of Christian internationalism. He is a world builder, a civilization producer, a bringer-in of the kingdom. He may have a modest charge in a little Main Street town, but he is engaged in an enterprise that girdles the earth and brushes heaven.

His contacts are racial. Like the old prophets, he stands in the shadows fighting for the dawn, calling for the day, shouting to the watchers along the world line: "What of the night?" And ever and again he gets back from the far-flung front: "The morning cometh." Enough for him if he have some humble share in the reddening sky which says: "The day approaches." Enough if his listening heart shall hear the harbingers of the morning singing their battle song:

"O, the dawn is upon us,
The pale light climbs to its zenith,
With glamour and golden dart;
Up, boot and saddle, give spurs to your steeds,

There are cities beleaguered which cry for men's
deeds

With the pain of the world in their cavernous
hearts,

Ours be the triumph, humanity calls,

Life's not a dream in the clover,

On to the walls, on to the walls,

And over!"

VII

THE DRAB AND GOLD IN THE GREAT CALLING

THERE are two sides to everything—the drab and the gold, the cloud and the sheen, the dark and the dawn, the battle and the victory, the cross and the crown.

The gospel ministry is no exception. The preacher has hours that are gray and days that are golden. Sometimes the way drops to the valley, and again it winds to the heights. There are times when duty takes him through the furnace fires, and then there comes a day when he climbs to the summit where before his raptured eyes life is transfigured.

“It has been a hard charge,” said a tired little woman with a worn look in her face. She was the minister’s wife, and she had helped him carry the burden in a parish that forgot to be kind. To her had come the gray.

“If he would be fully satisfied, tell him to choose the ministry,” said an enthusiastic young preacher who was in the radiant morning of his first pastorate. To him had come the gold.

“Were I to live my life over again, I would not change my work. It has never been easy. Often

I should have fallen in hopeless discouragement and defeat had not an unseen hand held me up, but with it all there has been a joy no words can tell, and obscure preacher that I am, I would not change places with a king." This was what an aged minister said as he tarried in the twilight at the end of the road waiting the last call. To him had come both gray and gold.

THE DRAB

Let us look first at the drab in the great calling. The preacher's poverty clamours for attention. There are only two decent ways for him to escape. A well-to-do father may endow him, or he may marry a rich wife. Should he by any chance possess the money-making gift and successfully exploit it as he exercises his ministry, he will find his influence as a spiritual leader dwindling, and more than likely his power as a preacher slowly dying out.

Poverty has its hardships. Paul in his love letter to the Philippians speaks gratefully of the fact that while he was preaching to the church in Thessalonica, an emotional and hysterical church that seems to have been readier to profess than to perform, the Philippians "sent once and again unto his necessity." Happy the preacher who has a few friends like the Philippians, for there are necessities that must be provided if want is to be kept from the door of the manse. How some preachers

manage on their slender stipends passes understanding. The taunt is sometimes flung at preachers that they lack business sense; if the ability to make a dollar go a long way is a sign of business sense, preachers are the leading financiers of the world.

“Slow rises worth, by poverty oppressed” is a proverb that may not be true, but that money opens doors of opportunity, that it is needed when clothes are to be bought and children educated and appearances maintained must be apparent even to the stone blind.

It was a Sunday I was spending in the field of a devout and consecrated home missionary. His charge was wide and his work was hard, but he was getting souls for his hire. It was about all the hire he was getting. I went into his study and looked around. My throat filled and my eyes began to swim. His library consisted of a teacher's Bible, a concordance, and a paper pad. Yes, he needed books, but books cost money. How was he ever to have a library on his starvation salary? There are others like him. This is the pathos of the preacher's life. He must have ideas, fresh ones and well served, if he is to hold his congregation, but ideas are not born of a paper pad. As steel sharpeneth steel, so mind sharpeneth mind. Books are the preacher's tools, and many a preacher wears a shiny coat that he may buy a book.

“The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus

when thou comest bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments." Paul was so poor that he could not afford to lose the cloak he forgot that early Monday morning he hurried from Troas after that never-to-be-forgotten service in an upper room lasting past midnight. But he seems to say: "If you cannot bring all, leave the cloke, but fail not to bring my books and manuscripts."

But poverty has its compensations. There must have been some good reason why the Saviour chose to be poor, and why He selected for His disciples men without means, and why through the long centuries the outstanding preachers of the Gospel have lived on intimate terms with poverty.

After all, poverty must be something of an asset as well as a handicap to Christ's servant. It gives him contacts he could not otherwise acquire. It opens doors and makes it easier for him to enter hearts. If it does this, though it come dressed in drab it is welcome.

Lack of appreciation is another of the gray aspects of the holy calling. The fact that his work is a labour of love makes the sting bite deeper. His is always a full day, and after he has done his best he is conscious that he has left much undone. There are calls he should have made, but could not reach. An ordinary day is only twenty-four hours long. There are matters of detail in his parish that deserved attention, but amid the thronging duties of the day they were overlooked. His mes-

sage needed more careful preparation, but his study hour was broken by telephone calls, and smashed beyond repair by callers who had time to burn. In addition to all else there are important engagements the poor man is sometimes so stupid as actually to forget.

I forgot a wedding once. It was to have been at four P. M., but I went gaily on my pastoral rounds, and was soon so deeply immersed with the troubles of two families whose girls worked in the mill and whose parental heads wasted their wages in drink that my mind was a blank on matrimony. The Lord, however, watches over His servants, and He guided my wandering footsteps down a street where I suddenly ran amuck of the bride's father searching madly for the derelict parson. The wedding feast was cold, and the bride and groom did not look as ecstatic as some I have seen. They had been cheated out of two hours of wedded bliss. But I comforted myself with the thought that as the years wore on, there might come a day when they would forgive me for the hundred and twenty golden minutes I had subtracted from their honeymoon.

✓ After one has done his best, it hurts to be blamed. Sometimes the preacher is tempted to be a bit bitter when this lack of appreciation comes from people from whom he has every right to expect gratitude, and especially, as is sometimes the case, when to render the service he had to drain

his lean stipend. A preacher was once called home from his vacation to conduct the funeral of a member of his church who was many times a millionaire. It necessitated a long and expensive journey. The public thought he received a fat honorarium, but they were mistaken. He was not even reimbursed for his travelling expenses. The organist sent a bill, after waiting in vain and giving sufficient time for spontaneous action. The preacher could not do this, so he merely tightened his belt.

It is fine to be able to see the humour in such experiences, and the humour is there if one have the gift to sense it. Under no circumstances must the preacher pity himself. Self-pity has been well called mental phthisis. It is a disease in the character akin to tuberculosis in the body. The preacher is doomed who thinks of himself as a martyr. All the heroic has oozed out of him, and he has shrivelled into a faint simulation of a herald of the cross.

What if people do forget? There is One Who does not, and if at the close of the day He says: "Well done," it is enough. "Not with eye service as men-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." This must be the preacher's resolve when leaden skies make gray his day and drab hours come to chill his heart.

✓ A sense of failure is worse than either the hard-

ships of poverty or the stings of ingratitude. Where is the preacher with any sort of a decent standard who is not overwhelmed again and again with a sense of failure? He makes his prayer and builds his house of hope, and goes forth in the name of the Lord of hosts to possess the land. He returns from the quest empty-handed to find his hopes ashes and his prayers a vain cry to heavens of brass. He fails in his sermon. He has put his best effort into the preparation of his message, and enters the pulpit from his knees, but somehow the thing will not preach. He descends with a feeling akin to that of Charles Kingsley, who after preaching in Westminster Abbey said with his slight stammer to a friend: "Whenever I walk up to the pulpit in the Abbey, I wish myself d-d-dead, and whenever I walk back, I wish myself more d-d-dead."

Worse than his failures with sermons are his failures with the people he tries to reach and with the work he strives to do. There are souls over whom he agonizes, but somehow he seems powerless to make an impression. There are some who give bright prospects of fruitful service, but their ardour cools, their zeal lags, the world gains, and instead of becoming a joy to the pastor's heart, they are a source of anxiety and of keenest disappointment. The church fails to prosper. The work seems at a standstill. There is no enthusiasm. Appeals fall on deaf ears and unresponsive

hearts. Slowly the cold steel enters the preacher's soul. He is failing in his ministry.

Perhaps even harder to bear is the conviction that God has failed him. Instead of a Pentecost he has had a Sahara. The revival prayed for so earnestly and worked for so hard and needed so desperately declines to arrive. Where is the minister who does not have experiences which enable him keenly to sympathize with Elijah as he lay whipped and despairing under the juniper tree in the wilderness and requested for himself that he might die? He thought he had won a great victory. He had been answered with fire from heaven. Surely God was with him. Then suddenly high noon turns black as midnight. The threat of a bad woman sends him in headlong flight to the desert. He has failed. "O God, let me die, for I am not better than my fathers."

It helps to remember that results are God's. Discouragement is often merely disenchanted egotism. The preacher has been saying his prayers to his sermon or to his system or to his people rather than to the Lord, and God gives him a rude awakening that he may discover the real source of power. This is the lesson that runs through the entire history of God's dealings with the chosen people.

There is also such a thing as the success of failure. Again and again it turns out that what seem to be one's most crushing defeats are in real-

ity his most glorious victories. "I want you to preach a sermon on the blessedness of unanswered prayer," a good woman said to me one day. She declared that some of her richest blessings had come to her because of the prayers which God had not answered. This is the thought that must comfort the preacher in the hour of his Gethsemane. "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done." Then victory strikes the hour, for defeat is impossible to him who has merged his will into the will of God.

Such are some of the times when the drab turns gold, when failure wins the fight, when ceasing to struggle and beginning to cling, what we thought an adversary is discovered to be an angel of the Lord to carry us safely over life's Jabboks into our real inheritance. And so it comes about that the preacher's light afflictions work out for him a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Perhaps the drabbest hour in the gospel ministry is when the preacher faces the dead line, and begins to realize that he is not wanted, that the gifts and attainments and experiences of a lifetime have ceased to have a market value in the church, that much that he has done and been is forgotten, and that about all there is left to him is to resign and retire, and wait for the kind hand of death to give him release.

It is a strange obsession which leads the Chris-

✓ tian Church to discount age. In the other learned professions, the law, medicine, journalism, age instead of being a liability is more of an asset. Who wants a young doctor? And so one cultivates lines of care, and dresses with a seriousness beyond his years that he may overcome the handicap of youth. Not until he passes middle life does the lawyer begin to reap the harvest of what he has so long and so laboriously sown. Well-nigh everywhere else years add value to one's earning capacity. In the gospel ministry the dead line is a terror.

✓ One would think that in religious work more than anywhere else a ripened experience would command a premium. "A hoary head is a crown of glory if it be found in the way of righteousness." There is nothing in either the Old or the New Testament in favour of chloroforming the old minister. One wonders what was behind the calf worship the children of Israel brought out of Egypt, and how long it can survive as an hereditary influence.

The practice becomes all the more wicked when one considers the pitiful provision made in the shape of ministerial relief and pension funds for the old preacher shelved before his preaching days are over. A few churches are wakening to the situation and seeking to give some sort of decent treatment to the pastor whose always meagre salary made it impossible for him to save, and who without a dowry crosses the dead line and enters his

Sahara. With most churches, however, it is still a dole of charity, and even that not always given with a good grace.

✓ There is nothing that so tests the measures of the man as this. One must have an undying attachment to Christ to be subjected to such treatment and stay sweet. That many of them, most of them, do is a high tribute to the heroic stuff of which most preachers are made. They have learned the lesson of putting self aside, and they are tasting some of the joy Paul had when he said: ✓ "I am crucified with Christ." Here in the twilight of the long day the aged minister shoulders the heaviest cross he has had to bear. But he is not alone, and the promise still holds: "As thy day, so shall thy strength be." And so there is light at evening.

These are some of the drab hours in the great calling. They only enhance the brightness of the gold, for God ever builds a tear and a smile close together. For these drab hours the preacher needs to cultivate the cheerful mood of old Uncle Henry. He had been a slave in the family of Dr. Moses Hoge, who for over half a century was pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church of Richmond, Virginia. After the war was over and the negroes were given their freedom, Uncle Henry moved into Prince Edward County and lived in a little cabin on the banks of the Briery River not far from Hampden Sidney. Once a year with funds fur-

nished by his former master he would make a pilgrimage to Richmond. There was always a room ready for him in the manse, and there the former slave was made a guest. After Dr. Hoge's death, Miss Bessie, his daughter, continued the custom of Uncle Henry's annual visit.

One day the old negro hobbled in, bent and twisted with rheumatism, his clothing the worse for wear, and greeted Miss Bessie with the remark: "Dis is ma las' visit, Miss Bessie. De Lawd has done sot His heart on me, an' He's gwine to tak me home." "You must not be so low-spirited," Miss Bessie replied. "What makes you think you're going to die?"

"Day wuz a flood in Ole Briery las' winter, and wash my cabin away. Ah moved into Worsham, and de roof caved in. Den Ah got a place in Farmville, but Ah couldn't pay de rent, and dey put me out."

"I don't see **that** all this proves that you are going to die."

"Well, doan de good book say dat 'Whom de Lawd loves He chases'? From de way He's been chasin' me aroun' heah lately, Ah know He's done sot His heart on me, an' He's gwine to tak His ole sarvant home."

Henry was not so far wrong, for the drab in the life of God's servant is but a part of the tracery of love. "The trial of your faith is more precious than gold that perisheth." Therefore, who knows

but some day, somewhere, the drab may outshine the gold, and the preacher look back on the gray days in his life-work as times when heaven brushed earth and the "far-stretched land which is so very near" was nearest?

THE GOLD

The gold in the great calling is pure gold. The preacher's mother country is like Havilah, and "the gold of that land is good." The material compensations of the gospel ministry may be meagre, but the preacher is rich in the stipend that feeds the soul and fills the heart with contentment and peace. He has the hidden manna. His are the riches which abide. There is no calling open to men which so fertilizes the soul with enduring rewards as this.

First to be mentioned among the things which gloriously react on one's soul as he follows the great calling is the fun of fighting the devil. Every red-blooded man loves a fight. There is something wrong with the soul that supinely surrenders. "I was ever a fighter, so one fight more." The greatest preacher in apostolic days, as he drew near the end of his ministry, said: "I have fought a good fight." Christianity is a militant religion. Its great hymns are war songs, and its promises are "To him that overcometh."

The man who represents God in this wicked world must have in him something of the spirit of

that Canadian lad who after his daily fistic encounter with an older brother, from which he usually emerged victor, said as he was about to receive at the hands of his mother the customary chastisement: "Mother, you may whip me as often as you please, but you can never whip the fight out of me." Of course the preacher must not degenerate into a disputer and deserve to be classed with the Scotchman's dog whose master, when asked what was the matter with his dog, replied: "Oh, life is full of sarioussness to him. He can just never get enough of fichtin'."

The trouble with most of the fighting in the world is that it has nothing but bad blood behind it. It is a riot of the rage of unrestrained human passion. It is motivated by selfishness or hate or lust for gain or power. The fun in fighting the devil is to see rascality thwarted, hypocrisy unmasked, and hate vanquished. It is a clean fight for a clean world. It is a campaign against the beast, against the powers of darkness, against the foes of all that God and man hold dear.

It is great to go out against a brothel where hell is hatched, against a dive where crime burrows and hides, against commercialized vice whose victims are boys and girls, against the graft and bribery of corrupt officials who prey on the weak and betray a town. It is great to fight sin around you; as one does, he finds sin dying out within him. This is the only holy war, and that preacher

is strangely timid who is not eager to be in the thick of the fray. Here in this moral warfare for a cleaner world is no place for white-livered cowards who turn pale on the red line of battle. Something of the soul of Elijah on Mount Carmel is needed, something of the spirit of Caleb as he hunted for giants on the heights of Hebron.

The preacher who fights the devil will not escape wounds. He will be splashed with the mud of a godless world. There will be those to say that he would better stay inside his holy of holies and avoid all contacts with the sordid and seamy side of life. At such times he can comfort himself with the words of his Master: "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets."

While there are wounds, there can be no doubt about the issue of the battle against the powers of darkness. It is always victory for the powers of light. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." It is strange that the Church should ever be timid about fighting the devil. Sin has not a chance in the field against God. The moment light is turned on iniquity, it beats a retreat. Indeed, the campaign of a militant church is little more than a march of triumph. The Great Captain Who marches from Edom "glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength," has fought and won, and those who follow in His train are already conquerors.

Finer than the thrill of war and the elation of victory is the joy of rescue. There is no satisfaction sweeter than his who has been privileged to lead a soul into saving fellowship with Christ. This is preëminently the preacher's work. He is in the business of salvation. He is to be forever seeking to save the lost. He will be busy about many things, but they are merely the by-products of the great calling. The goal of all is a redeemed soul, and the preacher who has no souls for his hire has failed.

He may preach great sermons to big crowds who hang on his words and admire his gifts. He may organize his parish into a big business until a numerous staff of hired helpers are driven day and night to superintend the multitudinous activities of a complex ecclesiastical machine. He may be up to his neck in engagements that call him hither and yon to lend his influence for human betterment. He may achieve popularity and fame, and find his name in the headlines and on the committee lists of much that goes on under the sun. But if his ministry is sterile of souls, what doth it profit? "He that winneth souls is wise."

Here is the pure gold of the great calling. "He which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." This is the test of the sermon,—not what the newspapers said about it the next morning, but did it get its man? Did any sin-sick

soul come saying: "What must I do to be saved?"

There is no joy like the thrill which comes with the consciousness of having been used to change the destiny of a human life and make one who was lost safe, and one who was dead in trespasses and sins partaker of the divine nature.

Here is the compensation for all the gray days that crowd the calendar. "Do you never feel lonely?" someone asked of the lighthouse keeper on a wild and far-out point at sea. "No, not since I saved my man." The cry of the man he had saved sang to him in his lonely hours. The face of the man he had saved smiled on him when the day was gray. The spirit of the man he had saved communed with him in the long and weary watches when the storm was on the sea. And so he was not lonely. Thus it is with the preacher, for after all, his pulpit is a lighthouse, and his work is to give light and to save life. To drag one soul out of the muck of the murky sea, to watch one soul turn its face to the morning and fare on with a song, is to lose loneliness forever, is to find the angels of God not far away.

There is gold, too, in the ministry of building up a broken-down life, for the preacher's work does not end with rescue. Salvation is vastly more than keeping out of hell. The marvellous processes of Christian experience are to be wrought in. Character is to be built. Knowledge is to be increased. Devotion and consecration are to be de-

veloped. Service is to be promoted. What is more fascinating than to watch the transformation of a human life into godlikeness? It is interesting to see a tree grow, a city grow, a nation grow, but to watch a soul grow is to share with God the finest sight either time or eternity can offer.

“We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.” To stand on the deck on a moonlight night and watch “the moonbeams transfigure the dark ocean into a silvery radiance like their own” is to have nature cast its spell on you. But it is to feel the moods of heaven to watch Him Who is “the Light of the world” transfigure with His radiant glory human lives until dark sin stains disappear, until the lustrous beauty of godhood shines in the open face and human hearts cry: “Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

The preacher ministers to the highest in man,—not to what the man has, but to what he is, not to what he is for an hour or a century but to what he is forever,—not to what he is or appears to be, but to what he may become in the boundless sweep of God’s unfolding plan for a human life.

It is something to minister to the body, to set a broken limb, to rebuild a deformed hip, to cure a

tubercular bone, to wipe a hare lip from a child's face, to lay a baby in a mother's arms, to fight off the foes that would rob the baby of its mother or the mother of her child, but it is greater to minister to the soul, for man merely has a body, but is a soul, and "it takes a soul to lift a body." It takes "a high-born soul to move it even to a cleaner sty."

It is something to minister to a man's surroundings, to clean up a slum, to promote decent housing conditions, to fight for a living wage for the underpaid, to espouse the cause of weakness against greed and oppression, to contend against disease and poverty and the monotony of life, but it is greater to have a hand in building within the soul a fighting force to overcome. Man is essentially a spirit, and the preacher is the physician of the spiritual. His satisfaction is not to see a garden grow where a desert held sway, but to grow a race of vanquishers of the desert, in whose blood runs the life of God, and whose work widens out beyond the garden even to the new heavens and the new earth.

It is a day of gold to the preacher when he discovers that God is working with him, that he is not alone, that he is not one feeble man fighting a hostile world, but one man plus Almighty God. How his own soul takes fire and his weak will stiffens and steadies and his courage climbs with that discovery. There are such days, thank God, for His servants! Then the long road shortens

and the winding way clears and the heights seem nearer and the angels sing to men who have waited and hoped and fought off despair. These days come when a prayer is answered in so convincing a way as to become a certificate of the reality of the supernatural. Once more a bramble bush becomes God's shekinah, and the preacher walks softly, for he knows that he is on holy ground.

To help a soul fight off fear when the time comes to cross the great divide, to sit there by the bedside of a dying man and tell him of Jesus and repeat the story of Calvary and recite the promises of God and proclaim the power of the blood to blot out sin, to hold open the door of grace and say: "Whosoever will may come," until fear fades from the face and there is in the heart "the peace of God that passeth all understanding" and on the soul, instead of the shadow of death, "the light that never was on land or sea," is to witness face to face the mightiest of all miracles, is to know beyond all doubt "that God is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

To the preacher is given to touch life in its holiest moments and deepest moods. When a man and woman would rebuild their Eden and stand to plight to each other their troth and take the vows which make them husband and wife, it is the minister who tells them that "for this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they twain shall be one

flesh," and it is his lips that pronounce the words which bind "till death shall part."

When God gives a child and parental love stands to plight troth to God and enter into that holy covenant whose object is to safeguard the little life from the evil in the world, it is the minister who hears the vow and applies the sacred waters of baptism.

And when the shadow falls on the window and the crape flutters at the door and the call comes to sail away on the river that flows ever north and whose tides do not return, it is the minister again who comes to say that the dark river runs to a morning land, and that on its far banks Eden rebuilds to abide forever.

✓ What a holy privilege to be permitted to enter in with God to these holiest and most intimate hours of life! He is dull indeed whose soul is not stirred by such experiences and who does not seek from heaven the strength and grace for such ministry.

The preacher is to represent Him Who said to the stricken of earth: "I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you." He is to be a minister of consolation. Here is perhaps his sublimest opportunity. The door is open in the day of trouble. His people expect him then. They are waiting for the message which only he can bring. Their hearts are tender, and they are conscious of their need. Alas, if he come not! He has lost his

chance. He might have led them into a new and closer walk with God. A soul was there, melted and broken and ready to surrender. But while the preacher was busy with his church societies and the machinery of his parish, the world walked back into the heart that was waiting and longing for God, and the preacher's chance went by perhaps forever.

He has strangely mixed and mistaken values who in the work of the gospel ministry walks toward lives in trouble with reluctant feet. People in trouble drew Christ like a magnet. The cry of human need always found Him ready. See Him as He mothers a broken heart and says: "I will not leave you orphaned." To one who has armed himself with the mind of Christ, it is not irksome to be permitted to be a minister of consolation to hearts bereft and lonely. What greater privilege than to share the sacrament of sorrow with souls who kneel where the golden light of heaven streams through the gate of pearl open for a fleeting moment to admit the pilgrim whose long journey is over and who is going in to be forever with the Lord?

There is pure gold, too, in the preacher's opportunity to help build a better world. He is the harbinger of the new day for mankind. He has the message that can cure sin and banish hate and end strife and promote brotherhood and create civilization.

Giovanni Papini, an Italian writer, has recently written a book entitled "The Story of Christ." Papini had been a violent antagonist of Christianity, but the war cured him. He was stunned by its horrors, and then shocked wide awake by the perils which threaten a world that has no breakwater against human hate. He has become as intense in his espousal and advocacy as he formerly was in his rejection of the Gospel, for he says: "The only way to change the world is to change its spirit, and the only thing that can change its spirit is religion." He might have added that the only religion that can change the spirit of the world from hate to love is the religion of the gentle Christ.

What a privilege to be the herald of the message that is to change the world, that is to make it friendly, that is to end war forever! This is the gold in the great calling; the Gospel's program is international friendship, and its goal the new heavens and the new earth. The preacher is the statesman of the new age. He is a world builder, a civilization producer. He toils at a task angels might envy. He is in partnership with God.

✓ The friendships of the ministry are among its dearest treasures. Perhaps nowhere is friendship ✓ more unselfish than here. The ties which bind together a pastor and the people of his charge are free of mercenary stain or taint. They are more precious than those material values which would

free the preacher of worldly care. This stipend of the heart, the love of his people, next to the approval of his God, is his best compensation as he goes on in his work.

The gospel ministry is rich in friendships. Ever and again the old story of David and Jonathan repeats itself. "Because Jonathan loved David, for he loved him as he loved his own soul." Over and over the story of Paul and Timothy finds a modern counterpart, and age reaches out its arms to youth and yearningly calls: "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me."

He who thinks the gospel ministry a gloomy business does not know. One need only sit for a short half-hour in that genial and often gay and always friendly fellowship to discover that the lightest-hearted men in the world are these preachers who share with men their burdens, but who share with Christ His yoke.

It was once my privilege on a voyage to Europe to have as table mates a group of preachers. Three times daily for a fortnight we sat together at the table and discussed themes that ranged from gay to gray through time and out into the beyond. The group was made up of such preachers as Bishop Hamilton, Peter Ainslie, Howard Bridgman, Nehemiah Boynton, and Graham Taylor. Who that shared those rare days can ever forget? Such repartee, such wit and humour, such engaging anecdotes, such side-splitting stories, such good-

natured controversy, such fellowship! And in it all there was never a story that left a stain, never a sally that left a sting. This is a part of the golden hire of the gospel ministry and "the gold of that land is good."

Thus the great calling runs its course until the sun dips low in the west. The old preacher is not as active as he was. There is less of fire in his message. Age has mellowed the flame, but it has also intensified the glow of a good life. What finer asset does the town possess than the influence of an old minister who for long years has lived a spotless life and spent his powers in the service of God and humanity? Just to meet him is to catch sight of a vista that stretches past time. Just to have him say: "Good-morning!" or lay his kind hand on your shoulder is to feel that God is not far off.

His life has proved his message. All the devils in hell cannot answer the life he has lived. Scoffers are silent when they think of him. Skeptics find how cheap and shabby doubts are when matched against the faith of a saint who for the best part of a century has fairly incarnated his creed.

I am thinking of one of these old preachers as I come to the close of my story of the drab and gold in the great calling. For more than fifty years he was the master of a valley manse "beyond the blue mountains in the lovely valley of the Shen-

andoah.”¹ Let one who dipped his brush in his heart paint the picture.

“As a pastor he was profoundly beloved. His very presence was a benediction. Old and young rejoiced at his coming, and found cheer and comfort in the kindly ministry of one who like his Master ‘went about doing good.’

“And he was every inch a man; gentle yet firm, kindly yet courageous, there was about him that quality of manhood which true men everywhere recognize without effort and reverence without stint, with a face so handsome that it would attract attention in a crowd, a graceful carriage, a rare tact, a manner so gracious and frank and kindly that all were irresistibly drawn to him, he was for more than threescore years the leading citizen of his city and section. Men and women of that older day looked upon him as their ideal man. Their children and their children’s children came under his influence, felt the charm of his personality, and in after years blessed God for the lasting impress of his character in their heart and life. Men of the world, often critical and censorious of others, were hushed to silence in his presence, and as they looked upon him, took knowledge of him that he had been with Jesus.”

There are others like this saintly master of the

¹ Rev. James R. Graham, D. D., for more than sixty years the pastor of Kent Street Presbyterian Church, Winchester, Va. He gave three sons to the ministry.

valley manse. Rich indeed is the community that can count among its assets such a life. Privileged indeed is he who is permitted to wield such an influence.

And so for the preacher "at evening time it shall be light." As the day wears to its close, however drab the noon or gray the dawn, the sunset is golden, and the road west winds through the gloaming toward the morning land. "There is no night there." For the light that brings the dawn "shines more and more unto the perfect day."

VIII

THE WORLD'S GREATEST PREACHER

THERE have been many great preachers.

Is it possible to name the greatest?

There are two tests by which a preacher's greatness is to be measured. The first is his value to God and the second his value to men. All other tests, such as scholarship, eloquence, personal influence, results achieved, are incidental. A great preacher must make his life count for God and for mankind. The extent to which he does decides the measure of his enduring greatness. Let us try to measure Paul by these tests.

Sometimes a phrase is enough to reveal a life. It lifts the curtain and lets us look full on the face and character and career of the speaker. There are two brief phrases in which Paul reveals himself. In one he discloses his relation to God and in the other to man. In one he says: "For his sake I have lost everything,"¹ and in the other: "I am debtor." These are two portraits of the same face. When we have looked at them for a while, we shall find them blending into a single likeness of the world's greatest preacher.

¹ Moffatt's Translation.

MAKING LIFE COUNT FOR GOD

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul writes: "For his sake I have lost everything." This is not the sigh of a sad soul. It is the slogan of victory. It is not an announcement of failure, but a declaration of success. Paul is not posting a notice of bankruptcy. He is advertising an investment that will pay increasing dividends forever. He is not plunged into regret, but thrilled with the ecstasy of joy. He is not asking for sympathy. He is inviting congratulations.

THE SUCCESSFUL MAN

When is a man successful? To find the right answer to that question, one must keep in mind what man is. He is more than a refined and highly trained animal. He was made in God's image. He has self-consciousness and will-power, aspirations and appetites and longings higher than the highest heaven. He has powers that function in a realm beyond the senses. He is a spirit, and he clamours for communion with God. He possesses an influence that reaches out in subtle lines to shape other lives. He has capacities for enjoyment and possibilities of development which only God can satisfy.

When is such a creature successful? Evidently man is in a bigger business than earning a living. He must do this, of course. He must live. He needs bread and clothing and a roof over his head.

His body insists on attention. Its clamour at times becomes so loud that it drowns other voices. Nevertheless, man is living a life, and life is more than meat.

He is in a bigger business than having a good time. There is nothing wrong in enjoying life. Pleasure is not only a legitimate pursuit, but man is built so that recreation is essential to development. He has forgotten too much who forgets how to be happy, who permits his laughing muscles to atrophy. But man needs more than a program of pleasure.

He is in a bigger business than making money. The rich men of the world sadly tell us that wealth is not success. It is hard to get, harder to keep. It fails to satisfy and often brings many troubles in its train. One of the richest men on earth sadly remarked to a friend of mine: "I believe the world will feel more kindly toward me in years to come than it does now." His heart yearned for something worth more than a billion dollars. He longed for the love and esteem of his fellows.

Man is in a bigger business than getting up and on, than acquiring notoriety and publicity, than securing position and power. "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." Fame has always been a failure as a happiness-producer.

One must get past these things for the right answer to the question. He must get to God. Augustine had the secret when he said, "O Lord,

Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee." No man is successful who leaves God out of his life. Real success is to be sought in the realm of the spiritual, for man is essentially a spiritual being. He may be successful everywhere else, but if he is a failure in the thing God meant him to be, he has failed. He may have succeeded as a mere animal, but he is a failure as an immortal spirit.

Paul succeeded. No one questions that statement now, but he claimed success when everyone said he was a failure, when society branded him as a fool because he went out to make his life count for God, and for God's sake lost everything. He had much to lose, no man more, but he turned his back on it all. He gave up everything, position, power, political ambition, public esteem, ease, comfort, worldly emoluments, all. He declares he made no mistake. He is glad he did it. He boasts about it. It was the greatest act of his life. "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

GOD MUST COME FIRST

If one would be successful, he must give God the right of way in his life. He must settle his life-work facing the question: How can I best make my life count for God? Because man is

built along religious lines. He may deny God, but the very denial is itself a recognition of God. Man is hopelessly and forever religious. An irreligious man is incomplete. He is a defective, perhaps not in body or mind, but in soul. One may be well developed physically, and even mentally, and at the same time have the spiritual development of an infant.

Making life count for God makes all one does count. It invests deeds with value. It is easy to waste time, but the time spent in doing what God wants done is never wasted. The efforts and talents and money invested in His work are investments whose value can never depreciate. Nothing done for Him can ever fail. "Be ye therefore stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." This business is the only business in which it is impossible to fail.

Making life count for God underwrites itself. The best way to keep out of evil is to be occupied with the good. The easiest way to banish darkness is to strike a light. If a young man has a special weakness, the way to conquer it is to make his life count for God. If he is cursed by some bad habit, the easiest way to whip the devil is to get busy in God's work. I know a woman who said she married a preacher to keep from going to the devil. It was perhaps not the loftiest plane

on which to conduct a matrimonial venture, but when God lives within, the devil rings life's doorbell in vain.

It is not only the safest, but the most satisfying life. Here is the secret of peace and joy. Paul had lost everything, but he was not miserable. He was jubilant. The Christian who makes his life count for God has scored the goal of happiness. The business that makes life bigger and better, that invests all that one does with value, that is safe and satisfying, and that wins the approval of Him "Whose we are and Whom we serve" can never be called a failure; if success is within the reach of mortal, it is here.

WITHIN REACH OF ALL

This kind of success is within the reach of us all. If one runs for office, he may not be elected. If he goes into business, he may lose money. If he goes in for a good time, he may come out broken in health and fortune. But if his ambition is to make his life count for God, the commissioner in bankruptcy will never nail a card on his door.

It is a business that requires neither a big capital nor a great opportunity. Anyone anywhere can make his life count for God. One day a poor woman with two mites made a gift into the Lord's treasury. She might have spent it for some necessity. She might have bought a loaf of bread for a hungry child. But she made it count for God,

and statistics fail to total the staggering returns from her gift. One day some fishermen on Galilee left their boats and nets to make their lives count for God, and became the leaders of the world. One night a woman broke an alabaster box of ointment on Jesus, and the angels in heaven have been talking about it ever since.

Every day is rich in opportunity when one would make his life count for God. There are never any hard times in this business. One needs only to be genuine, and the career starts, and life bears fruit. The story is told that two newsboys were talking about Theodore Roosevelt the day he died. One of them sadly said to the other: "Now he is dead and I can never vote for him." His companion replied: "Naw, but you can be like him." Think of what a living personality throbbing with the life of God may do. It is amazing what one of ordinary gifts may accomplish whose single aim is to make his life count for God. It lifts him. It lifted Paul. It threw him out on human history forever. Every young man must decide what he is to do with his life, whether he will invest it or spend it. Solomon had all the world could give. He died with a wail of pessimism on his lips. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" Paul lost everything. He died shouting victory. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

MAKING LIFE COUNT FOR MANKIND

In his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote: "I am debtor." He could never have written such a line but for the fact that he was an enthusiast. I do not mean that he was hysterical and over-emotional, although some people might so regard him. There are those who say that a man who had Paul's chance and who acted as he did was a fool.

As a young man, his worldly prospects were considerable. He could have gotten almost anything he went after. But something happened, and he gave up the chase for power and worldly eminence, and became an enthusiast. No doubt many of his friends thought the man had gone crazy, but no one who reads Paul's letters and studies his life can reach the conclusion that he was mentally unbalanced.

He was a man who had gotten God's conception of what life is for. This is the meaning of the word "enthusiasm." Its root significance in the original is "full of the God." He was a man into whose life had flowed the tides of God until he saw life through God's eyes, and measured values according to God's standard, and determined duty according to God's definition.

Is it a small man who does this? Is one weak who tries to build his life according to God's plan? Is he riding for a fall who determines to invest himself according to the teachings of Jesus? Is

he a fool for being an enthusiast? People may not answer these questions alike, but one who is honestly striving to settle aright the question of his life-work and follow a career of greatest usefulness to his fellow-men may with profit sit down in front of Paul's life and try to take his measures.

A DEBTOR

Paul considered himself a debtor,—not a creditor, but a debtor, not a man who had things owing to him, but a man who owed all that he had or could ever have, and who proposed to spend his life trying to pay his debts. This was his conception of life. He felt that he was in the world not to see what he could get out of it, but to see what he could put into it, not what he could make people do for him, but what he could do for them, not how much he could accumulate and leave at his death, but how much good he could do, how much service he could render. His program was altruistic. Had he been a millionaire he would have become a philanthropist, but being a poor man he capitalized himself and became a preacher.

Is this a bad way to look at life? Is it weak and foolish to regard life as an obligation, to feel that society has claims upon us, to conclude that you have no right to be selfish, to seek only your own happiness and the well-being of your family, and to leave the big world to travel the same road? In order to be practical and hard-headed, must one

return to the law of the jungle? Is civilization, after all, just a refined method of being a beast?

The question is not whether one should pay his honest debts, but whether there may not be debts which have never been recognized, whether there may not be obligations which have never been honestly faced, whether there may not be duties which have been left dishonoured and undone. There are probably those who feel that the world is in debt to them, but if they could see life as God sees it, they would begin to say with Paul: "I am debtor. Poor fool that I am, I have been counting my wealth and measuring my crops and tearing down my barns and building larger, thinking of what I own, when all the while it was not what I own, but what I owe."

CREDITORS

Paul names his creditors. He says that he is debtor to the Greeks and the Barbarians, to the wise and to the unwise, to the people of his class and to the people of other classes, to culture and ignorance, to privilege and need, to those who are near and to those who are far. He is debtor to humanity. He is taking on big obligations. They are likely to bankrupt him. Prudence would caution him and say: "Paul, you would best go slow. You are just one lone man. You are taking in too much territory. Your enthusiasm is carrying you beyond bounds. You will have your

hands full attending to the Greeks. You will have plenty to do at home. Why worry over the Barbarians? Why load yourself down with impossible duties in the ends of the earth?" But Paul was the kind of preacher who refused to repudiate his debts. He said: "I am debtor to the world."

There are those who are willing to write in the Greeks, but they balk at the Barbarians. They are willing to pay out for work at home, but they decline to recognize any claims that can be made on them by work abroad. They will contribute for the support of their own religious privileges, but not a cent for missions. They are willing to pay out that they may worship according to the dictates of their own conscience the Saviour Who died for all men, and Who said: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," but if the Barbarians and the unwise want a church and a Gospel like theirs, let them foot the bill.

In a certain church of which I was the pastor, there was a man who paid all of his church dues and contributions for the entire year in a single check. Across the face of the check he always wrote: "Not a cent for foreign missions." I never cared much to receive his gift. It looked too much like tainted money. It seemed an insult to the Christ of Calvary. It fell to my lot to conduct this man's funeral, and as I read the service over him, his check stood out before me. He has gone to be judged by the Christ Who died for Barbarian

as well as Greek. I wonder what he thinks of his check now?

Can we ignore the Barbarians? We do not attempt to do so in trade. Can we leave the unwise to go to the devil, and amble contentedly up the sunny slopes to Paradise ourselves? Hunger says: No. Pestilence says: No. War says: No. Almighty God says it cannot be done. "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." Humanity is one. It is like a great sea. The smallest pebble ripples the waters to the farthest shore.

We must admit the Barbarians if we are to preach Christ's Gospel. They are as needy as the Greeks. Unless the debt to them be paid, there will be more trouble. Where do we draw our trade line? Not at the front gate, not at our city walls, not at our seaports. We are out to make a dollar anywhere we can under the wide heavens. The field is the world. We must make our debt line as wide as our trade line.

GETTING IN DEBT

How could Paul become a debtor to the world? Multitudes of the people he had never seen and could never see. They do not know that there is such a man in existence. They have never done anything for him. They do not carry him on their books. They are not desirous of anything he has. All they ask is to be let alone. Why not let them

alone? Paul, you are taking yourself too seriously. You had better go back to Tarsus and mind your own business. It is nice to be altruistic, but one need not be foolish. Paul looked at the matter from a different standpoint. What was it that led him to conclude that he was a debtor to the world?

I think he said to himself: "I have no right to live a selfish life. I have certain rights, but among these I fail to find the right to be self-centered and exclusive. Life is a trust. It is not to be used, but invested. It is not to be enjoyed, but spent. It must be lived in accordance with the terms of the trust. This makes me a debtor."

He also got a vision of world need. Some never see this. They are not looking for it. They are looking for dividends. They are planning to coin human need into profits. They have their reward. Paul caught sight of a world in trouble. He heard the cries of woe. He saw through the eyes of Christ when Christ saw the multitudes as sheep not having a shepherd. He is a poor preacher whose eyes are blind to human woe and suffering, but let him catch that vision and he must recognize his obligation.

One Sunday morning Isaac Yonan from Armenia stood in my pulpit and told the story of his broken nation. Years ago he had been associated with the church, having charge for a year of one of our missions. We knew he was genuine. We believed his story. He plead the cause of the starv-

ing children, and painted the picture of martyrdoms the like of which perhaps the world has never seen. The next day one of the church officers met me on the street and said: "When I sat down at the dinner table yesterday, I could not eat. The food choked me. I could not get away from the thought of those starving, dying children in Armenia." He had seen the vision. It was not necessary for us to beg him to give. The question with him was not how little but how much. "O God, they are in need. They are dying. I must help." It was some such vision that made Paul debtor.

As he looked he saw that he had what would meet the world's need. That increased his obligation. The mere fact that he was in a position to do something loaded him down with responsibility. No man can increase his wealth without increasing his obligation. The fact that you are in a position to do something gets God after you, and if one should try to shirk or evade or hide out, sooner or later he must reckon with God.

Then in addition to all else, he saw One hanging on a cross. He caught sight of the crucified Christ, dying with the nails in His hands and feet, and he said: "I cannot go back to the old, selfish life. He suffered for me. I am not my own. I belong to my Saviour. I have been bought with a price. What things were gain to me, these I count lost for Him. I am debtor both to the

Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise." Thus Paul got into debt.

It is the way every disciple of Christ gets into debt. There is no way under heaven to keep out. Life is a trust. All about us and out to the farthest skyline is a world in need. In some strange way our need has been met, and we hold in our hands bread for the hungry and the cup that will slake the thirsty world. And yonder on the cross hangs One Who said: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto me." In the face of all this, shall one turn back and say: "It is none of my business; let the hungry starve and the thirsty die"? If we do, the world will condemn us and the needy will curse us and God will not forget.

PAYMENT

How did this great preacher propose to pay his debt? Did he really propose to pay at all? Is he not just talking? It is one thing to preach and another to practice. One day an old mountaineer came to the rear of my cottage in the mountains where I was engaged in some task on the place and asked me if I was Dr. Vance. Replying in the affirmative, he inquired if I practiced there or in Nashville. He evidently thought I was a real doctor. I said: "I do not practice. I just preach." He turned on his heel without a word, but with a look which said: "It is not always safe

to try to be humorous with a mountaineer." Is Paul merely preaching when he calls himself a debtor? Is he saying a brave thing, but something that he does not intend to keep? He is talking about world debts. I once knew a preacher who made a subscription of several hundred dollars to a church enterprise, but when called on for payment, said: "Surely you do not expect me to pay. I merely subscribed to encourage others." Is this what Paul is doing? What did that little Jew have with which to pay a world debt?

He had the inexhaustible riches of God. He had the only thing with which to meet a world obligation, the only thing that would satisfy the needs of a weary, sinning, fainting world. He had the Gospel. This is the payment he proposed to make. He has determined to spend his life proclaiming the Gospel. Nothing can stop him. No cross can be too heavy, no hate too fierce, no scourging too severe. "So as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also."

This is the payment. Paul does not plan to open a park or start a philanthropy or endow a college, or even build a church. All of this would have been beautiful. He has something greater. He will preach Christ. This is what the world needed most then, and needs most now. We are coming every day to see it more plainly. Cautious, cool-headed business men are saying that the Gospel

of Christ is the only thing that will save the world, that what society needs is an old-fashioned revival of religion.

And so the man who is preaching the Gospel is the man who is rendering the life of service to mankind, is the man of all men who is making the biggest contribution toward the building of the new world.

These are the two pictures of the world's greatest preacher. In seeking to make his life count for God, Paul went as far as man can go. He became a bankrupt. In seeking to make his life count for men, he also went as far as man can go. He became a debtor. It is the same face that looks out in both pictures,—the portrait of a preacher who gave up all, who held back nothing. The greatest of preachers was one who from the standpoint of material values had the world under his feet, but who from the standpoint of spiritual values carried the world in his heart. These are the measures according to which everyone who would become truly great must build his life.

THE RESULT

How did it turn out? How did the world treat Paul as he went about paying his debts? What kind of reception did society give this enthusiast who had lost everything for God, who had turned his back on the brightest worldly prospects and determined to spend himself paying his debts?

One day he is in Athens. He is there to make a payment. He gets a little group of people together on Mars Hill and preaches the Gospel. How did they receive it? There were a few converts, but the crowd said he was crazy, a mere babbler. Paul was not getting famous very fast. Another day we find him in Lystra. How did they receive him? Did they give a great welcome to this unselfish benefactor who has come to bestow a wonderful blessing on the city? They are driving him out of town. They are stoning him to death. He falls in the street. They drag his apparently lifeless body outside the town and throw it on the ash-heap and leave him for dead. But Paul climbs to his feet and wipes the dirt and blood from his face and starts on to make another payment. And so it was in Corinth, and so in Ephesus. They did not want his Gospel. They wanted him to clear out. Would he not better quit and go back to Tarsus? One day we find him in Rome. He is in prison and sick. That was a queer way to treat a philanthropist. Paul, what a fool you have been! Give up your dream and leave this work in which you have never had anything but hardship and sorrow. But Paul never wavered. He was not thinking of the crowd. He was thinking of Christ, of his greatest creditor, and through it all was getting such an experience of intimate fellowship with his Saviour that he could say: "I am crucified with Christ. I

bear about in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."

We must not measure the payment by the gratitude of men. Sometimes still they stone the prophets and kill those who are sent unto them. Sometimes the preacher is tempted to ask: What is the use? But if faith will listen, it can hear still coming over the pallid lips of the crucified Christ the old words: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature."

"Men see thee, hear thee, praise thee not,
The Master praises; what are men?"

And now the time has come for Paul to render his account. He is standing before his Master. What will Christ say to him? Will He say: "Paul, what have been your profits, your dividends? How much are you worth? You have had some wonderful opportunities for investment. You have been up and down the earth. You have travelled across the seas. Did you keep an eye open for good investments? Come, render an account of your stewardship"? And Paul tells his story. "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one; thrice was I beaten with rods; once was I stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilder-

ness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."

I think I can hear the Saviour say: "Paul, it is glorious; it sounds just like Calvary. And I knew all about it, for I never once left your side, but I wanted to hear you tell it. I was with you through it all. I was an hungered and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in, naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison, and when you went to jail, it was just that you might be with me."

When Paul heard that, I do not think he was sorry that he had spent his life trying to pay his debt. It is not the receipt that is the great thing. It is the payment, and the payment that counts is the payment that costs.

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