ANNOUNCED TO PREACH

by

CLOVIS G. CHAPPELL
FOREWORD

Through Dr. H. B. Trimble, Dean of the Candler School of Theology, I was invited to deliver the 1950 lectures on The Jarrell Foundation. The addresses contained in this book, "Anointed to Preach" were prepared in response to this invitation. If they seem unduly personal it is because I was seeking to share with my younger brethren something of what I think I have learned through a fairly long ministry spent entirely in pastorate. These addresses therefore are not so much the result of wide reading and hard thinking as of actual experience. In them I make no claims of new discoveries. Perhaps all I have said has been better said before. But they are original in that they contain something of what I believe about the preacher's task and of what I have sought to some degree of earnestness to practice.

I confess that I sat about the task of delivering these addresses "in weakness and in fear and in much trembling", but the cordial and brotherly hearing accorded them both by the visiting ministers and the students and faculty of the school of theology served to make the occasion one of the high experiences. It served also to deepen my gratitude to God that he had annointed me to preach.
INDEX

I. THE PREACHER'S CALL
II. HIS MAJOR EMPHASIS
III. THE SERMON
I. PREPARING THE SERMON
V. OUR FINEST HOUR
VI. KEEPING FIT
In speaking of the preacher's call I realize that I am dealing with a subject that is hoary with age. It is also one that at first glance will seem to many very limited in its appeal, of interest only to those who vividly or vaguely feel that they have experienced such a call. But in reality, the preacher's call is a matter of universal interest. This is the case because, as Paul affirms in the passage from which our text is a part, preaching and salvation are related as cause and effect. Since everybody is in need of salvation it becomes true that the preacher's call is a matter of universal interest. Therefore, I am dealing with a subject of present and of wide interest.

I take it that the conviction that God does call certain men into the ministry is one that is shared by perhaps everyone of us. This is not to affirm that we as ministers have a corner on God's call. I believe that Jesus was speaking sober truth when he declared that God gives to every man his worth. But we are thinking now especially of those whom God calls to be his prophets, his spokesmen. We are thinking of those chosen of God to hear the word at his mouth and to warn men from him. Our reason for holding such truth rests, I think, upon very solid foundation.

1. We believe in the preacher's call because we meet it again and again upon the pages of the Bible. To read the Old Testament, for instance, is to come upon a company of men who are unique. These men cannot be accounted for in terms of their times nor in terms of their environment. They are men who are deeply earnest. They are possessed by a compelling sense of mission. They declare in their own language emphatically, "The Lord has spoken! Who can but prophecy?" These men, thought men of deep humility, dared to begin their
messages to their messages with this startling affirmation: "Thus saith the Lord." They cannot explain themselves except in terms of God. They are men who have been divinely called. The explanation they give of themselves is one we have to give of them. After all these centuries we can find no other explanation than the call of God.

To take one of their number for instance, perhaps the greatest. Had you met Moses toward the end of his sojourn in Midian you would have been impressed by his vast abilities. You would have known him as a man of genius. But, in spite of that fact, you would never have picked him as the future leader of a revolution. You would never have thought of him as a man who was to bring a new nation to its birth. You would never have picked him as the teacher of his own generation and of all the generations that were to follow. You would rather have expected him to have gone to his grave having filled no higher mission than that of shepherd to another man's sheep.

In so thinking you would have had some very solid reason. In the first place he was getting far into the years. A man may be born anew when he is old, but it is a very rare miracle. Then, in all probability, Moses was disillusioned, if not positively cynical. He had blazed once, but his fires had long gone out. He had had an exciting youth, fished out of the waters of the Nile, adopted into the royal family, having received the best education that the court and the schools of Egypt could give, trained especially by his consecrated parents, he had no doubt dreamed great dreams for himself. I think by far the sunniest of these dreams was the expectation of becoming the deliverer of his people. This was only natural since he had come to share the fate of his consecrated father and mother.
He had even gone so far as to make a beginning. What a disappointment that beginning had proved to himself and to those who were interested in his future!

Going one day to visit his people he had struck an Egyptian bully dead. I do not think it was his intention to kill this man, but when he saw the offender roll over and lie still, he was none to grieved about it. I rather think that he dusted off his hands and went back to the palace feeling that he had made a fine beginning. He told himself that now his countrymen would accept him as their champion, now they would give him the love and loyalty that were necessary if he was to become their leader.

But the events of the next day tore these fond dreams into shreds and tatters. When he undertook the role of peacemaker between two of his brethren, one of them turned upon him with this shocking and insulting question, "Who made you a judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you did that Egyptian yesterday?" At that, Moses' house of dreams fell in ruins about him. At that I think he grew hot with anger. "You miserable ingrate", he perhaps hissed through white lips. "Here I am endangering my whole career for you, and you have no appreciation of it. You miserable fool. You have rot[ted down in your slavery to such an extent that you are not worth saving. This is true not only of you, but of your kind. Therefore, Moses took to his heels not because, as the writer of the Hebrews tells us, he was afraid of the wrath of the king. He rather fled because he was afraid of the stolid stupidity of his people.

Having taken refuge in Midian he was for a time very restless and homesick. He missed his exciting yesterdays. He missed the great hopes that had lured him. But little by little he had come to feel at home. Little by little he had put his soul to sleep by telling himself that he had tried once to rescue his people but that
they did not care for his services. Thus he had become more or less indifferent. "For the wettest of wet blankets," says Lord Morley, "give me the man who is most enthusiastic in his youth". So here we find a thoroughly wet blanket. One who is likely to walk an uneventful road to the very end.

Then suddenly the unexpected happens. This aging and disillusioned man sets out in the afternoon to accomplish that which he had failed to accomplish in life's bright morning. What is the explanation? Moses, himself, tells us that one day he saw on the mountain side a dry, fragile bush, all ablaze. The fact that this bush burned did not excite his curiosity. But the fact that it kept on burning caused him to turn aside because this bush spoke home to the most disappointing experience of his life. As he looked at it, he said to himself, "I was all ablaze once, but my fire has died down to gray ashes long ago. What does this bush possess that I lack?"

Then it was that God called to him, saying, "Come, how I will send thee to Pharoah". We cannot account for Moses except as he accounts for himself in terms of God. It was from this experience that he went out to endure as seeing him who is invisible. The greatest personalities that we meet upon the pages of the New Testament can only be explained by the fact that they had been divinely called.

When we turn to the New Testament we find this call of God no less real, but sometimes less dramatic. One day we enter into a village church to worship. We see the choicest of all choice young men rise to signify that he desires to read the lesson for the day. We see the choice of all choice young men rise to signify that he desires to read the lesson for the day. When the roll of the prophet Isaiah is given him, he finds the text that he wishes to discuss with his people. It reads like this, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath annointed me to preach". Then the speaker affirms that this ancient word is alive and up to date, that the prophet is not speaking of himself alone,
but is speaking of the preacher who is now addressing them. Thus does Jesus assert that he has been divinely called, that God has laid his hand upon him and has appointed him for the work of the ministry.

Now, as God called Jesus, so Jesus called others. Going down by the lakeside one day he found four sturdy fishermen. These were men of solid parts, yet nobody cherished any extravagant expectations for them, nor did they cherish any high expectations for themselves. They never thought of themselves as men who under God were to usher in a new day. But Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you to become fishers of men", and as they followed him, little by little he remade them. At the close of his ministry he gave them this parting word, "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you". Thus he affirms that he is sending them upon the same mission upon which he himself had been sent, the mission of being God's spokesman.
He is also affirming that they are backed by the same infinite resources and going out as God's called ministers they did help to usher in a new day.

As Jesus called men in the days of his flesh, so he called them after his ascension. One day Saul of Tarsus, the greatest minister of the early church, was journeying from Jerusalem to Damascus on an errand of persecution, but there was a flash and a fall. Then this man heard a word spoken directly to him: "Rise, and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen and of those things in which I will appear unto thee". At that Paul began the work of the ministry. It was his boast in the after-days that he was not disobedient under the heavenly vision for could he ever think of the rich privileges that had come to him as a result of this call without a shout of sheer joy. "To me is this grace given that I might preach the unsearchable riches of Christ".
in both the Old and the New Testament, therefore we come upon holy and sincere men who cannot be explained except in terms of the divine call.

Not only do we find these God-called men upon the pages of the Bible, but we meet them also upon the pages of Church history. In fact it is just these men divinely called who account for the best that is in church history. The Church has not had a constant appeal of victory. There have been relapses and recoveries. Whenever a recovery has come about it has always been initiated by some divinely called preacher. It has always come about because some man has been able to say reverently and yet gladly, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has annointed me to preach". The fact that God does call certain men into his ministry is a fact both of the Bible and of church history.

What is equally impressive is that this divine call is not only a fact of the past but it is an experience of the present. There are scores and hundreds of cultivated, sane, earnest, and sincere men who can affirm today what Jesus said of himself in the long ago, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has annointed me to preach". Next Sunday in pulpits in the country, in the quiet village, in the crowded city, men can account for themselves by saying, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world that I might preach the unsearchable riches of Christ". The fact that God does call men into his ministry is asserted by history and by present experience.

II

Agreeing then that God does call men into the ministry, how does he call them?

It is not surprising since God is a God of infinite variety that he does not call all his ministers in the same way. He
no more gives to every man the same call than he converts every man in the same fashion. It is very common for those who have reached religious certainty to have a conviction that those who have reached that same certainty must have traveled by exactly the same road. But this is not the case. I am thinking of three blind men who experienced the healing of Jesus. To one of them our Lord said, "Receive thy sight", and the morning dawned. To another he said, "Receive thy sight", but he touched his eyes as he said it. Then it was that the day broke. To the third he spoke no such word. He rather anointed his eyes with clay and spittle and sent him to wash in a certain pool. But the result for him was the same as that for his brethren. He came into the beauty of the daylight. Now, I imagine that I met these three men as they rejoiced over their wonderful experience, and when they told me that they had once been blind and that now they saw, I said to them, "I have a friend who is blind. He has never witnessed the sunrise." I would be glad to help him. Tell me, therefore, how does Jesus open blind eyes?"

At once they answered with enthusiasm. One of these men would have turned to me eagerly and said, "It is very simple. He anoints your eyes with clay and spittle and sends you to wash in some pool". The other two would have heard this word with amazement not unmixed with indignation. One of them answered, "Nothing of the kind. He touches your eyes and says receive your sight". The third would have been no less excited and no less indignant. "Why", he would have answered, "it is not that way at all. He simply says "receive thy sight"". And they would at once, engaged in a heated argument, and would have ended in all probability in going off and organizing three separate churches.

A few years ago at the close of a service for boys and girls
a fine old gentleman said to me, "I do not approve of what you have been doing". "Just what did I do", I replied, "of which you did not approve?" "Well", he said, "you invited those boys and girls to come forward in token of the fact that they had accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior. Now, he continued, five years from today or ten years from today or twenty years from today they could not tell you when they were converted" "What of it?" I said to him, not getting his point. "Why", he answered indignantly, "I would not give the tip of my left finger for any man who could not tell you the day and the hour in which he was converted". That was a strong assertion, but I am persuaded that there are quite a few who will agree.

But let us look at that. If you know the day and the hour in which you were converted, thank God for it. But remember there may be those rubbing elbows with you who are more conscious of life in Christ than you are, who could not tell you the day and the hour in which they were converted to save their lives. It is not when were you converted, or how were you converted, but have you converted? That is the one question, because conversion is of various types.

For instance, when I was a boy on the farm, my father gave me a little colt. He gave me that colt the very day that it was born. I began at once to get on good terms with him. I would stroke his ears and rub his nose. Sometimes I would give him an apple core, if I could spare it. Then I began to lean my weight upon him to see if he could hold me up. Then one day in a moment of reckless daring I mounted his back and rode him off. Believe it or not, he never did throw me, he never did kick me, he never did paw me.
horse?" he would have answered, "Really I don't know. My master and I were always on good terms."

But there was another colt the same age as mine. He ran the same pasture. He did not belong to anybody in particular, he only belonged to my father. Therefore, nobody ever paid him any especial attention. Nobody stroked his ears or rubbed his nose or gave him an apple core. Everybody let him decently alone, until one day my father said, "He is old enough to be converted into a work horse." But, by that time he had become so wild that his conversion was quite an ordeal. In fact it was such an ordeal that if one had asked him years later, "When were you converted into a work horse?" he would have answered, "Dear me, I have an awful struggle that day, I had an awful struggle."

I hear the screech of it upon me at this moment. But, I submit to you that my colt was, as genuine, converted as the wild one and a far more normal and far more natural way. We need not be surprised in the least the point being, that there are varied types of conversion that God calls us in varied fashions, because he also converts us in varied fashions.

Then God's calls are exceedingly varied, because of the varied types of men whom he calls, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, saith the Lord." That is true in practically where is I know that there is a wiser in choosing men for the every particular. But, I do not think there is anywhere that it is work of the ministry. That varied types he has found engaged much more true than in the choices that God makes for his ministers. It is easy for us to agree with God in the call of an Ishmael or a Phineas to the work of his ministry anywhere. But yet does he does not confine himself to men of outstanding ability. He chooses men who are mediocre. He even.

outstanding ability. He chooses men who are mediocre. He even.

But, Cat has easily understand God's choice of, having them chooses some who seem less than mediocre. That, we can see and varied but when we look at some lesser prophetic type, we cannot but think does God call into his ministry.

Take for instance that unique genius, Bud Robison. A few years ago, I invited him to speak to my people one mid-week afternoon. We
great congregation, and he told us his experience. He told us how he was called to preach. As he told it, he did not know whether to laugh or cry, and so we did both. It ran something like this, "I was lying under an oak or path with my head on a chalk. It seemed like the Lord spoke to me and he said, 'Bud, I want you to preach for me!' I answered, 'Lord, I will do it.' I will fight the devil as long as I have a fist, and I will gum him as long as I have a tooth, and then I will gum him until I die." How crude, you say! And yet we have to forget the crudeness in the light of the fact that he called literally thousands into a richer knowledge of Jesus Christ, and in the light of the fact that he helped to prepare almost a hundred young men for the ministry. God therefore calls his ministers with varied voices because they themselves are of such varied types.

There are those, for instance, to whom God speaks in tones that are clear and unmistakable. He speaks to them seemingly in tones of thunder. Paul had such a call. Therefore he said, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." But there are others to whom the voice of God comes as a mere whisper. In fact it is a whisper so vague that oftentimes the called man may go for weeks and months and years in bewildering uncertainty as to what the will of God for his life really is. God speaks to his ministers in exceedingly varied tones.

There are others to whom the voice of God comes in terms of human need. This was in a peculiar sense the call that came to the prophet Isaiah. One day this choice young man realized his need of the forgiving grace of God. He realized that he was a man of unclean lips, then as he came to this realization and repented, there flew one of the seraphim having a live coal in his hand which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; and laid it upon my mouth and said, 'Lo, this has touched thy lips and mine iniquity is taken away,'
living amidst the people of unclean lips and knowing that there was a cleansing power he was eager to share his blessings with them.

Most often, I think, God speaks to us through human voices. If all the missionaries on the field, and if all the men in our pulpits today who were reared in unchristian homes were to forsake their posts, I do not think they would be greatly missed, but if all those on mission fields and all those in the pulpits who were reared in homes definitely Christian, were to forsake their posts, the missionary field would be largely deserted and the pulpits would fall into silence. By far the greatest recruiting ground for the ministry is the Christian home, and God's favorite way of speaking to us is through the voices of consecrated parents. I judge there are many reared in such homes who have known from their childhood that they were destined for the work of the ministry. While this was not my case, yet it is true that my first wistful look at the ministry came through the influence of my Christian father and mother. I was influenced toward this high calling by what they were in themselves. I was influenced to this high calling by what they taught. I was influenced, further, to this high calling because of the honor that they showed the minister who was a frequent visitor in our home. Early it came into my boyish heart to say, "I should like to be the kind of man that my father and mother could honor as they honor our minister." Therefore, I looked longingly at the ministry, but in spite of the longing, in spite of the fact that there were times when I felt that whatever other vocation I might enter, I should never feel that I had arrived until I had entered the ministry.
this longing was not strong enough and I decided upon another vocation.

My final decision was brought about through a wise layman. I was principal of a village high school. This layman was superintendent of the Sunday School. He took time to talk to me about entering the ministry, and I told him that I was not adverse to this vocation, but that I felt it was too high for me. He gave me encouragement. Above all else he set me a path. He asked me to give a resume of the Sunday School lesson each Sunday morning to the entire school.

It was as I preached these ten minute sermons that I plucked up courage to believe that God might use me in the vocation that had always been my first choice. It was at the conclusion of this experience that I volunteered for the ministry.

Even that child of prayer, Samuel, needed the assistance of a human voice. One night God spoke to him directly, but Samuel did not understand. He thought the call was to be a teacher of his teaching. It was the privilege of wise Eli to tell him how to be sure. The instruction that Eli gave was just as pertinent today as they were in the long ago. He told this bright lad to say this, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." It is true now as it was true then that if any man is willing to do his will, he shall hear. The best way to be sure of God's call is to be willing to hear. God speaks in many ways, and to those who are willing, sooner or later he will bring full assurance. He promised that to those who are willing to hear, he will make many more to dare III clean.

Why does God call men into his ministry? There are many reasons. I am going to mention at least two.

1. He called certain men to be his spokesmen because, knowing them, and knowing the world of which they are a part, he knows that they can do something for him that no one else can do. It is
a thrilling and awe inspiring thought that God for this high task in the conviction that you is essential to the salvation of men. In spite of all our handicaps, in spite of all our limitations, in spite of all our follies and failures, if God has called us to preach he has done so with cause because he knows that we can do something for him that no one else can do.

2. Then God calls certain men to preach because they need such a call to know what they ought to do. They need such a call to give them sufficient daring to take upon themselves this thrilling and difficult task. It certainly requires a great deal of faith and daring for us to take upon ourselves this holy office. It takes a tremendous lot of presumption. The more choice and sensitive a soul is, the more, I think, will that soul hesitate to undertake to be God's spokesman unless God lays hold of him as he did over his prophets with a mighty and strong hand.

If we need this call in order to make us dare to enter the ministry, we need it even more to steady us and keep us true to our task, once we have entered. Jesus, himself, had to strengthen his soul with this conviction of the divine call. "He that hath sent me is with me. The Father hath not left me alone because I do always the things that please him." If we lose our sense of mission, if we lose the holy urgency that came to us in the morning tide of our ministry, we are in great danger of losing our spiritual power and of degenerating into mere ecclesiastics. The last barrier that we have to break down in order to repudiate our high calling is that we minimize at our task when we can lay hold of the loss of our sense of mission.

Sometimes, even when we have been unfaithful, this sense of mission will steady us and keep us at our task. There is a striking passage in the Scarlet Letter, of Seneca's and Esther Pomeroy, where
in an illicit love, are in conversation. Everybody knows the sin
of Esther. It is blazoned to the world by the scarlet letter, that
she wears upon her bosom. It is further proclaimed by the fact that
she has given birth to a child. Pearl she called her because she
has purchased at a great price, at the price of a mother's
supreme treasure. But nobody suspects the young minister who has a
great reputation for holiness. Being a fine and sensitive soul, the
devil life that he must live kindles the very fires of hell in his
heart. He longs to escape.

Then one day the woman who loves him, realizing the torture
that he is suffering, urges him to resign his pulpit and to bury
himself among the Indians in the wilds of the forest and find some
degree of peace. But, somehow the young minister cannot do it.

He answers in these words, "I dare not quit my post, though an un-
faithful sentinel whose sure reward is dishonor and death when his
weary watch shall have come to an end".

Almost immediately after I had been licensed to preach, I
went to supply a circuit in a western state. This circuit had fallen
upon evil days. The former pastor had had to quit under a black cloud.

The local preacher who belonged to the circuit had been on a drunk
and in the thrill of his drunkenness he had gone home and whipped his
wife. The first item of business, I remember, was a church trial.
On the trial committee was a splendid Indian Chief. He listened to
the evidence with typical Indian stoicism. Then, just before the
vote was taken he asked a question. He said, "Before I feel confi-
dent to vote on this matter, I must know what the minister
whipped his wife for. She might have needed it".

Now, with these two co-workers I began my ministry. It goes
without saying that I was not vastly popular.
station there was no brass band to meet me. But though I was a bit
cast down I was not utterly distraught. I had three sermons that
I had preached among the home folks. They had pronounced them
good. They had even declared that I would be bishop some day.
Therefore, I consoled myself by saying, "When Sunday comes I am going
to preach the best of these three sermons. Then their eyes will be
opened and they will take me to their hearts".

But, when Sunday came and I preached that best sermon, if any-
body thought that I was going to be bishop, he kept it a profound
secret. The former pastor invited me home to dinner. I went, but
when we entered his home, he disappeared. There was a large family,
They also disappeared. By and by, I was invited out to dinner and set
down absolutely alone. I was not very hungry. Therefore, when
I had finished, and had looked about for some member of the family
and had failed in finding a single one, I took my hat and
set out through the forest and struck the railroad, and started west.
It was not my purpose to grow up with the country, but to get away,
from the agony of that awful hour. I think that Sunday afternoon
was the bitterest that has ever passed over my head.

What was the matter? It was not simply that the situation
was hard and disappointing. I could have faced that with some
degree of courage. My Gethsemane was born of the uncertainty of my
call. I found myself talking after this fashion: "You were doing
some good in the work that you had chosen, but you are doing
nothing here. You are not a hero. You are only a fool. You have
run without being called. You have taken a human voice for the
divine voice and God has not called you into the ministry at all".
That was torture, too heavy to bear. A few days later, there came
a long distance telephone call that turned my black night into
marvelous day. I was offered a most desirable position in the
yield of education in my home state, mounted the highest hill, and
resigned and hurried back to accept this position. As I traveled
home again there was one word that I repeated to myself over and over.
It was this, "Whatever else you may do in the morrow, there is one
thing that you certainly will not do. Never again will you enter a
pulpit to preach." This chapter of trying to be a Christian minister
is closed and closed forever." And I closed it with considerable
relief.

Yet, be it said to the praise of my patient Lord, here I
stand with more than forty years of joyous ministry behind me.
These have been faulty years, but they have been in the main
years of gladsome servanthood. I have so loved my vocation that it has
been without a rival. I have so loved it that if I had my life to
live over again, and if God were again to honor me with his call, I
should say, with greater eagerness today than I did yesterday,
"Here am I. Send me." I have honored other vocations but all of
them have been as starlight to sunlight, in comparison with the high
vocation of preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Therefore, let me close with this word from that passage
beside the bonny brier bush. A Scottish mother is passing to where
beyond these voices there is peace. "Here is my watch and chain,"
she says to a laddie, sitting by her bedside. "You will wear it for
your mother's sake, and when you feel the chain about your neck it will
remind you of your mother's arms. You will follow Christ. If he
offers you his cross you will not refuse it for he always carries
the heavy end himself." Even so if God offers you his cross by
calling you into the ministry, do not refuse it. He will indeed
carry the heavy end himself. So he has for those who have dared to
obey him, so he does, and so he will.
can but prophesy?" Though men of deep humility, they dare to begin their messages with this startling affirmation, "Thus saith the Lord". They cannot explain themselves except in terms of God. They have been divinely called. The explanation they give of themselves is the one we have to give of them. After all these centuries we can find no other explanation than the call of God.

Take one of their number, for instance, perhaps the greatest. Had you met Moses toward the end of his sojourn in Midian you would have been impressed by his vast abilities. You might have recognized him as a man of genius. But, in spite of that fact, you would never have picked him as the future leader of a revolution. You would never have thought of him as a man who was to bring a new nation to its birth. You would never have seen in him a teacher of his own generation and of all the generations that were to follow. You would rather have expected him to go to his grave having filled no higher destiny than that of shepherd to another man's sheep.

In so thinking you would have had some very solid reasons. In the first place, he was getting far into the years. A man may be born anew when he is old, but it is a very rare miracle. Then, in all probability, he had become somewhat disillusioned, if not positively cynical. He had blazed once but his fires had long gone out. He had had an exciting youth. Fished out of the waters of the Nile, adopted into the royal family, educated at the court and in the best schools of Egypt, trained by consecrated parents, he had no doubt dreamed great dreams for himself. I think by far the sunniest of these dreams was the expectation of becoming the deliverer of his people. This was only natural since he had come to share the faith of his father and mother. He had even gone so
under the heavenly vision. Nor could he ever think of the rich
privilege that had come to him as a result of this call without
a shout of sheer joy. "To me is this grace given that I might
preach the unsearchable riches of Christ". In both the Old and the
New Testament, therefore, we come upon holy men who
cannot be explained except in terms of the divine call.

2. Not only do we find God-called men upon the pages of the
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into his ministry, therefore, is asserted both by the Bible, by
Church history, and by present experience.
good in the work that you have thrown down. But you can do nothing here. You are not a hero, you have run without being sent. God has not called you. You are only a fool." A few days later, there came a long distance telephone call offering me a very desirable position in the field of education in my home state. I at once resigned. As I turned my face home again there was one word that I repeated to myself over and over. It was this, "Whatever else you may do in the morrow, there is one thing that you certainly will not do. Never again will you enter a pulpit to preach."

Yet, be it said to the praise of my patient Lord, here I stand with more than forty years of joyous ministry behind me. These have been faulty years, but they have been in the main years of gladsome certainty. I have so loved my vocation that it has been without a rival. While honoring other callings, I have so loved my calling that if I had my life to live over again and if God were again to honor me with his call, I should say today with greater eagerness than I did yesterday, "Here am I. Send me." In comparison with that of preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ, all of them have been as starlight to sunlight.

Therefore, let me close with this word from that classic, "Beside the Bonny Brier Bush". A Scotch mother is passing to her final rest and reward. "Here is my watch and chain," she says to her laddie who is sitting by her bedside, "You will wear it for your mother's sake, and when you feel the chain about your neck it will remind you of your mother's arms. You will follow Christ, for he offers you his cross you will not refuse it, for he always carries the heavy end himself." Even so, if our Lord offers you his cross by calling you into the ministry, do not refuse it. He will indeed carry the heavy end himself. So he has for those who have dared to obey him, so he does, and so he will.
good in the work that you have thrown down. But you still are not being here. You are not a hero, you have run without being sent. God has not called you. You are only a fool". A few days later, when there came a long distance telephone call offering me a very desirable position in the field of education in my home state, I at once resigned. As I turned my face home again there was one word that I repeated to myself over and over. It was this, "Whatever else you may do tomorrow, there is one thing that you certainly will not do. Never again will you enter a pulpit to preach".

Yet, be it said to the praise of my patient Lord, here I stand with more than forty years of joyous ministry behind me. These have been faulty years, but they have been in the main years of gladsome certainty. I have so loved my vocation that it has been without a rival. While honoring other callings in comparison with that of preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ, all others have been as starlight to sunlight. Therefore, if I had my life to live over again, and if God were again to honor me with his call, I should say today with greater eagerness than I did yesterday, "Here am I, send me".

Therefore, let me close with this word from that classic, "Beside the Bonny Brier Bush". A Scotch mother is passing to her final rest and reward. "Here's my watch and chain", she says to her laddie who is sobbing at her bedside, "and when you feel the chain about your neck it will remind you of your mother's arms. You will follow Christ, and if he offers you his cross, you will not refuse it, for he always carries the heavy end himself". Even so, if our Lord offers you his cross by calling you into the ministry, do not refuse it. He will indeed carry the heavy end himself. So he has for those who have dared to obey him, so he does, and so he will.
We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. Acts 6:4 (A S. V.)

I

This text has an interesting background. It marks a crisis in the life of the early church. It begins with this disappointing and depressing declaration, "There arose a murmuring." That is a familiar sound. Whatever else may be strange about this scene, here at least we feel at home. There is nothing more familiar in our world than this particular sound of murmuring. We hear it among the nations. We hear it in our places of business. We hear it in our institutions of learning. We hear it in our homes where it often rises to the dimensions of a war-whoop that rends the home asunder. We even hear it in the church. "There arose a murmuring."

Now that this murmuring should walk so hard upon the heels of Pentecost is a bit depressing. Luke has just told us that with the coming of the Spirit the multitudes were of one heart and one soul, but this beautiful oneness is now in danger of being destroyed. It is in danger of being destroyed in the only way that oneness can be destroyed and that is from within. Home-born Jews and foreign-born Jews are looking suspiciously at each other. They have had their differences before, and though these differences have been buried by the coming of the Spirit, they are now on the point of becoming alert and alive once more. Thus the brotherhood was in danger of being rent asunder.

The particular cause of this murmuring was the fact that the Hellenists thought that their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. Whether this neglect was actual or imaginary we cannot say. But I am sure they were sincere in thinking that they were neglected. Thus they became critical. Their criticism, however, was not
in reality against the Hebrews as a whole. It was, rather, against those who had charge of the daily distribution, rather the preachers themselves. It was thus against the apostles that the Hellenists were murmuring.

Now, it is a bit depressing to hear this murmuring in the early church. Yet I am glad that Dr. Luke felt led to tell us about it. By doing so he performed a two-fold service. First, he compels us to realize that the church, even of that day, was not perfect. We are prone to idealize the past. Too often we seek for the Golden age, in some far-off yesterday. Jerome K. Jerome declares that people have been looking back to the good old days of fifty years ago ever since Adam's fifty-first birthday. But, "distance lends enchantment to the view", if that distance is made of years as well as if it is made of leagues. The church was never perfect because it was always composed of faulty individuals, such as we are.

The truth is that there is a sense in which the imperfection of the church is heartening. It is because the church is imperfect that you and I can have a place in it. To be perfectly candid, I am in the church for two reasons. First, I am in the church because the church being imperfect will let me in. If it were a perfect church it would not receive me, because I would at once make it imperfect. Second, I belong to the church because the church, being imperfect, needs me in. I can do something for an imperfect church, but I could do nothing for a perfect church except to lower its moral and spiritual temperature, and to rob it in some measure of its beauty.

Then Luke does us a service in that he tells us how these early ministers met the criticism that was leveled against them. You know, we ministers are like other people in that we do not like adverse
criticism. Now and then some misguided soul will come to me at the close of a service and say, "I know ministers do not like to be complimented." In sober honesty I have to answer, "You're not talking to me. I like to be complimented." I do not hesitate to say so, and if you affirm that you do not, the only difference between you and me is that I am telling the truth.

But though we do not relish adverse criticism any more than we do bad-tasting medicine, yet such criticism, as such medicine, sometimes, prove helpful. Years ago when I was quite a young minister I went to be pastor of the Highland Park Church in Dallas, Texas. That, as you know, is the university church. My first service was a rather terrifying experience. Present at that service was my oldest brother, a choice and scholarly gentleman. I knew his heart was bleeding for his youngest brother and I did not wish to make it bleed any more than necessary. Present, also, was the president of the university whose way of listening was to look at his toes. Never once during the service did he lift his eyes to the hill from whence I was trying to make come his help. Present, also, was the most pompous bishop of that day, and "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." That "the wheels of the chariot drave heavily" is indicated by the fact that at the close of the service a wicked and heartless hearer came forward to tell me how many times I had scratched the left side of my head with my right hand. I do not know how many times it was, but I do know the number was out of all proportion to the way my head was itching. I did not enjoy the criticism, but since then I have sought to reduce that scratching to a minimum.

Now, these Apostles might have met this criticism against them-
selves in varied ways. First, they might have resented it. They might have told their critics, as we say today, "where to head in."

Some might have said with truth, "we were in this movement before you. When it comes to serving bread we qualify as experts. We were trained by the Master himself. Have you forgotten that when he fed the five thousand we were the ones that handed out the bread? And have you forgotten that the same was the case when he fed the four thousand? We are past masters in the art of looking after the physical needs of our people. Therefore, if you do not like the way we are doing it, you can get out."

A second course, they might have taken was to play the martyr role. They might have fallen down and groveled in self-pity. I love martyrs provided they never discover that they are martyrs. But if they once find it out they can be a pest far worse than any that was suffered by Pharaoh. Sometime ago while preaching to one of our Northern conferences, there were present some hundred wives of the preachers. They honored me by asking me to speak at their banquet. When I had finished my address I made bold to give one or two warnings that I thought some of them might need. One was this, "Don't play the martyr, don't go about telling folks how much better off you would have been if you had married this doctor or that lawyer or that merchant. Glancing at you casually, I think most of you took about the best chance that was offered. And looking at some of you more closely, I dare say you took the only chance that was offered. Therefore, don't play the martyr."

These apostles might have said, "We have been doing our best, we have been sitting up until midnight working in your behalf, and all you give us is criticism. We are going to quit."

A third possibility was to examine the criticism, see if there
was any truth in it, and act accordingly. This they did. They literally took that criticism in their hands and looked at it objectively. Having done so, they reached the conclusion that there was some truth in what their critics were saying. They decided that they had been making a mistake. "It is not right", they confessed, "that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables".

Now in confessing that they were wrong, they showed some degree of bigness. Pygmies are never wrong. Little babies never apologize. I took my first born in my arms years ago when I was one of the floor walkers for our firm and walked him back and forth until the small hours of the morning. Only to realize at last that there was nothing in particular the matter with him. But the little rascal flatly refused to apologize. He never did beg my pardon. He never did say that he had been wrong in keeping me awake, this in spite of the fact that he had nothing to do the next day but handle his bottle, while I had a sermon to prepare. Babies just are never wrong. Never being wrong, they never apologize. But grown-ups do.

I honor Apollos for his many fine gifts and attainments. I appreciate the fact that he was both eloquent and mighty in the scriptures. But what I appreciate most about him is that he allowed two people without half his ability and training to instruct him in his own speciality. A man thus willing to learn the way of the Lord more perfectly from such teachers was both a great man and a great Christian. Such were these Apostles. Instead of growing angry, instead of giving way to self-pity, they acknowledged their wrong and made a decision to change their way. "Henceforth", they said, "We are going to devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word".
But, if they were wrong, wherein were they wrong?

They were not wrong in that they had concerned themselves with the organizational work of the church. They were not wrong in that they had concerned themselves with the physical needs of their congregation. They knew that it is impossible to speak convincingly about the bread of life to people who are hungry for physical bread. It is at once thrilling and enlightening to see how much time Jesus gave to the meeting of the physical needs of people. Therefore, the minister is altogether right when he takes account of the material needs of the congregation to which he has been called to preach.

No more was the wrong of which these Apostles were guilty born of their failure to give entire satisfaction. Nobody gives complete satisfaction in the doing of any work, where any considerable number of people is concerned. If you, as a young minister, set out with the hope of performing any task in your church in such a way as to win universal approval, you are likely to be disappointed. Any minister who counts upon carrying on the work of his church to the entire satisfaction of everybody is sure to spend a large part of his time under the juniper tree.

What, then, was wrong with their conduct? The wrong was this. They had become so mired down with the managing of their church, they had been so absorbed in putting through the organization that preaching had been pushed on the sideline. Peter put it this way. "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables". Now, we are not to conclude from this that these Apostles had quit preaching altogether. They doubtless still kept their appointments.
But though they continued to preach, they ceased to put preaching in the center. It was no longer their vocation, it was only their avocation. It was no longer on the main line, it was a sideline. It was one of many tasks. Being thus engaged in many tasks, the thorns sprang up, the thorns of varied activities, and choked the wheat of preaching.

We can see how much more modern and up-to-date this text is today than it was the day in which it was written. As the years have come and gone, the machinery of the church has been greatly multiplied. So much is this the case that it is safe to say that of no other man in the community is so much expected as of the modern minister. He is expected to do more things well than any other man in the society of our day. He must be an administrator, a financier, a specialist in religious education. He must be a pastor, at times, a court of domestic relations. In fact there is no interest of his church or community that is entirely alien to him.

Whatever else I may say, let me emphasize this fact. I believe that it is the duty of the preacher to take an intelligent interest in the entire program of his church. I am not so blind as to tell you that if a man will only preach the Gospel he need not concern himself about anything else. I have been pastor of downtown churches long enough to know the absolute necessity of the preacher's taking an interest in all the program of his church.

But the question here is one of emphasis. We cannot be equally interested in every activity of our church. We cannot give every syllable of our program the same accent. We have to put the emphasis somewhere. Where, as preachers of the word, are we to put that emphasis? It was the conviction of these ancient preachers
I believe that we ought to continue with our tithing of mint and anise and cummin, but I think that it is nothing short of tragic, if by doing so, we neglect the weightier matter (and that is the matter) of preaching. Moneyness is in my opinion, to put our wealth in any other place is in my opinion, to neglect the weightier matter.

III

Why should we put the major emphasis on preaching?

We are not to emphasize preaching because to preach is more religious, or to use a threadbare word, more spiritual, than the handling of money. There is nothing more sacred than the so-called secular. Some ministers seem never to come to this conviction. Therefore, they never cease to speak about money apologetically, as if it were something too sordid to be discussed in the pulpit. They speak freely of prayer, of regeneration, of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but of money they speak haltingly, if at all. In fact, I became pastor of a church years ago whose boast was that their minister never mention money in the pulpit. It was a thing too profane, too little spiritual to have any place in his preaching.

But the minister who is too deeply spiritual to speak about money has run clean past Jesus Christ and is looking back at him. Jesus had something to say about repentance. He said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish". He preached regeneration, saying to a fine old servant of the church, "You must be born anew". But he had far more to say about money than he had to say about either repentance or regeneration. He had more to say about money and matters related to money than any other subject of which he spoke.

The reason for this is obvious. We live our lives not in castles in
the air, but in homely houses where we have to eat three meals a day, more or less, and where we have to wear clothing, all these require money. Therefore we have to handle material values in terms of money every day that we live. Therefore, we have to learn to relate ourselves aright to money or we simply do not learn to live.

Possessed of this conviction I have never felt any hesitation in speaking to my people about money. The truth of the matter is, I think some of the most joyful times I have in preaching are when I preach about money. I thrill to it. I revel in it. I love to see the liberal enjoy it, and I love to watch the stingy suffer. There is nothing about which the minister can never preach, there is nothing about which he can concern himself that is more sacred than money. Therefore, we are not to major on preaching because by doing so we perform a service that is more religious than the handling of money.

Why then, I repeat, should we major on preaching? We should major on it, first because preaching is our job. That is the particular task to which, in the wisdom of God we have been called. Since that is our business I submit to you that it is our first duty to mind our own business. Always our first duty is to do the task to which God in his providence has called us.

I know that the preacher who majors on preaching is quite likely to be criticized. Most of this criticism, however, will not come from his congregation. It will likely come from his brethren in the ministry. About such a preacher we are accustomed to make this remark, "He can preach, but he can't do anything else". Now, as a rule, that is a slander. As a rule, that is ninty-nine and forty-four one hundred percent pure falsehood. This is the case because the minister who can really preach must do something else or he could not preach. No man
who lives in an ivory tower can preach. No man can preach who loses
contact with people. If you think lightly of pastoral visiting be-
cause of what it does for your parishioners you had better not think
lightly of it because of what it does to you. Without such contact
with his people no minister can preach at his best. God has to have
men in the pulpit who know how people are born, how they bark their
shins, how they break their hearts, how they suffer, how they die.

Therefore, no man can be a good preacher who can do nothing else.
So when we make that remark we are either mistaken or saying what is
frankly false.

But if this slander were one hundred percent true, even the man
called of God to preach who could do nothing else would be leagues
ahead of the man who could do other things, but who could not or
would not do the one thing to which God had called him. You remember
that parable in the Old Testament of the chap who was set to guard a
certain important prisoner? He was told that the safekeeping of his
prisoner was so important that if he allowed him to escape his own life
would be to forfeit. But in spite of this warning, he did allow his
prisoner to escape. He failed in his one task. When he was called on
the carpet all he had to say was this, "While thy servant was busy here
and there he was gone".

Now I do not know what this servant was doing when his prisoner
escaped. He might have been engaged in a poker game, or he might
have been visiting the sick. Whatever he was doing was of little con-
gquence in the face of the fact that he refused to do the one task
assigned to him. In failing to guard his prisoner he exposed his
country to danger. In failing to guard his prisoner he failed in a
duty that was his and his alone, a duty that no other man could perform.
This brings us, therefore, to a second reason why we as pastors should major on preaching, and that is if we do not preach to our congregation, nobody else will. I drove into a town in Mississippi some time ago and stopped in front of a hotel that was not very inviting. Therefore, I asked a colored brother standing by, "Is this the best hotel in town"? He gave me a very illuminating answer. He said, "It is the onliest one". Even so, you are the only man to whom your congregation can look Sunday by Sunday for the preaching of the word.

Therefore, it is well for every minister to remind himself of this when he begins the preparation of his sermon (on Monday morning). It is well for him to remind himself afresh as he mounts the pulpit stairs. Say to yourself, "The one chance that these needy, hungry hearted people of mine have of hearing the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the sermon that I preach". That being the case we as ministers ought to do our best. We ought to put our major emphasis on preaching.

Then we ought to put our major emphasis on preaching, in the third place, because preaching is so important. Preaching is an absolute necessity. I believe in all of the helpful activities of the church. But the church would get on without all of them better than it would get on without preaching. Preaching is the one absolute essential. I remind you again that in the New Testament preaching and salvation are related to each other as cause and effect. That is worth considering. What is the great question before the house today? It is the salvation question. That is the question that is to the fore in this generation and in every generation. How can the individual, how can the community, how can the social order, how can our trembling, tortured world be saved?
Now, you and I as Christian ministers believe we have the answer. At least we can be sure of this, God has never been able to get on and run his church adequately without the preacher. He managed, as another has pointed out, for seventeen hundred years without a Sunday School, as important as that is. He managed eighteen hundred and fifty years without a single Boy Scout. But he has never been able to manage without the preacher. Whenever the preacher has failed, the church has failed. Whenever the pulpit has ceased to give forth living water, drought and desert have spread over the earth. But when fountains have flowed from the pulpit, then the desert has been become a garden and the fields of the heart have flowered.

I know there are those to whom such an assertion will sound little short of silly. Yet only a few weeks ago I heard one of the most thoughtful and capable men that I know say to a company of ministers, "Gentlemen, it may seem to you that by your preaching you are doing very little. Even though that might be true, I want to assure you of this, You are doing more than anybody else". The most important event that takes place in your town or city on any day of the week is when the minister proclaims the unsearchable riches of Christ. There is nothing else so much needed, there is nothing else so essential as the right kind of preaching. By far the highest service you can render to your church, to your community, and to your world is to be the best possible preacher.

You ought, therefore, to major on preaching because that is your job. You ought to major on preaching because you are God's one chance at your congregation. You ought to major on preaching because preaching is a necessity. It is that without which the individual and the world simply cannot be saved. It is the biggest thing that any man can do. Thomas Aquinas reminded us that
The wisdom of the decision of these ministers to put their major emphasis on preaching is indicated by what followed as a result of their decision. "We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word". So what?

These men believed in some measure of their multitudinous duties, they preached better. This is not mentioned specifically, but we can be perfectly sure that such was the case. The whole context seems to prove it. Then it is a matter of commonsense. It takes time to preach. A minister can not be a man of all work and do his best as a preacher. In fact the preacher who tries to do everything from being the janitor up or down is seeking the spiritual impoverishment of his congregation in the impoverishment of his preaching. It takes time to preach, and blessed is the man who so realizes this fact that he acts accordingly.

That some do not realize it, we all know. A friend said some time ago that he mulled over his sermon Saturday night after he got in bed. A second one asked me, "When do you begin your sermon?" I replied, "When do you?" He said, "I try to get around to mine at least by Friday". Now for me that would be a most dangerous risk, because, in a few instances I have been able to prepare a sermon quickly, but there have been other times when I could not prepare one at all. Therefore, I have made it a rule to give myself plenty of time. Hence I begin early. If there was any resting to be done, I have done it at the end of the week, rather than at the beginning.

A second result that followed this decision was the growth of the church. "The word of the Lord increased", Luke tells us.
mean that they started printing presses in connection with their church. It means something even better. It means that gospels were being printed in terms of transformed lives. There was an increasing number of living epistles that were known and read of men. The church grew both because of better preaching and because more people were set to work.

Now with the Apostles preaching better, with more people at work, with an increasing number being won to Christ and to His church, the murmuring either ceased altogether or was drowned by the hum of activity. It is hard for a man to have very much time to murmur if he is really playing the game. You will notice that almost all the murmuring in the church is done by the people who have nothing else to do. When these people got busy they did not have time to murmur.

Then, the murmuring may have ceased for a second reason. It is a bit difficult to find fault in the presence of results. That was a thoroughly hostile court before which Peter and John had stood not so long ago. But in spite of its hostility it was put to silence by results. "Beholding the man who was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it". There is nothing in the church or out of it that succeeds like success. The church that can offer exhibit "A" in terms of transformed lives is hard to criticize. Murmuring in such a church is likely to be reduced to a minimum. Thus, through this better preaching the wilderness and the solitary place became glad, and the desert rejoiced and blossomed as a rose.

I find it easy to believe in the victory that followed when these Apostles put their major emphasis on preaching because such a thing has been a day of great preaching as long as the light lasted, all else in a measure has failed. "When the light goes out in the head, there is no brightness in the body, there is no profit."

Many years ago a brilliant minister was led away into exile as a war casualty. As he made his long trek from Jerusalem to a concentration camp outside Babylon he passed through a wide valley where a battle had been fought many months before. After the battle the armies withdrew, not taking time to bury their dead. Therefore, the scene that the prophet beheld was quite ghastly. Everywhere, as far as his eyes could see, the valley was white with human bones. Every hand was death, death grown old and gray. The scene was thoroughly depressing. But it was not more so than the congregation that he faced when he reached his destination. They were so utterly desperate and hopeless that they reminded him of the valley of death through which he had recently passed.

Now, as pastor of First Church, Death Valley, what was Ezekiel commanded of God to do? There was at least one thing he did that is thoroughly modern. He made a survey. The Lord caused him to pass by the bones round about and to see that there were very many in the open valley, and to see that they were very dry. Having done this he might have polished the bones, or he might have organized them. The remedy that God commanded was different. It was, I submit, about the last remedy that the man of the world would think of using. What did God tell his prophet to do in order to meet the desperate situation? He told him to preach to these bones.

How silly! Yet, as he preached in obedience to the command of God, something happened. "There was a noise." It is always heartening to get even a noise out of dry bones. Then the bones came together.
and there was organization. Then the sinews and flesh came upon them
and there were some very decent corpses. I am afraid if I had been the
minister when I had won that much success I should have quit and called
it a day. But Ezekiel continued, and as he continued saying, "Come
from the four winds, o, breathe upon these slain that they
may live. Breath entered into them, and they stood upon their feet
an exceeding great host." It was done under God, through the power of
preaching. "Only a picture," you say. Certainly, but the picture of a reality.

For a few centuries after Pentecost, the church spread over the
world like a forest fire. Men went out everywhere to preach, but by
this arduous work of preaching was changed for something easier.
In the Dark Ages, and the darkness remained until one day a man trained
to be a priest, reversed the order and became a preacher, and it was
through the preaching of Martin Luther, that morning dawned, the
morning of the Reformation.

Then, one night many centuries later, a young Oxford don came out
of a little service in Aldersgate Street, London, claiming that he had
felt his heart strangely warm. That young man, with his hot heart
pounding in his bosom, mounted his horse soon after, and set out on a
preaching mission that carried literally, through the century. As he
preached to the valley of dry bones that then was England, once more
the impossible happened. The icicles fell from the eaves of the houses,
the winter-stripped trees put on their verdant foliage, the
flowers bloomed, the birds sang, and the human heart stood up in the
glad consciousness that God had come. Once more the spiritually dead
stood upon their feet, an exceeding great host. Thus civilization moved
Now, my young friends, as we face our difficult world, and nobody ever faced one more difficult, it is my conviction that the greatest service that we, as ministers, can render is to preach to that world, with "a mouth and a wisdom that men cannot gainsay nor resist". To do this we must not only do our best, but be our best, this is.

There was never a time when there was greater demand for ministers who can stand in the pulpit Sunday after Sunday and preach. There was never a time when wider doors of opportunity were opening to such ministers. Nor was there ever a time of greater need.

Blessed, therefore, is the young man who facing this high and beautiful adventure makes his own the resolve of these Apostles of the long ago:— "We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word".

"Preaching is the fruit of victories."
Our Major Emphasis

Acts 6:4  We will devote ourselves constantly to prayer and to the ministry of the word. Acts 6:4

This text has an interesting background. It marks a crisis in the life of the early church. It begins with this interesting and depressing declaration: "There arose a murmur."

What ever else may be strange about this passage, this at least is familiar. There is nothing more familiar in our world than this particular sound of murmuring. We hear it among the nations. We hear it in our civic clubs. We hear it in our lodges. We hear it in our places of business. We hear it in our homes where it often rises to the dimensions of a war-whoop that rends the home asunder. We even hear it in the Church. "There arose a murmuring."

Now that this murmuring should arise so hard upon the heels of Pentecost is a bit depressing. Luke has just told us that with the coming of the Spirit the multitude were of one heart and one soul. But this beautiful unity is in danger of being destroyed. It is in danger of being destroyed in the only way that unity can be destroyed and that is from within. Home-born Jews and foreign-born Jews are looking ascast at each other. They have had their differences before, and though they have been bettered, with the coming of the spirit they are ready to become active and alert and alive once more. And so the brotherhood was in danger of being rent asunder.
I have been looking back to the good old days of fifty years ago ever since Adam's fifty-first birthday. But, distance lends enchantment to the view if that distance is made of years just as well as if it is made of miles. The church was never perfect because it was always composed of faulty individuals, just such as we are.

The truth is, the imperfection of the church is a heartening fact. It is because the church is imperfect that you and I can have a place in it. To be perfectly candid, with you I am in the Church for two reasons. First, I am in the church because the church is imperfect and they let me in. If it were a perfect church it would not receive me, because I would at once make it
imperfect. Second, I belong to the church, because the church, being imperfect, leads me in. I can do something for an imperfect church, but I could do nothing for a perfect church except to lower its moral and spiritual temperature and to rob it of its beauty.

Then Luke does us a service in that he tells us how these early ministers met the criticism that was leveled against them. You know, we ministers as a tribe are like other people in that we do not like adverse criticism. Now and then some misguided soul will come to me at the close of a service and say, "Now, I know you ministers do not like to be complimented". In sober honesty I have to answer them, "You're not talking to me. I love to be complimented". I do not hesitate to say so, and if you affirm that you do not, the only difference between you and me is that I am telling the truth.

But though we do not relish adverse criticism any more than we do bad-tasting medicine, yet such criticism and such medicine can, at times, prove helpful, if we react to it in the right way. Years ago when I was quite a young minister I went to be pastor of the Highland Park Church in Dallas, Texas. That, as you know, is the university church. I was quite frightened beyond measure. Present at my first service was my oldest brother, a choice and scholarly gentleman. I knew his heart was bleeding for his youngest brother and I did not wish to make it bleed any more than I could help. Present, also, was the president of the university whose way of listening was to look at his toes, and never once during the service did he lift his eyes to the hill
from whence I was trying to make come his help. Presently
also was the most pompous bishop of that day and Solomon in all
his glory was not arrayed like one of these. That is indicated by the fact that at the close of the
service some wicked and heartless hearer came forward to tell me
how many times I had scratched the left hand side of my head with
my right hand. I do not know how many times it was, but I do
know the number of times was out of all proportion to the way my
head was itching. I did not enjoy the criticism, but since then
I have tried to reduce pulpit scratching to a minimum.

Now when these venerable men found themselves criticised
they could have met the criticism in varied ways. First, they
might have resented it. They might have told their crit-
ims, as we say today, where to head in. They could have said to
them with great reason we were in this movement long before you,
and when it comes to dishing out bread we are masters of the
situation. We have been to the seminary run by Jesus Himself.
Have you forgotten that when he fed the five thousand and when
he fed the four thousand we were the ones that handed out the
bread, and we are past masters in the art of looking after the
physical needs of our people, and if you don't like the way we
are doing it you can just get out.

A second course, they might have taken for to play the martyr
role. They might have fallen down and groveled in self-pity.

You know, I love martyrs, but provided they never discover they
are martyrs. But if they once find it out they can be a pest
that is far worse than any experience by Pharoah. Sometime ago
while preaching to one of our Northern conferences, there were
present some hundred widows of the preachers, and they asked me
to speak at their banquet. I did so with great pleasure, and when
address I needed food to give.

I had finished my sermon I gave one or two warnings that I thought
some of them might need. That warning was this: Don't play the
martyr. Don't go about telling folks how much better off you
would have been if you had married this doctor or that lawyer or
that merchant. I said, glancing at you casually, I think you
took just about the best chance that was offered. And looking at
some of you more closely, I dare say you took the only chance

that was offered. Don't play the martyr. These men might have
said, "we have been doing our best, we have been sitting up until
midnight working in your behalf and all you give us is criticism."

We are going to move.

A third possibility was to examine the criticism, see if there
was any truth in it, and act accordingly. And this they did.

They literally took that criticism in their hands, looked at it
objectively, humbly done so, they reached the conclusion
carefully, and said, "There is some truth in what these people
are saying. We have been making a mistake. We have been doing
wrong. It is not right that we should give up preaching the
word of God to serve people."

Now, in confessing that they were wrong, that showed some
degree of bigness and some vitality. Pygmies, you know, are
never wrong. Little babies never apologize. I took my
first born in my arms years ago when I was one of the fell-
floor walkers for our firm and walked him back and forth until
the small hours of the morning, to discover that there was no-
thing in particular the matter with him. But you know, the
little rascal didn't apologize for it. He never did beg my par-
don. He never did say, 'I was wrong in keeping you awake, when
this
PART II

But, if they were wrong, wherein were they wrong?

They were not wrong in that they had concerned themselves with the organizational work of the church. They were not wrong in that they had concerned themselves with the physical needs of their congregation. They knew that it was impossible to speak convincingly about the bread of life to people who were hungry for physical bread. It is at once thrilling and enlightening to see how much time Jesus gave to the meeting of the physical needs of people. Therefore, the minister is altogether right when he takes account of the material needs of the congregation to which he has been called to preach.

(No more was it wrong of these apostles to handle the finances of this early church because preaching was more religious, or to use a threadbare word, more spiritual than the handling of)
money. There is nothing, my brothers, more sacred than the so-called
secular. Some ministers seem never to come to that conviction.
Therefore they never learn how to preach about money apologetically

I have known preachers that always spoke about money apologetically

regeneration, but I money they speak hardly
than the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In fact I became pastor of

a great church years ago, and it was the boast of that church that

their pastor never mention money in the pulpit. It was a thing

prominent too little to have any place in the pulpit.

But, the man who is too deeply spiritual to speak about
money has run clean past Jesus Christ and is looking back at him.
Jesus had something to say about repentance. It was an impor-
tant matter. He said, 'except that ye repent, ye shall all
likewise perish.' He preached regeneration, as saying to a fine
old servant of the church, 'you must be born anew.' But

Jesus had far more to say about money than he had to say about
either repentance or regeneration. He had more to say about
money and matters related to money than any other subject of which
he spoke. This is only natural. We live our lives not in castles
in the air, but in homely houses in this dusty, commonplace
world, and we have to eat three meals a day, more or less, and we
have to wear clothing and have a roof over our heads and all
these require money. Therefore we have to handle material
values in terms of money every day that we live, and if we do not
learn to relate ourselves aright to money, we simply do not
learn to live.

Therefore, with this conviction in my heart I have never felt
any hesitation of speaking to my people about money. The truth
of the matter is, I think some of the most joyful times I have in
preaching, this is when I preach about money. I thrill to it.
I revel in it. I love to see the liberal enjoy it, and I love to watch the stingy suffer. Some time ago a group of women asked for our sanctuary for a worship service and when the offering plates were presented, they drew back with a kind of horror and said, Oh, we are not going to receive an offering. This is a worship service and they seemed to think it was far too sacred for an offering.

Now, any service that is too sacred to talk about money and to receive money is far too sacred to read the twenty-third psalm. It is far too sacred to pray the Lord's Prayer, and it is far too sacred to sing "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross". There is nothing about which you can ever preach that is more sacred than the matter of money. And so, when these apostles concerned themselves about the finances of their church, they were not doing something that was less religious or less spiritual than preaching.

What was wrong with their conduct? The wrong was this. They had become so mired down with the managing of their church, they had been so taken up with putting through the organization that preaching had been pushed on the sideline. They put it this way. "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Now I do not take Peter to mean that in our evangelical church they had quit preaching altogether. They kept their appointment as usual, but I do think take him to mean that they bed ceased to put preaching in the center. Preaching was no longer a vocation, it was an avocation. It was no longer on the main line, it was the sideline. It was no longer something about which they could say, this one thing I do. It was one of many tasks, and
Being thus engaged in many tasks, the thorns sprang up, the varied thorns of buried activities, and choked the wheat of preaching.

Now you can see how much more modern and up to date this text is today than it was the day in which it was written. Because, as the years have come and gone, the machinery of the church has been greatly multiplied. So much is this the case that it is safe to say that of no other man in the community is so much expected as of the minister. The preacher is expected to do more things well than any other man in modern society. He must be an administrator, he must be a financier, he must be a specialist in religious education. He must, at times, be a court of domestic relations. If there is no interest in his church or community that is entirely alien to him.

Now whatever else I may say to you, let me emphasize this fact: that I believe in the preacher's interest and concern in the entire program of his church. I am not going to be so stupid as to stand and tell you that if a man will only preach the gospel that is all that is necessary, and that he need not concern himself about anything else. I have been pastor of our downtown churches long enough to know the absolute necessity of the preacher's interest in all the program of his church.

But the question is a question of emphasis. We cannot be equally interested in every activity of our church. We cannot give every syllable of our program an equal accent. We have got to put the emphasis somewhere. Now, where as ministers of the Gospel, where as preachers of the word, are we to put that emphasis? It was the conviction of these ancient preachers that they ought to major on preaching. That also is my conviction.
I believe that we certainly ought to go on with our tithing of mint and anise and cummin, but I think it is nothing short of tragic when we neglect the weightier matter of the law and that is the weightier matter of preaching.

PART III

Why should we put the major emphasis on preaching? It is not because preaching is the easiest thing that a minister more religious, or his threadbare soul, more is called upon to do. There are those who fancy that such is the case. There are people by the thousands who feel that there is nothing easier than for a certain man to stay hermetically sealed all the week and then to blossom out and say a couple of pieces on Sunday. Plenty of people today feel that the minister gets through life some what as that friend of whom Charles Lamb wrote. He said, "Mr. X passed away last Wednesday evening, dying, as he had lived, without much trouble." But if you put the emphasis on preaching because that is the easiest way you are likely to be the worst disappointed man in the world, because of all the hard, hard, tasks, the most difficult thing that a minister is ever called upon to do is to preach. It is easy to run errands from morning until night, but to really settle down and prepare a sermon that is worth preaching and to deliver it in such a way that men cannot gainsay or resist, that is the highest and most difficult task that the minister has to do. Why then, I repeat, should we major on preaching? We should major on it, first, because that is our job. That is the particular task to which in the wisdom of God we have been called. Now, since that is our business I submit to you that a man's first duty is to mind his own business. A man's first duty is to do the task to which God in his wisdom has called him. I know that the man who majors on preaching will be open to plenty of criticism. Most of this criticism, however, will not come from his
congregation. It will likely come from his brethren in the ministry. About such a preacher we are accustomed to make this remark, "He can preach but he can't do anything else." Now, as a rule, that is a slander. As a rule, that is ninety-nine and forty-four one hundredths percent pure falsehood. A man who can really preach must do something else or he couldn't preach. No man who lives in an ivory tower can preach.

No man can preach who loses contact with people. If you think likely of pastoral visiting because of what it does for your parishioners you had better not think likely of it because of what it does to you. No man can preach when he loses contact with people. God has to have men in the pulpit that know how people are born, how they break their shins, how they break their hearts, how they suffer, and no man who lives in an ivory tower can preach.

About such a preacher we are accustomed to make this remark. He can preach but he can't do anything else. So when we make that remark we are either mistaken or saying what is frankly effake false.

But if this slander were one hundred percent true, the man called of God to preach who could do nothing else would still be infinite leagues ahead of the man who could do many other things, but who could not or would not do the one thing to which God in his providence had called him. You remember that parable in the Old Testament about the squire who was set to guard a certain notable and important prisoner. He was told that if he allowed his prisoner to escape his own life would be forfeited.

But, in spite of this warning he did allow his prisoner to escape, and forfeited his one task. When he was called on the carpet he had an alibi. He had this to say for himself: "While thy servant was busy here and there he was gone."

Now I do not know what this servant was doing when his prisoner escaped. He might have been engaged in a poker game, or he might have been visiting the sick, but whatever he was doing was of little consequence in the face of the fact that he refused to do the one task
This brings us, therefore, to a second reason why we as pastors should major on preaching, and that is if we don't preach no body else will. I drove into a town in Mississippi some time ago and stopped in front of a hotel that was not very inviting. As I said to a colored brother standing by, "Is this the best hotel in town?" He gave me a very illuminating answer. He said, "It is the onliest one." Even so, you are the only man on whom your congregation can depend next Sunday, for the hearing of the Gospel of the unsearchable riches of Christ. It is well for every minister to remind himself when he begins the preparation of his sermon on Monday morning. It is well for him to remind himself afresh when as he mounts the pulpit stairs, "Is this the chance that these needy, hungry hearted people of mine have at the Gospel of Jesus Christ?"" Today is through me. I am their one chance. Being the case, I ought to do my best. I ought to put my emphasis on preaching. Then we ought to put our major emphasis on preaching, in the third place, because preaching is so important. Preaching is an absolute necessity. I believe in all of the helpful activities of the church, but the church could get along without all of them better than it could get along without preaching. Preaching is the one absolute essential. In the New Testament and in life preaching and salvation are related to each other as cause and effect. Men do not, as a rule, believe that today, but it is true none the less. What is the great question that is before the house today? It is not what Russia is going to do, it is the salvation question. That is the question that is to the fore in this generation and in every gener-
Now, you and I as Christian ministers believe we have the answer. We believe that there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, and whatever we may think about it, God has never been able to get on and run his church adequately without a preacher. He managed, as another has pointed out, for seventeen hundred years without a Sunday School, as important as that is. He managed eighteen hundred and fifty years without a single Boy Scout, but he has never been able to manage without a preacher, and whenever the preacher has failed, the church has failed. Whenever the pulpit has ceased to give forth fountains of living water, our world has become a desert. But when even there flowed out of the pulpit these fountains of living water, then the desert has been broken up and the fields of the heart have flowered.

I know there are those to whom such an assertion would sound little short of silly, yet only a few weeks ago I heard one of the most thoughtful and capable men that I know today say to a company of ministers, "Gentleman, it may seem to you that you are doing very little in the way of preaching you are doing very little. That may be even true, but I want to assure you of this. You are doing more than anybody else." The most important event that takes place in your town or city on any day of the week is when the minister of Christ stands up to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ. There is nothing so much needed, there is nothing else so essential as the right kind of preaching. Therefore, far the highest service you can render to your church, to your community, and to your world is to be the best possible preacher. You ought therefore, to major on preaching because that is your job. You ought to major on preaching because you are God's one chance to your congregation. You ought to major on preaching because preaching is an
Therefore, I think the wisdom of the decision of these early ministers to put their major emphasis on preaching is indicated by what followed as a result of their wise decision. 'We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.' So what?

The first result is not mentioned, but I am perfectly sure it followed. These men relieved of their multititudinous duties preached better. It takes time to preach. A man can not be a man of all work and be the best possible preacher. I stood in front of a board some time ago where the world series was being played, and it so happened that I stopped by a colored brother and a certain player was at the bat. Evidently he had bet on this player's team, and so he was saying, "Hit it, Peck, Hit it Peck. I can't do everything." And neither can the minister, however versatile he may be. And the preacher that tries to do everything is seeking the spiritual impoverishment of his congregation, in the spiritual impoverishment of his preaching. It takes time to preach, and blessed is the man who realizes this fact.

That some do not realize it, we all know. A friend said some time ago that he mulled over his sermon Saturday night after he got in bed. A second one asked me, "When do you begin your sermon?" I said, "When do you?" He said, "I try to get around to mine at least by Friday." Now for me, that would be a most dangerous risk, because, in a few rare instances I have been able while there are a few times that I can prepare a sermon quickly, and then there are other times that I cannot prepare one at all. The only safe thing is to give myself time to work, and work, and work like a slave at it, and whenever I preach a sermon that is passable it is no accident; it is because I have made a genuine and serious effort and some of the work. Rather than at the beginning I think the same is true of the most of my brethren.
The second result that followed was the growth of the church. The church grew for at least two reasons. More people were working, somebody was busily engaged in the church besides the minister. Now the minister that leads his congregation up in a carriage and hitches himself to the shaft is not only shortening his own life and handicapping his own ministry, but he is handicapping his congregation as well. A congregation does not need to be carried, and many a fine many-a-man and woman, boy and girl is lost to the church simply because they had nothing to do. Other men went to work besides the minister.

This was the preacher's preaching better and the congregation working better the church grew. It says that the work of the Lord increased. That doesn't mean that they started printing presses in connection with their church, but it does mean that the gospels were being printed in terms of transformed lives. There were an increasing number of living epistles that were known and read of men.

Now, with the apostles preaching better, with more people at work with were being won to Christ and to His church, the murmuring either ceased altogether or was drowned out in the hum of activity. It is hard for a man to have very much time to murmur if he is really playing the game. You will notice that almost all the murmuring in the church is done by the people that have nothing else to do. When these people got busy they did not have time to murmur.

Then, it was hard for them to murmur in the second place because it is difficult for anybody to criticize in the presence of results. You know, it is said that when these before whom the apostles were Peter and John had stood and the Lord said, "Go into Jerusalem". When they tried, when they saw the man that was healed standing with them, they tried to hinder, they had to balance by means of accosting the man could say nothing against it. There is nothing in the church or out of life that succeeds standing with them, they cannot keep silence if that succeeds like success, and when the church can offer exhibit that
Mourning is likely to be reduced to a minimum. Thus, through this better preaching the church spread, the wilderness and the solitude became glad, and the desert rejoiced and blossomed as a rose. Now, I find it easy to believe in the victory that followed, this better preaching because such is sanctioned by the history of the church. Whenever the pulpit has failed, all else in a measure has failed. We have a great blank space between the old Testament and the New Testament. Why is it there? It was not the will of God, it was because of decay in preaching. When the light goes out in the pulpit that has been well fed, it goes out around the world. When the pulpit ceases to be a place of power, all the wheels of the church slow down. When the light in the pulpit becomes weak, twilight settles down everywhere else.

For a few centuries after pentecost, the church spread over the world like a forest fire. Men went out everywhere to preach, but by and by this arduous work of preaching was changed for something easier. The prophet allowed himself to become a priest, and when the prophet became a priest the sun set and night came on. We call that night the dark ages, and the darkness remained until one day a man trained for a priest reversed the order, and became a preacher and it was through the preaching of Martin Luther that morning dawned, the morning of the Reformation.

Many years ago a brilliant minister was led away as a war casualty. As he made his long trek from Jerusalem to Babylon he passed through a wide valley where a battle had been fought many months before. After the battle the armies withdrew, not taking time to bury their dead. Therefore, the scene that he beheld was ghastly. Everywhere, as far as the eye could see, was a sea of human bones. There were human bones scattered over the valley, as was white with human bones. Here on every hand was death, death grew red and gray. The scene was thoroughly depressing, but it was not
By and by, he reached his destination. He stood up in the pulpit of the church to which he had been appointed, and as he looked into the hopeless faces of his people, as he looked at those faces that had grown hard with despair, they reminded him of the valley, through which he had passed, and he said in the depths of his soul, "Can these dry bones live?"

Now, when he got into the dry bones what did he do in order to make them live? There were a number of things that he might have done. He might have polished the bones, or he might have organized them.

He did do one very modern thing. He did make a survey. The Lord caused him to pass by them round about and to see that there were very many in the open valley, and to see that they were very dry. But the remedy that God commanded was different, and told his prophet to make the bones come together and there was some organization. Then the sinews and flesh came upon them and there were some very respectable bodies, some very decent corpses, and I am afraid if I had been the minister, I should have called it a day and said this is enough, but he continued, and as he continued saying, "Come from the four winds, 0, breath. Breathe upon these slain that they may live. Breath entered into them, and they stood upon their feet and an exceeding great host. It was done, through the power of preaching.

Only a picture you say. Certainly, but the picture of a reality,
III

Now it strikes me that this is a word that is needed by christian people of our day both in the pulpit and the pew. Of course there is a sense in which all of us are preachers. We preach in our homes. We preach among our friends. We preach at our places of business. We preach consciously when we do our duty and when we seek to win some soul to Christ. We preach unconsciously by the lives we live. Then in every sermon that your minister preaches you have a part, in so far as you help to make it possible and to give it power. But there is a special word I feel I ought to speak in behalf of the man who is called to prophesy in the pulpit. There is so much in the busy rush of today to cause the minister to neglect his supreme task of preaching. For instance the minister has a many sided task. There is not another man in the community of whom so much is expected. He has to be an organizer and an executive. He has to be a financier. He has to be alert and alive to the program of christian education. He has to be a pastor. In fact in our smaller churches he has to do almost everything that is done. There was never a day in which the pressure was greater for him to leave the Word of God and serve tables. But the church that insists upon the minister being a man of all work is seeking its own spiritual impoverishment through the impoverishment of the minister. A minister's first task is to preach.

Then preaching is often put in a subordinate place through the fault of the minister himself. Concerned by many tasks and realizing that he cannot do everything well he naturally chooses to put emphasis on the task that is most congenial. Our human nature being what it is the most congenial task, generally speaking is the one that is easiest rather than the one that is most important. Thus preaching is often side-tracked because it is never easy. Preaching is costly whether done by the man in the pulpit or in the pew. In fact it is my conviction that the right kind of preaching in the pulpit is the most costly thing in the world. If it takes great labor as another has said to paint a
human face it takes far greater labor so to picture with words the winsome face of Christ that men shall be drawn to Him. Because preaching is so costly we tend to neglect it.

Finally we need a new appreciation of the worth of preaching because the prophet is constantly tempted to degenerate into a priest. This is especially true in our day because we have discovered anew the vast importance of worship. Of course this new emphasis upon worship is all to the good. Nothing can be more important than worship. Yet believing as I do with all my heart in the goal I mistrust some of the roads by which we seek to attain that goal. I have witnessed religious programs that would have been positively laughable had they not been so pathetic. How one can worship God better in the dim light of a smelly, smoking candle than by an electric light has never been explained to me satisfactorily. I know that no less an authority than John Milton speaks of a "dim religious light" yet surely light is not religious in proportion to its dimness. Therefore to assume that we can worship God better in semi-darkness is to give up the conviction that God is Light as the New Testament affirms for the conviction that He is only twilight.

When a prophet becomes a priest he emphasizes his so-called worship service instead of the sermon, forgetting that both ought to be a part of a living whole. When we go to church we go to public worship. Of course we are to worship through prayers and songs but we are to worship also through the sermon. In fact the sermon ought to bring the worship to its climax. So I have found it in my own experience. I have been helped many times by the prayers. I have been uplifted by the great hymns of the church,—those stairways of the spirit upon which aspiring souls, throughout the years, have climbed up to God. But I must confess that when I have cried in penitence "God be merciful to me a sinner" or have felt with awe and gladness "surely God is in this place" it has most often been when some prophet of God, whether of fast or mediocre
ability has preached in such a fashion that I have been compelled to believe that his lips had been freshly touched with a live coal from off heaven's altar. This also I must add. However helpful I have found the worship service when that worship service has been followed by a shoddy, ill-prepared and slovenly delivered sermon much of its effect has been dissipated. It is my conviction therefore that there is nothing quite so important to the service of public worship as the right kind of preaching. Since this is true there is nothing quite so important to the community, to the nation, and to the world. In fact, the kind of word we are going to have tomorrow depends upon the kind of preaching that is being done in our pulpits and the response that is made to that preaching. Preaching therefore is not a matter of secondary importance but of supreme importance. To take that view is to take God's view. It is highly significant that Jesus who could have given Himself to so many tasks gave His brief handful of years to the work of preaching.
Acts 13:42 The people earnestly begged to have all this repeated to them on the following Sabbath (Weymouth)

Here is an arresting scene. The minister has finished his sermon, he has pronounced the benediction. The people are now at liberty to go to their homes. But, instead of taking advantage of their opportunity, they gather about the preacher. This they do not because he has hurried to the door, and has compelled them to shake hands with him. He has remained at the front. This, I have felt, is the better plan because if the preacher remains by the altar, though fewer people may shake hands with him, those who do might shake hands with one another. That would be to the good, because generally speaking, the more friendly a church is the more Christian it is.

But these people have gathered about Paul not merely to shake hands with him, but to present a request. They are urging him that he will repeat the sermon that he has just preached to them on the following Sabbath. Evidently they have found it interesting. Evidently they have been gripped by it. In fact, they have found it so fascinating that I can imagine, if something unusual happened to them during the following week, they said, "That is wonderful. It is as fascinating as a sermon." But, if this word ever crept into the vocabulary of church-goers as regarding a sermon it was soon crowded out. It was crowded out by another word, "as dull as the sermon." That is the word that has taken its permanent abode with us.

And the tragedy of it is that we seem to accept it as a matter of course. So much is this the case that I noticed, in one of our leading religious journals the other day, an article under this caption, "Sermons Not To Be Enjoyed". Well, if that is the goal, then the more dull and listless the minister is physically, intellectually, and spiritually, the more he is to arrive. But I for one do not think this is the case. What, ought a sermon to be? That is the subject of my
that I think every good sermon will possess.

I

First, a sermon ought to be interesting. This is the case because no sermon is an end in itself. Every sermon is a means to an end. The purpose of the sermon is to get some sort of action on the part of the hearer. But before our people act with us they must think with us. Before they think with us they must hear what we have to say. Before they hear what we have to say, they must be interested enough to listen to us. It is therefore, the first need of every sermon that it be interesting. I make bold to say that there was never a sermon preached that wasn't interesting. In saying this, I of course realize that it is not the first duty of the minister to be an entertainer or more is his first duty to be boring. But, he must win and hold attention. It is not enough to say that his sermon ought to be true. Of course it ought to be true. But everyone of us has heard the truth spoken in such a fashion that it was no better than a rumour. We have heard it spoken in such a fashion that a first class liar would dance like Fred Astaire in comparison with it. It is not enough to speak the truth. We have got to speak it with sufficient interest that those who are supposed to hear will listen. What we have done so far.

If we do not win and hold attention we are simply wasting our own time as well as the time of our congregation. This is the case. It matters not how true your sermon may be. What you have to say may be as fundamental as the Decalogue and as true as the Sermon on the Mount, but if nobody is listening you might as well be making mud pies. You are wasting your own time and theirs also.
Not only are you wasting your time and the time of your congregation, but you are worse than wasting it. You are doing your congregation positive harm. You are training them in the tragic art of inattention. You are so innoculating them with a sham gospel, that the real thing is not likely to take even when they are exposed to it. The better a congregation listened last Sunday, the better they are set to listen next Sunday. There is no congregation more difficult to interest than the one that is accustomed to being bored Sunday by Sunday. It is possible to cry "Wolf, wolf", and fail to produce the beast till those that hear your frantic shouts come to have serious doubts as to whether such animal exists.

For instance, a few months ago I preached a week each in two churches in the same city. One of these churches had a minister who put preaching first. He was vital and helpful. The other church had a minister who was a good earnest man, but preaching was not a vocation with him, it was merely an avocation. Now, which congregation, think you, was the easier to preach to. With the congregation of the man who made preaching a sideline I had difficulty every time. I never face them without feeling within myself to ask rather desperately, "Can these dry bones live?" With the other congregation, on the other hand, every service was a thrill. Everytime I faced them I felt like thanking God that he had ever called me to do the work of a minister. The preacher, therefore, who is deliberately dull and drab and uninteresting is wasting his time and that of his congregation and doing positive harm.

It is the preacher's first business to win and hold the attention of his congregation. How is he to do it? Of course many factors enter into this. And it is not my purpose in this address to go into all of them. Let me mention just a few that lie right on the surface.

First, if the preacher is to be interesting, he must be interested.
That means he must be interested in his own sermon. It has been well said that "Every good sermon has in it an element of surprise." If there is to be an element of surprise in your sermon, as you hear it, there must also be an element of surprise in the preacher. If you have lost a sense of the wonder of God's love, if you have ceased to marvel at his saving grace, if the fires have gone out on the alight of your own heart, you are not likely to be very interested in the Gospel that you preach. Or, if you are simply preaching old sermons that have grown old, not only in content, but in message, then your sermon is likely to be of more interest to you and of little or no interest to anyone else.

This does not mean that the minister is never to preach an old sermon. It does not mean that he is not to repeat. The only sermon that ought never to be repeated is one that was not worth preaching the first time. Every minister ought to preach old sermons. It develops fluency and confidence, but he must review those sermons and allow the truth enunciated through them to take fresh hold of his own heart. In addition, he must keep preparing new sermons or he will lose his capacity to do that, and even the sermons that he preached yesterday will not only be old in time, but they will be old in that they have ceased to interest the one who preaches them.

Not only must the preacher be interested in his sermon, but he must be interested in the people to whom he speaks. Interest begets interest, and listlessness on the part of the minister begets listlessness on the part of the man who should be hearing. Not long ago I went to hear a distinguished speaker who was to address a group of college people and whatnot. I was one of the "whatnots." To my utter amazement this gentleman stood and looked right down the floor and uttered a monologue. If he was the slightest bit interested in what he was saying or in the one to whom he was saying it, he never showed any indication
of that fact. And I will say further, if any one present was the slightest interested either in him or in what he was saying, they gave no indication of the fact. Interest begets interest;

This I think accounts for the fact that most pastors can preach better to their own congregation than to another. As I look upon Sunday after Sunday in the presence of my own people, as I look into their faces I can distinguish one from the other. I can see a man out in front who is fighting a hard fight. I can see a woman who has just come into God's house, the shattered fragment of a broken home. I can see a young woman whose romance has one wrong; I can see a young man who is having a hard fight to decide what he is going to do with his life. As I look at these people whom I know personally, whose longings and sorrows and joys have become a personal treasure of my own, I can speak to them with an interest that I cannot give to others whom I do not know. For this reason I have usually, as you have been at my best when preaching to my own congregation. I can thus be myself. They are getting to love, and to care for me, and they are interested not only in what I am saying, but in those to whom I am saying it. And this interest, I repeat, in myself, begets interest in them.

Then, if we are to interest the members of our congregation, we must speak with simplicity. The time has long since passed when a large number of people is going to come out to puzzle themselves as to what under the sun we are talking about. I am far from being an apostle of Billy Sunday, but he said one something with which I can heartily agree. In speaking to the ministers of a certain American city, he said, "The trouble with some of you is that your people will go to hell while they are trying to figure out what you mean". The modern minister is speaking to the most educated congregation the world has ever known. They are people who know enough to appreciate simplicity.
A gentleman said to me some few years ago with quite a bit of complacency, "My message is to the intellectually elite". Of course it is. So was that of Jesus. So is that of yours and mine. But it is not to the intellectually elite only. It is to those who are not so privileged. It is, in an especial sense, to the boys and girls of our congregations. The minister who addresses himself to the few highly educated, who may be in his congregation and forgets that larger group who are not, is acting quite silly if not positively wicked. Of course you are to have something for the intellectually elite. But it is this group that will appreciate simplicity more than any other.

I think the more I grow the more impatient I become with the preacher who is deliberately dull and obscure. Just remember that anybody can muddy the water, but it takes real thought and study to speak of the deep things of God with simplicity and with interest. I used to have a friend who seemed to be possessed of the conviction that the vocabulary of the pulpit was a thing entirely apart, that the moment he got into the pulpit he ought to speak a totally different language from that which he used outside the pulpit. Therefore he reveled in big words and in scientific terms.

One day a friend took his life in his hands and called him in question as to this practice. "Why", said this gentleman, "don't you stop using that pseudo-scientific jargon and speak English to your people". The gentleman was offended. He turned to his questioner in indignant and said, "I am not going to compromise my literary style". But, how silly was that answer? Just what was he in the ministry to accomplish? The salvation of a literary style, the worth of whose saving was totally questionable, or was he in to save people? And if he was in to save people, then those whom he was seeking to save must understand him.
I tell the story of a lad who was playing one day on the wharf of a seacoast village. The day was bitter cold. The little chap lost his footing on the ice-coated wharf and fell into the freezing water. But for the presence and courage of a sailor who dived in and rescued him, he would have drowned. The next day this sailor was going down the village street when he saw the mother of the lad coming toward him, leading the lad by the hand. With the typical Britisher's fear of a scene, the sailor looked about him for a way of escape. But not finding any, he had to go to meet the mother. But, when they met she did not fall on his neck as he feared. Instead, she said with considerable indignation, "Where is Jimmy's cap?" The sailor blushed, and looked abashedly confused, and then answered, "Really, Madam, I was not diving for Jimmy's cap, I was diving for Jimmy."

Blessed is the minister who keeps in mind that he is not diving for Jimmy's cap, but that he is diving for Jimmy. And that because he is out after men he must speak a language not simply that the boys and girls can understand, but that the dullest of his congregation cannot help but understand. Personally I made up my mind years ago that I was going to study to speak to the average man, and as the years have come and gone I have never deviated from that. And now, as I am nearing the end, my regret is not that I have not been less simple, but that I have not been even more so.

Finally, if we are to be interesting we ought to have in our preaching a note of authority. It is a striking fact that any man who can speak with authority on any question, will be in some measure interested. But the man who can speak with authority on the supreme question is supremely interesting. I should never have selected the woman whom Jesus met at the well as a highly successful evangelist. Yet it stands written in the record. Many believed because of the saying of the woman. Her one asset was this, that she had a first-hand knowledge of the Gospel which she preached. Any man who can come with
Fresh and authentic tidings of the decline of God with his own soul will have something to say, that is, of vital interest.

II

A good sermon is constructive. Now, I realize how prone we are especially in our youth to preach a gospel of denunciation. As youth we enjoy breaking the other man's idol and sometimes barking the other man's shin. It gives us a sense of courage and sometimes the misguided even congratulate us. Let me disabuse your mind by saying that there is no form of preaching that requires less of intelligence and less of heart that denunciatory preaching. This does not mean that we do not have to point out the evils of the individual and of our day. But it does mean that we are never to major on denunciation. We are to preach a positive gospel.

That is what Jesus meant by that strange word, "Resist not evil". How shocking is a statement like that from the lips of one who not only resisted evil but resisted it unto death, and resisted it more successfully than any other man who ever lived. But this method of resistance was not negative but positive. He knew that a frontal attack on evil would always fail.

Jesus is emphasizing the fact in this story: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man he passes through dry places seeking rest,
Then, saith He, 'I will return unto my house whence I came and findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and entereth in and dwelleth there. And the last state of that man is worse than the first'. What was his tragedy? Not that he kept hold on the evil that was in his heart. It was driven out. But, nothing better came to take its place, and so it came back again, seven-fold stronger than it had been before.

There was a time when I was deeply convinced that if we could only get rid of the Kaiser we would have our feet planted right on the threshold of paradise regained. But we got rid of him, and the tree was not in evidence. The I felt that if we could only get rid of Hitler, the kingdom of Israel would be restored, but we have not yet come on a new day, when Hitler is gone, and now I have a feeling that if we could get rid of Stalin we might come into the Golden Age.

Yet, this never happens. We never bring in the good by merely destroying the evil. When God gave the world a new chance by destroying all the wicked and saving just one choice family, even then the kingdom was not fully established. In fact, it seems about the first thing this good man did when he got out of the ark was to get drunk. The frontal attack upon evil is a failure because its victories are never permanent.

2. Then they are a failure in the second place because even if the victories were permanent they would not guarantee any positive good.

Suppose those industrial servants had gone out and pulled up every weed that was growing among the wheat, if they had pulled up the wheat at the same time, they would not have guaranteed a wheat field. They would only have guaranteed a positive waste. Timelessness is not the same as holiness, and the absence of vices does not spell the presence of virtues any more than the absence of disease means good health.

A physician told me some time ago that he was curing cancer, but added, however, that the patient always died. Without that doubt,
that he was killing the patient by the process. Well, I could have done as much with a machine gun. When the keeper of the morgue said to his friend who was visiting him, "You have a bad cough", the man replied with considerable wisdom, "Yes, I have a bad cough, but any of these chaps lying about on slabs would be glad to have it". This is the case because the absence of sickness does not mean the presence of health.

3. Not only is the frontal attack a failure because it does not guarantee any positive good, but it is a failure because mere negative goodness is the most form of evil. That was certainly the conviction of Jesus. In all his parables of judgment he never had one single denunciation against the aggressive sinner who shot up the town or who became guilty of some positive and outrageous wickedness. Every parable of judgment was addressed against the man who did no particular harm at all, the man who was faultfully faultless, icily regular, splendidly null.

The only charge against the priest was that in the presence of human need he thought only of himself. The charge of Dives who lifted up his eyes in hell was that he simply gave banquets and forgot the man in need who lay at his very door. The most hopeful of all hopeless sinners in the mind of Jesus is the man who is negatively good.

If, therefore, we are to accomplish anything by preaching, we must preach positively. Had I gone out with the saints of the early church, what a time I could have had preaching against false gods. I could have tarried a whole year in any of those pagan cities and denounced Jupiter and Mars and Diana and the rest. But when the heralds of the Gospel went out they had no word for these false gods. "What shall we say the Gentiles ask? Do you mean Jesus of Nazareth?"

"Indeed they held up Jesus Christ, and when they saw him as the one altogether lovely and the fairest of ten thousand, they threw away the false gods of themselves. Therefore, beware of a Gospel of mere denunciation, remember that the only foe of darkness is light, the only
A third characteristic that I think every sermon should have is this: that I think it should bring encouragement. The prophet Isaiah called the ministers 'heralds of happiness.' One of the choicest preachers that we had was Blackwell. In the sermon of the 21st of February, he brought to bear on the pages of the New Testament, his name changed to a sun, so that the face of it was changed to a new measure of encouragement. To meet him on the street was to receive new inspiration. To shake hands with him was like getting a hand clasp of spring. To turn away from him was to forget despair for ever, and the prophet he put heart and hope into people and made the soul that was talking to him the privilege and the solemn duty of every Christian minister. He was a preacher from whom to receive a sermon was a gain. Therefore, I give you this warning: whenever you preach a discouraging sermon you are not preaching a Christian sermon. On the contrary you are preaching a wicked sermon. I went to hear a friend preach some time ago who had just returned from Europe, and with that gloomy back ground in his mind, and then he was physically tired, he never roused his soul or the listening one. He preached what he called a sermon. But it did not have a ray of light, ray of hope in it. All that kept me from going away was that he was physically tired or a ray of hope in it. All that kept me from going away on four flat tires was that my indignation against such a sermon served to drive out my depression. Every discouraging sermon is a wicked sermon.

The contrary it is the duty of every Christian minister to bring courage. When your people come to you from a hard week, when discouragement has barked their shine, bring courage to drive out discouragement, what a tragedy it is when you steal from them their bit of courage that they have. Courage is essential. It is essential to bring the joy of life. When courage goes the song goes. It is essential to stay in life. Many a man flings out the back door by suicide simply because he has lost his courage. He who steals my purse steals trash.
I was mine, his, and has been slave to thousands. But he who enricheth from me my courage taketh that which not enricheth him, but makes me poor indeed. That is not exactly the way Shakespeare wrote it, but it is just as true as the day in which he wrote it.

But you say, "Are we not to face the grim and ugly facts of life, and is not the shallow optimist one of the major foes of mankind?" To both of these I answer a positive affirmative. We are to face the facts of life, and we are not to be blind optimists. But we are no more to be blind pessimists, and when we face the facts of life we are to face all of the facts, and not simply the grim and depressing facts. This I saith, that no man who preaches a discouraging sermon is a realist. No man who preaches a discouraging sermon has really faced the facts. He may have faced the human facts, but he has not faced the supreme fact, and that is the fact of God.

Let me remind you that of all the books ever written there is none that faces more bravely and more candidly the ugly and grim facts of life, than does this book we call the Bible. There is no shallow Pollyannaism here. It faces the grim facts in all their horridness. Yet, there is no other book ever written that has done so much to encourage the trembling heart of the world. There are two words that it uses together again and again. As soon as I am able I want to preach a sermon on those two words. The wonder is that I have not used them long ago. The words are these, "But God." The author will tell of a tragic fact, and then over against that fact he puts the highest fact of God.

For instance, here is Joseph and his brothers who have just returned from laying the bones of their father to their rest. These brothers come cringing into the presence of Joseph, because they feel that now that their father is out of the way, this powerful man will now settle for the ancient grudge he bears them. But Joseph rises to splendid
heights. He does not disguise the fact that they have done him a great wrong. He does not minimize their evil. He said, "You were out to get me. You meant it unto me for evil. You intended when you sold me into slavery that I should die in the obscurity of a self's pen in a pagan country." But God meant it unto good. God took a hand and so used that evil as to change it into good, and caused that path that they thought was going to end in a slave pen, ended in an immortality of usefulness.

The Bible faces the fact that when the choicest son that was ever born into our world came to serve us he crucified him. "But God raised him from the dead." Always over against the worst that man can do stands the fact of God.

Our Lord was a wonderful encouraging preacher. There was a word that was on his lips again and again. That word was "Be of good cheer." He had a way of putting heart and of putting hope into people.

And when, near the end of his ministry, he had to face the seeming failure of that ministry and his failure to win his people to his way and because of this he refused to face the bitter results of their failure that he brought upon himself in the form of his failure to accept him. He pictures that someday when catastrophe will walk hard upon the heels of catastrophe and tragedy upon the heels of tragedy, so that men's hearts would fail them for fear. But what is his conclusion? Even when you see all these things, "Look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." God is always in the heart of the tragedy, and for those who trust him he makes all things to work for good. "Be of good cheer," he says. There is a scene to make the heart stand up and cheer. There is a little vessel in the Mediterranean Sea that is slowly going to pieces. Those on board are going to pieces too out of sheer despair and hunger. Then, out from the hole of the vessel comes a man who grips a bit of a broken spar and lifts his voice and says, "Be of good cheer." He preaches an encouraging sermon. On what does he base his courage?
Not upon the clearing weather. The storm is still on. Not upon the seaworthiness of the vessel. It is going to pieces. Not upon captain and crew. They are totally unreliable. He bases it upon one fact, the fact of God. Therefore, sirs, be of good cheer, for I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me. That is in a peculiar sense the message of the minister. It is our business to encourage. To dare to do is to deliver the message. God has given me a right of preacher that comes with which can have been entrusted to him who is taught that I might know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.

Stevenson makes this entry. He says, "I have been to church today and am not depressed". I know that what he says is capable of more than one interpretation. I am taking it in its best sense. He was a man, who's life was one long battle with disease. He had much to discourage him. He seems to say, "I was depressed. The clouds were in the sky and the burden that lay upon me seemed greater than I could bear. But I went out to God's house and a tall son of God stood in the pulpit and parted the clouds and I caught a glimpse of the blue. Better still, I caught a glimpse of the face of my Lord, and I came away with my burden lifted and with a new courage in my heart. That is preaching at its best. I should like to have been the minister on that day. Every good sermon is a courage-bringer. I am quoting:

IV

Then, a sermon ought to reach a definite destination. It ought to start and travel and arrive. I think it is the minister who knows where he is going when he sets out. The marksman who can see his mark clearly before he shoots. I think we can say that this is true of practically every really good sermon. I could state that sermon in a single terse sentence. If the chairman of the official board were to touch me on the shoulder as I am entering the pulpit most any Sunday
I am shooting at the whole side of a barn, instead of at a particular target.

Now, to fail to do this is often to leave our hearers, if they are serious-minded, a bit confused and bewildered. A bright boy whom I know quite well said to his preacher father a few months ago after a sermon that the father had preached with considerable wandering in the wilderness, "Daddy, what were you trying to get us to do?" Now, this young man who loved his father, and honored him here desired to do good and knew he ought to do good, but he loved not because what his father desired him to do was utterly confused as to what the good father was telling him to do. That is a question with which every minister ought to ask himself. The chances are that most people do. If you have no definite conception of that then of course you will not preach a good sermon.

When I was a boy I used to meet an old chap who was little better than a tramp. His name was Sam. He pretended to farm, but it was little more than a pretense. Whenever I met him I had a way of asking him where he was going. I suppose part of my curiosity in the matter was to get to hear him tell of his destination. And you know, so far as I can remember, he had one uniform answer, "I am just knocking about." Now and then we preach when that is the way we would express it. We are not going anywhere in particular. We are just knocking about.

Now, if we are to preach a good sermon I say we ought to have a definite goal. We ought to aim at a definite mark. The only man in the Bible so far as I know who ever hit a mark at which he was not aiming was that nameless soldier who liquidated Ahab. He was not shooting at Ahab. He simply said to himself, "It is shooting time and I have here an arrow. I might as well get rid of it," and so "A certain
I have failed many times to have an open response, yet of those who have come forward to unite with the church I think it is safe to say that by far the majority have been won in this fashion.

Here then is what I think every good sermon ought to be. First, every good sermon ought to have. It ought to be interesting. If it isn’t, folks won’t listen to it. And if nobody listens we are wasting our own time and their time, and are doing them positive harm.

A sermon ought to be constructive. No amount of denunciation can bring about positive goodness. Absence of sickness does not mean health, and absence of vices does not mean virtue, and mere harmless does not mean holiness of life. Third, every sermon ought
to be encouraging. Folks have to have courage to sing and to live. Without it they become useless. We have all that is necessary to give courage. Above all else we have the fact of God. Fourth, a sermon ought to arrive, and having arrived it ought to call for a definite decision.
given you because it is yours. To some this will sound trite. But after watching myself and others I have become convinced that one of the most difficult decisions that the minister has to take is the decision to be himself.

This temptation to be somebody else is no respecter of persons. It dogs the steps of the greatly gifted quite as often as it does the steps of those whose gifts are mediocre. Perhaps all of us are at times tempted to strike a pose, assume an attitude, use a tone of voice, not our own. In so doing we may feel that we are making a better impression than we would if we dared to be our own selves. But, I doubt if that is ever the case. By seeking to be what we are not, we tend to fall into certain practices that hurt rather than help. First, in seeking to be another, we become self-conscious. The minister who is seeking to be somebody else has to watch himself or he will forget the particular character that he is seeking to play. For instance, I know a man who often uses a brogue which is not quite natural to him. But in spite of this he manages quite well so long as he is on his guard. But, if he becomes so gripped by his message that he forgets himself, he lapses into ordinary English. The fact, therefore, that a minister who plays a part has to be constantly on guard, tends to make him self-conscious.

Second, the minister who seeks to be somebody else is always more or less in a strain. It is hard to pretend to be rich when one is poor. It is a strain to pretend to know when one does not know. It is a tremendous strain to play young when one is old. It is always a strain to be something that you are not. This strain is often hard both on the minister and those who hear him. In fact, no man can put a congregation at ease unless he is at ease himself. Be natural, therefore. To refuse to do so leads at once to self-consciousness and strain.
Third, in an effort to be somebody else, we are likely to lose in a measure whatever charm we may possess. Naturalness is one of the most captivating characteristics that any individual can have. When Will Rogers was killed back in 1935, his death was lamented by more people than that of any other man who had died up to that time. Why was this the case? What was the secret of his popularity? Certainly one great factor was his naturalness. He never ceased to be himself. Being natural is a bit like wearing clothes that fit. Even clothing that are made out of ordinary material will look well if they fit the individual who wears them. On the other hand, however fine the material and however well made a garment may be, if it does not fit, it makes the wearer look awkward and ugly. Had David gone out to meet Goliath in the armor of Saul he would have looked ridiculous, because Saul's armor did not fit him. Not only so, but he would in all probability have lost the fight. David won because he dared to be himself, both in dress and otherwise.

When I was just getting well into my teens, I made up my mind that I would quit wearing the custom made garments such as other farmer boys about me were wearing. I decided instead to buy me a tailor-made suit. To this end I sent for the catalog of Montgomery Ward & company. When it came I turned to the tailoring department and saw the picture of a magnificent chap who looked just like I longed to look. Therefore, though the price was the forbidding sum of $13.50, I made up my mind I was going to buy that suit.

Now, there was one catch. There was no tailor about so I had to take my own measure. Blessed is the man that can take his own measure. I took mine and sent off specifications and in due course, the suit came. I tucked it under my arm, hurried home, and went upstairs to put it on and to come down and surprise the
family. I did. You might have tried that suit on every form of man and beast, but it would not have fit anything in the heavens above or in the earth beneath or in the waters under the earth.

Mindful of the fact that the catalog said specifically, "We are not responsible for the fit of a tailor-made suit", I was in deep distress. In spite of this stern word, however, I sent the creation back, writing this word only, "I know that you are not responsible for the fit of a tailor-made suit, but I cannot use this". A few days later I received a check not only for the full amount paid for the suit, but also for express charges both ways. I have always deeply appreciated it, but I have never fully understood it. My guess is that when they looked that suit over they said, "Anybody who is even approximately as deformed as this suit indicates, needs help and needs it badly".

Yet, what was wrong with my suit? It was not that it was not well made. It was not that it was of shoddy material. Its one defect was that it did not fit. Always the cheapest of cheap things is a misfit. Therefore, when we go into the pulpit clad in armor not our own, using a voice not our own, trying to be other than we are, we greatly lessen our chances of victory. Instead we tend to become self-conscious, to strain, and to lose what charm we have. Therefore, I beg of you, be yourself, your best possible self, but be your self. You cannot attain your best in any other way.

3. In delivering your sermon, use every power that God has given you. Use your imagination. If you have little, seek to cultivate what you have. Strive to see and to enable your people to see. It is perfectly amazing how some ministers can so discuss one of the live characters of the Bible as to seem to the hearers to be performing an autopsy upon him. Yet, another can make that
his pew. The difference is due, at least in part, to a difference in imagination.

Every preacher ought to make a study of how to tell stories. It is said of Jesus that he spoke many things unto them in parables or stories and without a story spoke he not unto them. 

Every preacher ought to make a study of how to tell a story. In selecting stories do not be afraid of one that has in it a touch of tears. I do not think our modern congregations are suffering unduly from too much emotion. I sat by a minister at a banquet some time ago. In the course of our conversation he warned me earnestly against appealing in any way to the emotions. There was nothing critical of me in his appeal as he knew nothing about me. He just felt it his duty to treat any emotion as one would treat a suspected person in time of war. I was not disposed to argue the question with him. But as I listened I became possessed of a strong conviction that the malady from which his congregation was suffering was not emotionalism. In fact, I dare say that the pews in his church burst into tears quite as often as the members of his congregation.

Of course, I am not making an appeal for mere "sob stuff". I am only asking that we deal realistically with life as we find it, which is a mingling of joy and sorrow, of laughter and tears. A good many years ago, I attended a service along with Bishop Hughes. At that time I did not know the Bishop very well. I came to know him more intimately later, and to recognize him as one of the choicest and tenderest souls that I have been privileged to meet. At first glance he looked to me like a man who had hardly a tear in his make-up. Yet as the minister of the day preached with passion and power, the Bishop wept along with the rest of us. When the sermon was over, he made this remark: "It helps me to cry like this. It always purges something mean out of me".
If it is native to you, do not hesitate to use clean and wholesome humor. Laughter and tears are next-door neighbors.

It is my conviction that humor does not belong simply to the theater, to the movies, to the club, to the lodge, to the home; everywhere, in fact, except in the sanctuary. I know there is a certain type of humor that has no place there or anywhere else. But I am convinced that laughter is just as pious as tears. The minister who has no sense of humor is very prone to major on minors. Blessed, therefore, is the minister who has sufficient humor to "sweeten bitter things with gentle laughter".

Of course there are excellent and consecrated ministers who feel that laughter has no place in the sanctuary. But, there are those equally consecrated who have made fine use of it. The sainted Spurgeon was one. And believe it or not, that distinguished Episcopalian, Philip Brooks, was another. Bishop Hughes, to whom I referred a moment ago, preached for years without using any humor. Then he began to give rein to the delicious laughter that was his by nature. Having done so, consecrated saint though he was, he never saw fit to change. Humor is a means to an end. It serves to quicken attention. It serves to humanize both the preacher and the sermon. I am persuaded also that for everyone who is offended by the right kind of humor, a hundred will be helped by it.

Some years ago at the close of a sermon a gentleman came forward looking for all the world like the incarnation of the committal service. Shaking hands, he said sadly, "I liked your sermon, but beware of that humor. Remember that the Bible says, 'Jesus wept', but it never says that he laughed". What a queer interpretation of the Scripture! Why does the Bible say Jesus wept? Because the fact that this man who was constantly saying to others, "Be of good cheer", the fact that this sunniest of all men should have his
all the while they might have written of him that he laughed. But because he was so uniformly cheerful, they wrote that he wept.

To see that Jesus had a delicious sense of humor it is only necessary to read the Gospels. Look at this picture: On another occasion Jesus said, "You Pharisees are very careful. If you get a gnat in your wine, you strain and strain and strain. You would not drink a gnat for anything. But if you get a camel in your wine, you gulp him down, hair, hide, hoofs, humps and all. You strain at a gnat and swallow a camel."

Jesus is laughing at them and with them. He had a sense of humor. (If God has given you a sense of humor, make use of it. Learn to laugh at yourself and to laugh with others.)

(Never forget that one can be just as serious in the telling of a story that will make people laugh as he can in the telling of one that will make them weep.) The reason some people object to humor in the pulpit is because they have never distinguished between solemnity and seriousness. The two words do not mean the same at all. A minister may be very solemn and very flippant. He may have a face "that creases and mantles like a standing pool" and yet have a chaffy soul. On the other hand he may be very sunny and very serious. Always we are to be serious, but that does not mean that always we are to be solemn. If, therefore, God has given you a sense of humor, seek to use it, to his glory.

4. Finally, we are to be in earnest both without and within the sanctuary. There is something fascinating about an earnest man. Earnestness helps to make possible the presence of God in the heart of the minister. But no half-hearted saint can walk with a whole-
hearted Christ. When the friends of Jesus looked into his face one day, they read there the meaning of a passage of scripture that they had but imperfectly understood before. They said, "The zeal for God's house is burning him up". Even a house on fire is interesting. A man on fire is the most interesting something in the world.

But if you desire to be uninteresting, be half-hearted. The author of the 119th Psalm says, "I hate men who are half and half". So do we all. In that respect we are kinfolks of Jesus Christ. The only example of divine disgust we have in the New Testament is when Our Lord said of a certain church, "I know you, that you are lukewarm, you are neither cold nor hot; you are half-hearted, you are straddlers, you areitters on the fence, you are hitters of the middle of the road. You have never known the majesty and the mirth of gathering yourselves together, hurling yourselves like a projectile for life or for death into a great cause". The man who stands in the pulpit, if he is to represent his Lord, must be a man who in laughter or in tears is desperately earnest.

(It is this type of man that God has been able to use across the years. It is this type of man that God can use today.

"Oft when the spell is on me to deliver
Melts the illusion and the truth lies bare
Desert or throng, the city or the river,
Melt in the lucid paradise or air.

Only like souls I see the folk that under
Slaves who should conquer, bound who should be kings
Hearing their one hope for the empty wonder
Soully content with the show of thin's.

Then with a burst of intolerable craving
Shivers through me like a trumpet call
O to save them, to perish for their saving
Die for their right, be offered for them all."

The man who faced a needy world of his day with that holy passion helped to turn that world upside down. Not only so but he has been breathing on all the subsequent centuries like a gulf stream. "How does your minister preach?" a visitor asked years ago of one who
was accustomed to hear a man who at that time was one of the greatest saints of the pulpit of Scotland. "How does my minister preach," came the reply. "He preaches as if he were just dying to see you saved". Evidently this man did not go into the pulpit for tears.

I have given you, my young friends, one man's opinion as to how to make the worship service our finest hour. (Of course, I am conscious of the fact that as imperfect as have been my instructions, even more imperfect has been my practice. Yet, here they are for what they are worth.) We are to remember constantly what we are in the pulpit to do. This will save us from wasting time by starting late, by becoming mere bulletin boards, by peddling trivial talk about ourselves. It will drive us to the matter in hand as an arrow to its mark. Thus we shall seek in earnest naturalness to deliver the message that God has given us. Let us do this in the faith that his word shall not return unto him void. Even after our worst failure we can join with Spurgeon as he prays after this fashion. "Lord, thou art all powerful. Thou canst make something out of nothing. Therefore, bless this sermon".
I minister preach a really powerful sermon on "The Lost Christ
telling was that sermon that many other preachers borrowed it.
In fact it was repeated so many times that it almost became hackneyed.
One reason for its popularity was that the simplicity and conciseness of the outline made it stick in the memory. It ran like this:

I. The Lost Person Lost Him That We Should Have Expected—His Mother

II. She Lost Him in the Last Place We Should Have Expected—The Church

III. She Lost Him Without At First Being Conscious of Her Loss

IV. She Found Him Where She Lost Him

For a quarter of a century I have remembered a gripping sermon preached by G. Campbell Morgan. His text, "The common people heard Him gladly". His theme, "The Spell that Jesus Cast over Men". Here is his outline.

I. His Was the Spell of a Man Who Knew. He spoke with Authority

II. His Was the Spell of a Man Who Was Alive. Men Constantly Asked Him About Life

III. His Was the Spell of a Man Who Cared. Everybody Felt the Love in the Heart of Him

In seeking some years ago to prepare a sermon on the Pharisee and the Publican I think I must have made at least fifty outlines before I hit upon what was final for me. It might not be final for you at all. But it stated simply what the parable said to me. It presented a threefold contrast.

I. The Contrast Between the Two Men Who Went To Pray.
   1. One was at the top of the ladder in church and state.
   2. The other at the bottom.

II. A Contrast in Their Prayers.
   1. One prayed with a good eye on himself, a bad eye on his brother, with no eye for the Lord at all.
writer. In later years I have taken the easier way of dictating
no more in the time of writing than may conveniently
them to a stenographer. But I always prepare the sermon before I
write it. There are other ministers far better than I who take the
other way—round and compose as they write. They write the sermon
first. But I think that by preaching the sermon first and preapring
the minute the first prepare and, therefore, the sermon, the writer
marks it with a congregation in my eye, my sermon is likely to sound
more sincere than his and, such a minute will, as if spoken instead of sounding as if written. There is a differ-
ence between what is spoken and what is written. It is my convict-
ion that a sermon that is a spoken address ought to sound spoken when
it is read.

Having thus prepared and written the sermon, I lay it aside.
Sometimes I read it over before I preach it. Sometimes I do not.
This means that I never memorize a sermon. There are at least
three grave objections to this practice. First, it is expensive in
time. In fact there are few men equal to the task of preparing and
memorizing two sermons a week. Second, such a preacher is in danger
of falling into the habit of reciting or declaiming instead of
speaking from his heart. Third, he is often dogged by the fear of
forgetting. To avoid this the tortured soul will sometimes fix his
gaze on the northeast corner of the sanctuary and never see his con-
gregation at all. With my outline well in mind, I speak such words
as are given. Naturally much that I say is just as I have written
it. Sometimes I feel that I improve it. But there is no effort to
remember it word for word. Therefore, neither notes nor manuscript
would help me any more than an extra hand.

Now, young gentlemen, I am not commending this method to you
at all. I am simply telling you what I have found helpful to myself
across a ministry of forty years. But I do close with this urgent
word, "Do your utmost to let God see that you at least are a sound
Since this is the case, whenever I preach a discouraging sermon, I am not preaching a Christian sermon. On the contrary I am preaching a wicked sermon. I went to hear a friend preach some months ago who has ability and consecration far beyond the ordinary. He had a large and, I think, expectant congregation. But I felt that he let them down miserably. He had just returned from Europe. With that gloomy background in his mind, and with the further handicap of physical weariness, he preached what he called a sermon. But it did not have a ray of light or a spark of hope in it. I felt then and feel now that it was a wicked sermon. No man has a right so to preach as to send his hearers away on flat tires. Every discouraging sermon is, I repeat, a wicked sermon for which the preacher needs to repent in sackcloth and ashes.

In the light of this fact no wonder John Watson said near the end of his life, "I had my ministry to go over again, I would preach more encouraging sermons." Courage is a priceless treasure. It is not this in the case because courage is more than a luxury. It is also a necessity. It is essential to the joy of life. When courage goes, the song goes. It is an essential for usefulness. A discouraged man is not an asset, but a liability. It is an essential if we are to live at all. Hundreds fling out the back door by suicide every year simply because they have lost their courage. "Whose purse, whose? Whose? Whose? T'was mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands: But he who filches from me my courage, filches that which not enriches him, but makes me poor indeed." That is not exactly the way Shakespeare wrote it, but it is just as true as the day in which he wrote it. Instead of the discourager failing to enrich himself, he further robs himself along with his victim.

But you say, "Are we not to face the grim and ugly facts of life? Is not the shallow optimist a foe of mankind?" To both of these I
Our Lord himself was supremely an encouraging preacher. There was a word that was on his lips again and again. That word was "Be of good cheer". He surpassed all others in putting heart and hope into people. When near the end of His ministry, He had to face the seeming failure of that ministry. He had also to face the doom of His people that became sure because of their refusal to follow Him. The picture that He paints is one of almost unrelieved horror. Catastrophe will walk hard upon the heels of catastrophe, and tragedy upon the heels of tragedy. As a result men's hearts are going to fail them for fear. But what is his thrilling conclusion? When these things begin to come to pass, then "look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh". God is always in the heart of the tragedy. For those who trust Him He makes all things to work for good. With a gospel like that every minister can be a courage bringer.

Here is a scene to make the heart stand up and cheer. A merchant vessel in the Mediterranean Sea is slowly going to pieces. Those on board, passengers and crew, are going to pieces too out of sheer despair and hunger. Then out from the hole of the vessel comes a man who grips a bit of a broken spar and lifts his voice and dares to shout this great word, "Be of good cheer". Thus he preaches an encouraging sermon. On does he base his courage? Not upon the cleaning weather. The is still on. Not upon the seaworthiness of the vessel. It is
still going to pieces. Not upon captain and crew. They are totally unreliable. He bases his cheer upon one fact, the fact of God.

"Therefore, sirs, be of good cheer, for I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me." That is in a peculiar sense the message of the minister. It is, therefore, I repeat, our business to encourage. To fail to do this is to fail to deliver the message with which we have been entrusted.

Robie Lawnday Stevenson makes this entry. "I have been to church today and am not depressed". I know that what he says is capable of more than one interpretation. I am taking it in its best sense. He was a man, you remember, who's life was one long battle with disease. He had much to discourage him. He seems to say, "I was depressed. The clouds were in my sky and the burden that lay upon me seemed greater than I could bear. But I went out to God's house and a tall son of God stood in the pulpit and parted the clouds and I caught a glimpse of the blue. Better still, I caught a glimpse of the face of my Lord, and I came away with my burden lifted and with a new courage in my heart." I should like to have been the minister on that day. That is preaching at its best. Every good sermon gives courage.

IV

A good sermon will reach a definite destination. A sermon should start, travel, and arrive. Blessed is the minister who knows where he is going before he sets out, the marksman who can see his mark clearly before he shoots. I think that if we are definite we can say that this is true of practically every good sermon. We can generally put the context of your sermon in a single terse sentence. If the chairman of your board were to touch you on the shoulder as you enter the pulpit one suneday and ask, "What are you going to tell your people today?" You should be able to give yer answer in one sentence. Indeed if you cannot there is grave danger that you are shooting at the whole side
To fail to be definite is often to leave our hearers confused and bewildered. Recently a bright boy whom I know quite well asked his preacher father after a sermon that had been little more than a wandering in the wilderness, "Daddy, what were you trying to get us to do?" This lad hon-
tek his father personally for his sermon with prayerful and loving his father. He was eager to do his father's will, he deeply desired to realize what his father dreams for him. But he could not, because he was utterly confused as to what his father was trying to tell him. If a devoted son should have to ask such a question, the chances are that not a few others were equally confused. Search your soul; therefore, with this question: "Just what am I trying to get my people to do? If you have no definite answer to this, you will not preach a good sermon.

This is not to affirm that a sermon lacking definiteness does not do any good. Preached with prayerful earnestness it may do great good. Yet, the only man in the Bible so far as I know who ever hit a mark at which he was not aiming was that nameless soldier who liquidated Ahab. He was not shooting at Ahab. He was shooting at nothing in particular. He simply said to himself, "It is shooting time and I have here an arrow. I might as well get rid of it." "A certain man drew a bow at a venture". The arrow from that bow reached a royal mark, through no skill of the marksman. It is possible to preach like that. "It is preaching time," we say, "I have a sermon of sorts. Therefore, I will fire away at random". By so preaching we may accomplish some good, but I am sure that slain of the Lord will not be so numerous as they would have been had we taken definite aim.

There is another advantage of definiteness. If the preacher knows where he is going he will know when he gets there. When we find it had to suit, often it is because we did not know where we were going when we set out. Knowing our goal, we shall find it easy to stop when
therefore I was still six blocks from home. No more stopped.

Though I have tailed many times to have thus reached a definite conclusion I can invite our to act upon it. Personally it has been my custom across the years to invite my hearers to accept the conclusion that I have reached. Though I have failed many times to have any open response, yet those who have come forward to unite with the church I think it is safe to say that by far the majority have been won in this fashion.

Here, then, I think, are the characteristics that a good sermon should have. It ought to be interesting. If it is not, folk will not listen to it. And if nobody listens we are wasting our own time and the time of our congregation. We are also doing them positive harm. A sermon ought to be constructive. No amount of denunciation can bring about positive goodness. Absence of sickness does not mean health, and absence of vices does not mean virtue, and mere harmlessness does not mean holiness. Third, every sermon ought to be encouraging. Folks have to have courage to sing and to live. Without it they become useless. In our Gospel we have all that is necessary to give courage. Above all else we have the fact of God. Fourth, a sermon ought to arrive, and having arrived it ought to call for a definite decision.
To preach by series will compel us to enlarge the number of texts discussed. It will prevent our riding a hobby of preaching only upon those texts that we ourselves find congenial. We need to preach from themes that are not perhaps congenial to us, but will be both congenial and helpful to the members of our congregation.

For instance, it came to me with a shock years ago when I set out to preach a series of sermons on the Ten Commandments, that though I had been preaching more than a quarter of a century, I had never preached on a single one of these important rules for living. When I preach a series of sermons on the Lord's Prayer, I think the petition that gave me the most trouble was this, "Give us this day our daily bread." Yet I think before this series was over, that became my favorite text of the prayer.

2. A second great advantage of preaching by series is that it saves so much lost motion. In Jesus' story of the laborers in the vineyard, it seems quite capricious for the landlord to have paid those who labored in the vineyard for one hour as much as he paid those who had labored for twelve, but these eleventh hour people had not made their small contribution because they were lazy and shiftless. They had been intensely busy all day. They had been busy in the most unsatisfactory fashion. They had been busy seeking a job. Therefore, they had not only worked hard but they had to fight with worry while they worked. Thus many a minister wears himself out seeking a theme. Often by the time he has reached a decision, it is too late to prepare the sermon.

Remember that however fine your car, however abundant your supply of gas, however fast you drive, you will not get anywhere if you do not know where you are going. Years ago, while touring in New England, I came about two o'clock in the afternoon to the Wayside Inn. Having spent some time looking it over, I went
on my way. As has happened to many another minister, I got lost. The result was at ten-thirty that evening I came to a hotel and decided to spend the night there. When I went in to this hotel, I discovered to my amazement, that it was the Wa yside Inn. I had been driving earnestly but had only got back to where I had started.

II

How, then, shall I decide upon my theme? 

considerations

Of course, there are many reasons that enter into the answer to this question. Sometimes there is a particularly pressing problem before your congregation, before your church. Sometimes it is helpful for us to discuss a topic that is timely, though it might not necessarily be timeless. Then we believe in Divine guidance. Our Lord guides in many ways. Happy is the minister who can select his theme with the conviction that of all others this is the particular message that God would have me bring to my people next Sunday.

Now, in seeking for themes, the sky is the limit. However, speaking out of my own experience, I have found mine in the Bible. For forty years now my ministry has been strictly Bible centered. Perhaps I began the practice of taking texts and seeking to interpret them because that was the custom of my day. But I have continued to do this for reasons that are far more solid.

It is my conviction that Bible centered preaching is the most helpful type of preaching. That is not to deny that those who select topics and who prepare their sermons and then seek the text to fit the situation are not excellent preachers. Yet I am convinced that other things being equal, there is no other type of ministry that draws and edifies a congregation as does Bible centered preaching.

Then, such preaching is so vastly varied. The man who preaches on subjects that are of vital interest is quite limited as to theme. The subjects that are to the fore in any day could be named almost on our fingers. But the man who preaches from a text has unlimited resources. These are as countless as the stars. The man, therefore, whose ministry is Bible centered is the man who has vast and varied
resources at his disposal.

Then, it is my conviction that Bible preaching is not only the best and most varied, but that it is the easiest. The man who first gets up a sermon and then hunts his text is preaching the hard way. Life did not grow softer for the Israelites when they were compelled to make brick without straw. It became harder. So it does for the minister who turns aside from the vast wealth contained in the Scriptures to go out on his own. Why seek to weave your web out of your own body like the spider when you have such priceless material waiting for the of your fingers?

Now, in assuming that I am going to preach from text, how shall I find my text? Speaking out of my own experience I do not recall ever to have found text when I was seeking for one. I am aware that there are ministers that read the Bible for this one reason and for none other. I spent some ten days in the home of a minister years ago without seeing him read the Bible one time. I knew him well enough to ask him if he had quit reading the Bible. "Certainly," he said, "except when I am seeking a text. I already know what is in it. Why should I read it?"

Now, I suppose most of us have spent some futile moments in this pursuit. But, generally speaking, the finding of a text is best achieved when we take the indirect road. I have found mine in this fashion. For many years it has been my custom to read each morning a lesson from the Old Testament and from the New. When I have found a word that spoke home a conviction to my own heart, I have been encouraged to believe that this same word might speak to the hearts of my people. It is upon this basis that I have almost invariably selected my texts.

Let me encourage you not to neglect the priceless preaching material of the Old Testament. I am not arguing that the Old Testament is on a
par with the New. I am not arguing that it is perfect. Those who maintain that such is the case do not see eye to eye with our Lord. Some of it he rejected; some of it he \textit{corrected}; some of it he found the very bread of life to his soul. "Ye have heard that it was said of them of olden times, but I say unto ye." While Jesus corrected some, he kept \textit{maintaining} the speech of olden times. He used the words of others as a sword of the spirit for the winning of his battle against temptation.

The more I read the Old Testament, the more I am amazed at its crudities, but of how well its great personalities came to know God. Take, for instance, the amazing \textit{hymn book} of the Jews. It is still the finest collection of devotional poems in the world. Among this collection is the post popular song ever written. It has put its arms around more grief burdened shoulders, its touch of healing on more hurt hearts than any other passage in the world's literature. So accurate is its picture of God that when Jesus came, he virtually declared that he sat for the picture. "I am the Good Shepherd that laid down his life for the sheep."

This habit of selecting texts that speak from your own heart will save you from the futility of speaking upon texts that are merely queer and bizarre. I have known ministers to select a text that was so sickly and weak \textit{known} that it could not stand on its own feet. The best magician cannot get a fat rabbit out of a hat if the hat is no larger than a thinble. Why select cisterns that can hold no water when a spring is gushing at your very feet? Select a brawny text that you will not have to support, but that will support you. Then even if you fail in some measure, in its interpretation, \textit{known} the people who heard you will go home with a strong word of God in their hearts.

These Bible themes will grip when they come \textit{not simply} from a single text, being from some personality. Of all the books that hold the mirror up to nature,
none surpass the Bible. Preaching from Bible characters is in my opinion about the most helpful type of sermon. People are not interested in the abstract. Pope was right when he said "the greatest study of mankind is man." Across the pages of the Bible, both of the Old and New Testaments, walk personalities that are just as vitally alive as we are. They speak to those who have ears to hear. They say much that we might be too tactful to speak on our own authority. They say junk for us and we can quote them without apology.

Then I have found it helpful to preach a series on the books of the Bible. By far the largest and the most interesting prayer meetings that I have had in my ministry have been when I was giving book reviews of the varied books of the Bible. I have had right at six hundred, not by guesswork, but by count, to listen to these ever gripping and vital themes. But whether by isolated text or by series, I have reached my decision largely through devotional reading of the Bible.

3. Now, having decided upon my text, I take the next step. I read it over and over again in connection with its context. As I read it, I try to open to it every single window of my mind and heart. This habit in my early ministry led me then in the practice that I have kept up for many years. I discovered that when the time came for me to read the Scripture lesson, I knew it by heart. I discovered further that when I read from memory everybody which would listen. Therefore, I have kept up the practice which I have found good for me, though I am not recommend it to you.

As I thus read and re-read the passage of which my text is a part, I write down everything that it says to me, everything that it suggests, whether relevant or irrelevant. I write down every story that it brings to my mind. Then sometimes I read everything I can find on the subject. However, I do not do this today as much as I did in my younger years.

This brings me to the question of reading sermons. Personally, I have read the sermons of ministers who appeal to me across-the-years. There are some ex-
excellent preachers from whom I get nothing. This is not a criticism of them but rather of myself. When I was just entering the ministry a wise old presiding elder spent part of one night warning me against ever reading another man's sermons. I took what he said with a grain of salt because I had a feeling, and have it still, that if it is wrong to read the sermons, it is also wrong to hear one.

His objection to sermon reading was that it would destroy my originality. But, of course, originality is not a matter of saying something that nobody ever thought of before. No more original writer than Shakespeare can be found, yet he borrowed about as profusely as any man who ever lived. Through originality is taking the thoughts of others and so running it through your own mental mill that it becomes your own. But it is far better to make your own notes before you read the

Having thus gathered my material I then proceed to make the outline. About the importance of an outline there is some difference of opinion. No less an author than John Arthur Gossip argues against outlines. Of course, in his argument, he had to use an outline, otherwise his lecture would have been a bit like without beginning or end of days. Therefore, instead of agreeing with this great author, it is my conviction that from the standpoint of mechanics of his sermon, the outline is of fundamental importance. In fact, given a good outline, a good sermon is next to inevitable.

This is the case because a sermon as indicated previously, must begin and travel and arrive at a definite goal. But that is impossible without concise and logical thinking. We have all heard sermons that were brilliantly stated in colorful language, and yet they got no where. The ending might have been in the middle and the middle might have been at the beginning. Therefore, it seems to me that there is no good preaching with
out a good outline.

This does not mean that it is necessary for the preacher to emphasize the manuscript of his sermon before the congregation. They do not have to see the wheels go round. Yet without the outline the sermon gets nowhere. Not only is the hearer unable to remember what the speaker said, but the speaker cannot even remember it himself. If I cannot remember my own sermon, I cannot expect much of it to be treasured in the memory of those who hear me.

On the other hand, if the minister has a simple, concise and logical outline, it would make it possible, in my opinion, even for those of faulty memory to preach without extensive notes or manuscripts. Now I am not here arguing for the superiority of extemporaneous preaching over manuscript preaching. There is no good preaching that is extemporaneous in the sense that the preacher is speaking out of the abundance of his resources without previous study. But other things being equal, the man who is set free from a manuscript can grip and hold the attention of his congregation better than if he were the bond slave of his manuscript. There are excellent preachers who read their sermons, but they would/better preachers if they did not. There are multitudes of church people who collapse mentally as soon as they see a manuscript brought into the pulpit. In my opinion, anybody could preach without a manuscript if they would make a simple and concise outline.

For instance, some years ago I was trying to prepare a sermon on the Pharisee and the Publican. I suppose I must have made fifty different outlines. At last, like a revelation, there came an outline that was final for me. The minister can tell when he has produced an outline that is final for contrast. himself. "This parable," I declared, "has in it a three-fold distribution. It is a contrast on the two men that went up into the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee and the other was a Publican. One was a pillar in the church and state. The other was a renegade and outcast.

2. There was the contrast in the prayer. One stood and prayed thus:
He had a good eye on himself, a bad eye on his brother and no eye on the Lord at all. The Pharasee on the other hand smote upon his breast and said, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner."

3. A third contrast is in the result. One went down to his house just as hard and selfish as he had been before he prayed. The other went down justified, pardoned, devout. This seemed to me to be what the Parable said and it was not only possible for me to remember it, but I can hardly forget it.

Now, as you see, there were three parts to this sermon. There are those who protest against that type of outline because of its lack of variety. When I was a small boy my old minister used to begin practically every sermon "My brethren, my sermon falls naturally into three parts." Personally, I wasn't so much impressed by the parts into which it fell but that it did actually fall.

But it seems to me that whether a sermon has two or three or five parts is a matter of no fundamental importance nor does it have anything to do with variety. How vastly different is one man from another, one woman from another. This vast difference is not due to the fact that one has twice as many bones as another. You have the same number of bones that I have. Therefore, my outline is very much like yours but that doesn't make us alike. Therefore, how many parts you have is not the important matter. What is important? That you have a definite, concise and logical outline.

4. Having made my outline, I take the final step. I preach the sermon to myself. This does not mean that I proclaim my message fulsome or so that the neighbors will think I have gone stark crazy. I simply walk up and down the floor and say it over in a voice little louder than a whisper. But I do say it, not once, but until I have it well
in hand. I can see down every step just as I can see down a hall.

Having thus prepared it, I then proceed to write it. I used to be such a glutton that I would peck my sermons out on an Oliver typewriter. Thus I won great strength in hand and arm. Now I take the easier way and of dictating them to a stenographer.

Having thus dictated the sermon and had it written out in full, I go over it and correct it. Sometimes I read it on Sunday morning before preaching it. Generally I do not. When it comes time to preach it, I make no effort to use the exact words that I used in writing the sermon. However, I do this without trying. But I never memorize a sermon. But I have so gripped the thought that I wished to bring that a manuscript would not be of any more help to me than an extra hand.

Having thus delivered my message, it has been my custom across the years to call for a verdict. Perhaps many times I have closed my sermon with those who had heard me saying, "So what?" But whenever this had happened it was because I had failed. I have sought to bring each service to a definite goal so that any chance hearer would know exactly the course that the minister was urging him to take.
THE PREPARATION AND DELIVERY OF SERMONS

I

In speaking of the preparation and delivery of sermons, the first step is deciding the kind of sermon that ought to be prepared. To the man who does not know his goal, every path is uncertain. "To the ship bound for no harbor, no wind is favorable." Not as one who has attained, but as a fellow-student with you, what kind of sermon ought the minister prepare to preach to the modern audience?

1. One fundamental need of a sermon is that it should be interesting. To this some will not agree. To some this will seem to put the accent on the wrong syllable. Naturally, there are other characteristics that are more important. Yet, I maintain that to be interesting is of very great importance. This is the case for the simple reason that, though the sermon may be as fundamental as the Decalogue and as true as the Sermon on the Mount, if nobody is listening, we are wasting our own time as well as that of our hearers. To speak when nobody is listening is to do positive harm.

Now to win and hold attention is not easy. We are speaking today to about the most difficult audience that the world has ever known. Our congregations are movie educated. They are accustomed to receive with a minimum of effort. Their emotions have been played upon. They have had all the thrills. They, therefore, come to the church often times with no better qualifications for hearing a sermon than tired bodies, frayed nerves, crowded minds, and worried hearts. If we hold their attention, we must be interesting. It is needless to argue that our congregations ought not to
be as they are. But they are that way none the less. The physician might say to a patient suffering from smallpox, "You ought not have smallpox, You should have chickenpox." But if the patient has smallpox none the less, the physician must act accordingly. To speak to this jaded age then, one must be interesting.

2. If we are to preach to the modern man, we must be simple. Our congregations are the most cultivated that the world has ever known. Therefore, they appreciate, as no others, the fine art of simplicity. There are few things more certain than this—that people are not going to come to church Sunday after Sunday to puzzle their minds over what under the sun we are talking about. I know that we sometimes refer to a minister as a deep preacher. But the deep preacher usually has a shallow audience. We who preach today must preach not so the wise can understand, but so a fool can't help but understand. Sometimes ago a friend said to me with considerable satisfaction, "My message is to the intellectually elite." I knew at once that he had a small audience.

Now we ought to have something to say to the intellectually elite. We also ought to have something to say to the mentally unfurnished. In fact, no minister has a right to preach in such a fashion that the humblest man that comes into his congregation, hungry for the Bread of Life, cannot find that Bread. We read of the preaching of the Master that the mass of people heard Him gladly. There is one type of sermon that appeals to the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the old and the young, the educated and the uneducated. That is a simple gospel sermon. It has that same universal appeal that Jesus had. Therefore, I say to my own heart as to yours, cultivate simplicity.

3. He who preaches today should preach constructively and positively.
The minds of the people that hear you and me are full of questions. But we cannot answer all these questions, we cannot pluck up by the roots the evils that disturb them. Tare-pulling is very exciting, but we can pull all the tares in the world without guaranteeing to ourselves one grain of golden wheat. I once heard a very cultivated minister teach a series of Bible lessons. He was thoroughly disappointing for the simple reason that he spent most of his time telling what he did not believe, instead of telling what he did believe. Pointing out errors is like adding ciphers. You might add a row of ciphers as high as from here to Mars, but all it would amount to would be one cipher.

Had I gone out with Paul in the first century to preach in cities like Ephesus and Corinth, I might have spent a whole year denouncing false gods. One night I might have spent on Zeus, another on Mars, another I might have discussed Diana, showing that she was not half so chaste as she had a reputation of being. But this would have got me nowhere. Paul went out to declare Jesus Christ. When they saw the Lord as the fairest of ten thousand and the One altogether lovely, they at once threw their gods away.

There is something fascinating about breaking the other man's idol. But really it takes less brains and less heart to destroy than to do almost anything else in the world. There are some perpetual sophomores who love to startle folks. They sound a trumpet before them to announce that they are heralds of a new truth. I used to know one such. He would say, "Now this is going to offend you." Then he would utter some platitude that his congregation would never have thought of disputing if he had not urged them to do so. Such a minister seems to me to be trying to impress his congregation with his up-to-dateness rather than with the Truth he is sent to teach. We are to preach positively and constructively.
4. The modern preacher needs to be a minister of encouragement and comfort. This does not mean that we are to ignore the grim facts of life. This does not mean that we are to shut our eyes to the evil in the hearts of individuals, in society, and in the world. But we are to confront these evils always in the presence of God. We are to confront them in the realization that no picture is really true when it is painted entirely in black. However unfriendly some soil may be, there is always some good soil.

The best English teacher I ever had could tear my themes into shreds till I wondered why I ever wrote such utter nonsense. But always before the conference was closed, he would manage to find something to commend. He would say, "While this and this and this is bad, yet, your thought is good. You are far from arriving, but you can do something with your writing if you are just willing to pay the price." We need to be thus wise in dealing with our congregations. We must always keep open a door of hope. Men are saying to us today what was said to Paul and Barnabas years ago. "Brethren, if you have anything encouraging to say, say it." God bless the man who today can put hope into hopeless hearts. That is part of our business.

5. Finally, we are to speak with authority—not with authority that is traditional, but with authority that is born of experience. What a privilege to speak a truth that we know in our hearts is eternal. I love to preach a sermon that I know is so true that if I take it and stand it by the First National Bank building I can be sure that when that building is dust, this sermon will be living with the dew of the morning upon it. It is our privilege, as it was that of our Master to speak with authority and not merely as the Scribes.

II

How do I set about preparing a sermon of this kind?

1. I find a text. As a rule this I do through the devotional reading
of the Bible. When I read this Book because I have personal needs of my own, when I find a text that fits into my need, I have faith to believe that it might fit into the needs of those who hear me. I am indebted for help in preparing sermons to the Bible more than to all other books combined.

Now, I am aware that there are good preachers for whom this is not the case. There are those who first prepare their sermons and then find a text. But that is not my way, and certainly I am sure it is not the easiest way. In a conversation with Doctor Luccock, he was kind enough to say, "One secret of the effectiveness of your preaching is that it is Bible-centered." "Subjects," he went on to say, "are very limited, but texts are as numberless as the stars in the sky."

There are advantages, of course, in preaching a series of sermons. To preach by series has two positive advantages. First, it saves a lot of lost motion. Happy the preacher who knows exactly where he is going when he gets up on Monday morning. A second benefit of a series is that it will compel the minister to use some themes that he would not otherwise discuss. It will thus help to save him from riding a hobby. For instance, I am quite sure I should never have preached on, "Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread", if I had not been preaching a series of sermons on the Lord's Prayer.

2. Having found my text, I read and re-read the context. I try to open every window of my soul toward it. I then read what I can find that bears on the subject. Above all else I try to recall all that I have read or experienced that bears on the subject. It is my conviction that almost everything the minister knows can be made to pay tribute to his sermon.

3. I then make an outline. To my mind the outline is the most fundamental something in the preparation of a sermon. Given a good outline, everything else will fall into its place. But without an outline
the sermon is likely to be a few pages of confusion. A sermon ought to begin, travel, and arrive. When it arrives, it ought to stop. This is possible if we have an outline. Then, an outline makes it easy for the minister to preach without being handicapped by a manuscript. A simple outline is not only easy to remember, but often times impossible to forget.

4. Having made the outline, I walk the floor and preach the sermon to myself. When I have it well in hand, when I can see through it from one end to the other like a man looking down a hallway, then I dictate it. In my younger days I used to pack it out myself on an Oliver typewriter. Having written the sermon, I sometimes read it before preaching; sometimes I do not.

III

Having my sermon well in hand, how shall I deliver it?

1. I must bear in my mind the reason for my being in the pulpit. I am here as God's spokesman. To keep this in mind will save me from endless errors into which we ministers are prone to fall. I have seen ministers come into the pulpit in such fashion as to give the impression that they were vagrants rather than crusaders. The realization that I am on an errand for my Lord will save me from trifling.

2. Such a conviction will save me from talking too much about myself. It will save me from peddling out pathetic alibis. I will not tell my congregation that the baby kept me awake, or that I have had a bad headache, or that I was so busy going here and there that I did not have time to prepare my sermon. If I am sick, I will do my dead-level best to preach in such a fashion as that none may suspect it. If I can get through by the grace of God with a handicap such as that, I will feel that I have won a real victory.
3. Finally, being here on business for my King, I shall preach for a verdict. Since some hundreds of people have given me thirty minutes in which to display my wares, I shall give them a chance for an order if they so desire. It has been my custom through the years to do this. Sometimes no one responds. But in the vast majority of cases, there have been those that have responded. There have been those who have given me reason to believe that, as the publican of old, they have gone down into their homes and into their tomorrows justified. It is worth one man's life to have preached a single sermon of this kind.
The pulpit is the place of the preacher's supreme joy. To preach to a receptive congregation in the power of the Spirit is about the greatest thrill that any human soul can know. Any one who has experienced it will not be surprised that Paul could never think of his own privilege as a preacher without shouting, "To me, be it a creed in exultation, "is this grace given that I might preach the unsurpassing riches of Christ."

But if the pulpit is a place of greatest power and joy, it is also the place of greatest pain. There is no suffering more excruciating than that of trying to preach when you can't. It is as tiring as undertaking to climb a greased pole, when you slip down faster than you climb up. We have all had that experience. Even the great Spurgeon, after a futile effort, prayed somewhat like this: "Lord, Thou art great, Thou canst do anything, nothing is too hard for Thee. Thou canst make something out of nothing, therefore, bless this sermon."

How are we to make this ministry effective?

I

We are to keep in mind as we enter the pulpit what we are to do. We are God's spokesmen. His one chance at the audience through the spoken word is ourselves. We are there as one who claims to have heard the Word from God's lips and to warn men from Him. We are there saying: "Thou hast given me the tongue of Him that has taught, that I might speak a word in season to Him that is weary." We are there saying humbly but gladly: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me because He hath anointed me to speak good tidings to the poor." And you may count on it that the poor and broken-hearted and
the captives and the blind are all there. Bearing in mind our high mission will save us from certain errors into which preachers tend to fall.

1. It would save us from wasting time. Some preachers go into the pulpit as if they were taking a stroll. They remind me of a worthless old chap I knew as a boy. If you asked him where he was going, his uniform answer was: "I am just knocking about." Many of us trifle. We squander time needlessly. To waste a single minute for sixty people is to waste an hour. To waste a minute for six hundred people is to waste ten years. We ought to enter the pulpit, not as vagrants, but as crusaders.

2. A sense of mission will save us from self-centeredness. We will not talk too much about ourselves. We will not find it necessary to tell where all we have been, how many speeches we have made, how hard we have worked, and how tired we are. We shall not tell how many nights the babies kept us awake, what a toothache we have had, and how sore our throat is. We shall avoid alibis and excuses as we would avoid a pestilence.

I used to have a young friend who gave every promise of a brilliant ministry. He has disappointed that promise, in some measure. He was very boyish and appealing. He used to begin every sermon by saying: "This is a great text for such a little man." It was his way of seeking for sympathy. Finally a good saint told him that if the text was too big for him to get a small one. He resented the good advice, but took it nonetheless. Do not cater for sympathy.

3. A sense of mission will save us from slavery to a crowd. Now, a crowd is vastly important. But if the folks are not there, do not let it take the heart out of you. You could hardly imagine the Master going away from a service and
saying to Peter complaingly: "Simon, there weren't many out tonight." Get as many people as you can, but refuse to be mastered by a crowd, or the lack of one.

4. If you keep your mission in mind, you will not scold. You will not skin. Remember that it takes less heart and brains to abuse people than to do anything else. You will refuse to be temperamental. I knew an excellent preacher to lose his grip of a city, by losing his temper because an old man disturbed him by his coughing and wheezing and blowing his nose like a trumpet. It was trying, but when the preacher lost his temper and rebuked him, he lost his crowd.

II

Then, if we would preach effectively, we must prepare the way of the Lord. This, we are to do by creating an atmosphere. Atmosphere means almost everything. The difference between a sermon that is a failure and a success is often just a difference in atmosphere. And the atmosphere has to be created largely by the preacher. It is not so between politicians. In an exciting campaign, everybody is thrilling and intemperate. In an atmosphere like that a platitudine sounds like an epigram. But not so in our churches where we have to appeal to everyone. How can we create this atmosphere?

1. By the preparation of ourselves. We need preparation of heart as we come to this high task.

2. By the preparation of our message. If we persistently come before our congregations unprepared, if we cry "wolf" over and over, but never produce the beast, we will kill the expectancy. There are plenty of excuses for a poorly prepared sermon. Then, we are to prepare by our conduct of the
service through the hymns we select, through our scripture lesson, through our prayer. All of these are vastly important. I have known men to kill the chance of a successful sermon by their prayers. I have known others to make a poor sermon almost impossible by their opening prayers.

III

Then, having finished the worship program, how shall we deliver the sermon?

1. Be interesting. That is absolutely essential. What you say may be as fundamental as the decalogue, and as true as the "Sermon on the Mount", but if nobody listens, you are wasting your time and theirs, too.

2. In order to be interesting, you must be interested. Your soul must be fired by the worth of your own message. If our gospel is not supremely necessary, it is supremely unnecessary. But you cannot interest others in that in which you are not interested yourself.

3. Be simple. Folks no longer come to church to wrack their brains over what you are talking about. The man who preaches today must speak in such a way, not simply that a wise man can understand him, but that a fool can't help but understand him.

4. Be yourself. If you are naturally an orator, then use the oratorical style. If not, use your own. If you are humorous, use humor so far as it is native to you. Do not try to be funny if you are not. Never lug a joke in. I heard a good friend tell a joke the other day, and I felt like bursting into tears - it was one of the saddest things I ever listened to. He was simply not humorous, and shouldn't have
tried to be.

5. Finally, speak for a verdict. Seek a decision time and end. Be earnest in this. Be confident in it. Stand upon the promise: "The word that goeth forth out of my mouth shall not return unto me void, but shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it."
2. Then, blessed is the congregation who has a minister who can
read the lesson to the edification of the saints. I used to have an English
essay read to the congregation. He was a bit of an artist, I learned
that gripping that I would hurry and at my first opportunity to buy the book
had. If I have not to find it boring book
from which he read. Sometimes when I bought it, I found it thoroughly dull
prosaic. What beauty it ever had been born of the impressed reading
of the teacher.

Now, I have heard ministers, so read the Bible as to produce an oppo-
site impression. I am afraid I have done the opposite myself. I am not a
good reader, because of that, I have made a habit across the years of memori-
ing mine lesson and upon it. But I have often discovered that I did not
reading my scripture lesson. I get into this habit largely by accident. But
when the hearing began, I find that when I read the lesson from memory it get
a few greater
almighty hearing. Some listened because it was out of the ordinary.

Some to see if I could get through with it. Thus, as Paul would say, "Whether
in pretense or in earnest, the scriptures were listened to, and therein
rejoiced, yea, and will rejoice." Therefore, my fellow minister, I am urging to

Now, I would certainly not recommend that every minister memorize his
scripture lesson. That would cost those not having an easy verbal memory
far more than it would be worth. But I do urge every young minister to read
and re-read his lesson in the privacy of his study till he can read it with
some degree of charm and power to his congregation.

3 Next, is the public prayer. In my opinion we are far ahead of the

the ministers of a generation ago in our pastoral prayers, when I was just en-
tering the ministry it was the fashion for every minister to have at least
one dimension in his pastoral prayer, and that was length. I am glad that
that has gone out of date. How many times have the saints been wearied by
hearing some brother make a long oration in the presence of God in the form
of prayer. It was the style then to ask for everything under the sun, and
It was there that the Christian had to give up one of the outstanding duties of the pastoral prayer. Even that was long. He often found it impossible to forget the importance of his position when he was not kept up by a strong faith in his ability. He often found he was leading his people and, as a result, felt responsible. He was not a temporal servant of a church as such, but a spiritual servant. The pastor was to act as an intercessor for his people, to pray for them, and to be a pattern to them. He was to be an example to them. He was to be a model to them. He was to be a father to them. He was to be a friend to them. He was to be a brother to them. He was to be a pastor to them. He was to be a spiritual leader to them. He was to be a spiritual friend to them. He was to be a spiritual brother to them. He was to be a spiritual father to them. He was to be a spiritual model to them. He was to be a spiritual example to them. He was to be a spiritual leader to them.
whenever we ask for everything under the sun in every prayer, we usually get what we expect and that is nothing.

Now, it is the purpose of a prayer to lead the congregation to worship, to bring them into the conscious presence of God. and the high art of being able to voice the longings and aspirations, the joys and the sorrows of our most backward saints and of our most mature saints in such a fashion as to enable them to say "Amen" in their hearts is indeed a high and heavenly art. It is one that is not easy to attain. It is one worthy of much study and prayerful consideration. I confess that as I have grown older, I have given more and more time to the preparation of my pastoral prayers. If we do not do this, we are likely to find ourselves praying about the same routine prayers Sunday after Sunday. Let us study to make our prayers helpful in the worship of God.

Now, there was a time when we called this first half of the service—the singing, the reading of the Scripture, and the prayer—the preliminaries. Of course, it was an unfortunate and rather slanderous name. Furthermore, I think we can safely say that we never quite meant that shabby name. Yet some probably were too nearly doing so. But today we have to go to the other extreme.

It is the necessity that now must often take a secondary place. Having come to regard the first half of the service of importance, some are in danger of many modern pulpit—the priest threatens to push the prophet out of his place.

This, I think, is a tremendous misfortune. The priest has a tendency in the modern pulpit to push the prophet out of his place. Now, the work of the priest is important. It is highly important. But, in my opinion, it is not so important as the work of the prophet. It is easier to be a priest than it is to be a prophet. It requires less of study and less of character.

The truth of the matter is by far the hardest thing that a minister is called upon to do is to speak for God. Being the most difficult, it is also the way.
most important. Every great age of the church has been an age of great preaching. It has been well said that when the light goes out in the pulpit, it goes out around the world. It is, therefore, the first task of the minister, in my opinion, to preach.

This does not mean that there is a contrast between the so-called worship service and the sermon. The service ought to be a unit. It means that the service ought to reach its climax through the sermon. The service ought not to be like that river that gushes out and brimming and full of life from the Himalaya Mountains, to lose itself a few miles below its source in the sand. It ought not to begin with a climax and end in an anti-climax. Instead it ought to reach its climax in the preaching of the sermon, in the delivery of the message from God.

Now, speaking out of my own personal experiences, when I have been privileged to sit in the pew, I have usually found this the case. I have been helped by the hymns, those stairways of the soul by which the saints of other centuries have climbed up to meet God. I have been edified by the prayers, but my edification has usually reached its climax in the hearing of the sermon. Whenever some minister has stood up and delivered a first hand message from God, whenever he has spoken as if his lips had been freshly touched with a live coal from off God's altar, it is then that I have most often felt, "Surely God is in this place." Too much emphasis, therefore, cannot be placed upon the first part of the service, but it ought to move toward a general climax in the sermon of the minister.
1. It is wise for the preacher to keep an eye on the congregation. It is especially wise for him to watch the boys and girls, if they are not listening, the chances are very great that the adults are not listening either. Of course, it is possible for a preacher to concentrate upon himself to the exclusion of his audience. But it is possible for him to be effectively ministered to. It is very likely to be conscious of this, and yet, this is very likely. The case of the young congregation except at times is not comparable to any audience without a leader. Therefore, when the young congregation without a leader, you have lost them. Let us remember that it is far better to lose a young congregation than to lose your congregation.
In my last address I dealt with that part of the worship service that ought to reach its climax in the service. If this is to be the case, how are we to bring it about? Naturally, I am assuming that the minister before he comes to the pulpit, has not only prepared his sermon, but that he has done something even more important, that he has prepared himself. Now, assuming that the minister has prepared, and his sermon, how is he to deliver it?

To begin, let him see that he does deliver it. Recently I have had two different boys to bring my paper. One of them was very careful. Often he would put the paper into my hands. When he did not do that, if the day was windy or rainy, he would put it inside the screen. He would see to it that I had a chance to get it. The other boy would throw the paper almost anywhere. If it happened to be a windy day, the chances are that I would not find it at all. If it was a rainy day, I could usually count on finding it in the biggest puddle of water in the yard. It is possible for the minister to be thus careless about the delivery of his sermon. How, then, shall we deliver?

**De natura.**

Be yourself.

**Q. 1.** Be natural. Be natural in your attitude and be natural in your voice. This you are to do not because you have the best personality of any man or the best voice of any man. There are others, superior to you in both.

You are to be natural because your personality and voice are yours. You may not believe you can ever attain a style of speaking which you are responsible, not like your particular garden spot, but it is your only chance to raise fruits and flowers. It is all you have. Therefore, use what God has given you because it is yours.

To do this well doesn't take much. First, you must catch the minister's eye. This should concern you. In the second place, after watching what you have to say, watch your delivery. The minister has to hear it. The delivery is the hardest part of the sermon. Now, there are ministers who forget this, thus they seek to be somebody else. By so doing, they at least fall into these glaring faults. First, they become self-conscious. The man who is trying to be somebody else has to watch
himself or he will forget the particular character that he is seeking to play.

For instance, I know a man who has a brogue which is not quite natural to him.

But in spite of this he manages quite well so long as he is on his guard. But, because he's trapped by his manner of speaking, he forgets himself; he lapses into ordinary English. The fact that a minister who plays a part has to be constantly on guard against his real self makes him self-conscious.

Second, the minister seeks to be somebody else must put himself more or less in a strain. It is hard to pretend to be rich when one is poor. It is a strain to pretend to know when one does not know. It is a tremendous strain to play young when one is old. It is always a strain to try to be something that you are not. This strain is hard both on the minister and those who hear him.

In fact no man Can put a congregation at ease unless he is at ease in himself. It so happens that I have a sensitive throat. I have heard a man so use his voice as to make my throat hurt out of sympathy for him. Be natural, therefore.

To refuse to do so leads at once to self-consciousness and strain.

Third, in an effort to be somebody else, we are likely to lose the charm that is our own. Naturalness is one of the most charming characteristics that any individual can have. When Will Rogers was killed back in 1935, his death was lamented by more people than any other man who had died up to that time. Why was this the case? What was the secret of his popularity? Certainly one great factor was his naturalness. He never ceased to be himself. Being natural is a bit like wearing clothes that fit. Even clothing that are made out of ordinary material will look well if they fit the individual who wears them.

On the other hand, no matter how fine the material, if the garment doesn't fit it makes the wearer look awkward and ugly. Had David gone out to meet Goliath in the armor of Saul he would have looked ridiculous, because Saul's armor did not fit him. Not only so, but he might have been the right. David won because he dared to be himself, both in dress and otherwise. When I was just just getting well into my teens, I made up my mind that I would wear-
the custom made garments that other farmer boys about me were wearing. I was going to get a tailor-made suit. To this end I sent for the catalog of Montgomery Ward & Company. I turned over to the tailoring department and saw the picture of a magnificent chap who looked just like I wanted to look. Therefore, though the suit cost the forbidding sum of $13.50, I made up my mind I was going to possess it.

Now, there was one catch. There was no tailor about to take my measure. Therefore, it became necessary for me to take my own measure. Blessed is the man that can take his own measure. I took mine and sent off specifications and in due course, the suit came. I tucked it under my arm, and went upstairs to put it on and to come down and surprise the family. I did. You might have tried that suit on every form of man and beast, but there was nothing in the heavens above or the earth beneath or the waters under the earth that it would have fit.

Mindful of the fact that the catalog said specifically, "We are not responsible for the fit of a tailor-made suit," I was in deep distress. In spite of this stern word, from the catalog, in sheer desperation I waded the creation up and sent it back, writing only, "I know that you are not responsible for the fit of a tailor-made suit, but I cannot use this." A few days later I received a check from the company, not only refunding my money, but paying express charges both ways. I have always deeply appreciated it, but I have never fully understood it. But my guess is that when they looked at that suit, they said, "Anybody that is even approximately, deformed as this suit indicates, needs help and needs it badly."

Yet, what was wrong with my suit? It was not that it was not well made. It was not that it wasn't of beautiful material. It had all these qualifications. The only objection was that it didn't fit. It was a misfit, the cheapest of
cheap things is a misfit. Therefore, when we go out clad in armor not our own, using a voice not our own, trying to be a personality that is not ourselves, we become self-conscious, we strain, we also lose what charm we have.

Hence, I beg of you, be yourself, your best possible self, but be yourself. You cannot do it in any other way.

2. In delivering your sermon, use every power that God has given you. Use your imagination. If you have little, seek to cultivate what you have. Make your people see things. It is perfectly amazing how some ministers can so discuss one of the live characters of the Bible as to seem to be performing an autopsy upon him, while another can make that same character seem as vividly in part of as a difference in imagination alive as the friend who is sharing his pew. The difference is how, and that is putting in too much detail. You can kill the most thrilling story by crushing it to death under details. For instance, we begin in this fashion: "Jim Smith and I were walking down the street on Tuesday. No, I don't believe it was Jim, it was John Jones." And then we start over again and say, "Let me see, it was not Tuesday, it was Wednesday." And before we get through nobody knows who it was or when. Beware of too much detail.

Dare to tell stories. It is said of Jesus that he spoke many things unto them in stories and without a story spake he not unto them. Every preacher ought to make a study of how to tell a story. Let me warn you against one thing and that is putting in too much detail. You can kill the most thrilling story by crushing it to death under details. For instance, we begin in this fashion: "Jim Smith and I were walking down the street on Tuesday. No, I don't believe it was Jim, it was John Jones." And then we start over again and say, "Let me see, it was not Tuesday, it was Wednesday." And before we get through nobody knows who it was or when. Beware of too much detail.

Do not be afraid of a story that has in it a touch of tears. I do not think our modern congregations are suffering unduly from too much emotion. I sat by a minister at a banquet some time ago. He was a typical doctor-of-philosophy and a lovely gentleman. In the course of our conversation he said, "There was nothing extraneous in his voice as he knew warned him against appealing in any way to the emotions. I was not disposed to argue the question, but I had a strong conviction that the malady from which his congregation was suffering was not emotionalism. In fact, I dare say that the pews of his church gave way to their emotions quite as often
the members of his congregation.

Of course, I am not making an appeal for mere "sob stuff". I am only asking that we deal realistically with life as we find it, which is a mingling of joy and sorrow, laughter and tears. Some years ago I attended a service along with Bishop Hughes. I did not know him very well then. I have come to know him since as a most choice soul. At that time he looked to me like a man who did not have a tear in his make up. Yet as the minister preached that day with tenderness and power, he wept along with the rest of us. When the sermon was over, he made this remark: "It helps me to cry like that. It always purges something mean out of me."

"If I am skating on thin ice, do not hesitate to use clean and wholesome humor. Laughter and tears are next-door neighbors. It is my conviction that humor does not belong simply to the theater, to the movies, or to the club, or to the lodge, or to the home; everywhere, in fact, except in the sanctuary. I know there is a certain type of humor that has no place there or anywhere else. But I am convinced that laughter is just as pious as tears. The minister who has no sense of humor is very prone to major on minors. Blessed, therefore, is the minister who has sufficient humor to "sweeten bitter things with gentle laughter."

Now, in saying this I am not forgetting that there are excellent and consecrated people both in pulpit and pew who think laughter has no place in the sanctuary. It would never have occurred to me had I been a friend of the "learned" who have been afraid some professional prophet Amos to have told him a joke. I do not think he would have seen the point. I would have hesitated before relating even the most ludicrous experience to the prophet Jeremiah. Nor would I have felt very much at home in saying something extremely ludicrous to that saintly Englishman who graced the pulpit of Fifth Avenue, John Henry Jewett."
A friend told me some years ago of Jowett's going to hear Billy Sunday when that famous evangelist was holding a meeting in New York. It so happened that on that occasion Billy was paying his respects to the society women of the city. He was deploring the brevity of their dress. "Why," he said, "these women go out into society without enough clothes to make a pair of leggins for a mosquito." At this Dr. Jowett turned to my friend in horrified amusement and said, "What does he mean?" Well, what does he mean?

But if there are those who look upon all laughter in the sanctuary with horror, there are those equally consecrated who have made fine use of it. Spurgeon was one. And believe it or not, that distinguished Episcopalian, Philip Brooks, was another. Bishop Hughes, to whom I referred a moment ago, preached for years without using any humor. Then he began to give rein to the delicious laughter that he had in him. Since then, consecrated saint though he is, he has never seen fit to change. Humor, like tears, is a means to an end. It serves to quicken attention. It serves to humanize both the preacher and the sermon. I am persuaded also that for everyone who is offended by the right kind of humor, a hundred will be attracted by it.

Some years ago at the close of a sermon, a gentleman came forward to speak to me. He looked like the incarnation of the committal service, "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, and dust to dust." Shaking hands, he said sadly, "I liked your sermon, but beware of that humor. Remember that the Bible says, Jesus wept, but it never said that he laughed." What a queer interpretation of the Scripture! Why does the Bible say Jesus wept? Because He was constantly dying to other "He who shed tears," the fact that the fact that this cheerful man, this sunniest of all sunny faces, should be wet with tears was most amazing. Had Jesus gone about shedding all the while they might have written of him that he laughed. But because he was so uniformly cheerful, they wrote that he wept. To
To see that Jesus had a delicious sense of humor it is only necessary to read the gospels. Look at this picture: One friend approached another and said, "Pardon me, but there is a mote in your eye." The friend might have answered, "What of it? A mote is such a small thing that it does not irritate my eye in the least." But pardon me, there is a plank, a whole saw log, in your eye." Had Dr. Jowett heard that I dare say that he would have questioned, "What does he mean?" Well, what does he mean? This is the case because that was humor.

On another occasion when he was rebuking the Pharisees, he said, "You Pharisees are very careful. If you get a gnat into your wine, you strain and strain and strain. You would not drink a gnat for anything. But if you get a camel in your wine, you gulp him down, hair, hoofs, humps and all. You strain at a gnat and swallow a camel." Jesus is laughing at them and with them. He had a sense of humor. If God has given you a sense of humor, make use of it. Learn to laugh at yourself and laugh with others.

Never forget that one can be just as serious in the telling of something that will make people laugh as he can in saying something that will make them weep. The reason some people object to humor in the pulpit is because they have never distinguished between solemnity and seriousness. They do not mean the same at all. A man may be very solemn and very flippant. He may have a face "that creases and mantles like a standing pool" and yet have a very chaffy heart. On the other hand a man may be very sunny and very serious.

Always we are to be serious, but that does not mean that we are to be solemn. Cultivate the habit, then, of laughter. Finally, we are to be in earnest. There is something fascinating about an earnest man. An earnest man makes possible the presence of God in his own heart. But no half-hearted Christian can walk with a whole-hearted
Christ. When the friends of Jesus looked into his face one day, they read
there the meaning of a passage of scripture that they had but imperfectly
understood before. They said, "The seal for God's house is burning him up."
Even an ordinary house on fire is interesting. A man on fire is the most
interesting something in the world.

But if you want to be uninteresting, just be half-hearted. The author
of the 119th Psalm says, "I hate men who are half and half." So do we all.
In that respect we are kinfolds of Jesus Christ. The only example of divine
disgust we have in the New Testament is when Jesus said of a certain church,
"I know you, that you are lukewarm, you are neither cold nor hot; you are
half-hearted, you are straddlers, you/sitters on the fence, you are hitters of
the middle of the road. "You have never known the majesty and the mirth of
gathering yourselves together, hurling yourselves like a projectile for life
or for death into a great cause." The man who stands in the pulpit, if he
is to represent his Lord, must be a man who in laughter or in tears is
desperately in earnest.

It is this type of man that God has been able to use across the years.
It is this type of man that God can use today

"Oft when the spell is on me to deliver
Melt the illusion and the truth lies bare
Desert or throng, the city or the river,
Melt in the lucid paradise or air.

Only like souls I see the folk that under
Slaves who should conquer, bound who should be kings
Hearing their one hope for the empty wonder
Sadly content with the show's of things.

Then with a burst of intolerable craving
Shivers through me like a trumpet call
O to save them, to perish for their saving
Die for their right, be offered for them all."

The man who faced a needy world, with that holy passion helped to turn that
world of his day upside down. Not only so but he has breathing on all
the subsequent centuries like a teeming gulf stream.

"How did your neighbors
Answer me a question who was accustomed to know
A man the like of that time among the greatest minds of the people of Scotland. How
does my minister preach, came the reply. The preacher did
Here, then, is one man's opinion as to how to make the worship service our finest hour. We are to remember constantly what we are there to do. This will save us from wasting time by starting late, by becoming mere bulletin boards, by peddling out-faddish anecdotes about ourselves. It will drive us to the matter in hand like an arrow to its mark. Thus we shall seek in earnest naturalness to deliver the message that God has given us, that we do this in the faith that his word shall those who hear will not be faithless, but believing.

not between earth and heaven, but ever even what fortunecome face with Sarah, and in grace, after this fashion: Lord, thou art the pardoner, thou canst make something out of nothing, therefore bless this sermon.

I am conscious of the fact that if of course, imperfect as these may be, more imperfect has been any production, yet how they are for what they are worth!
OUR FINEST HOUR

"Then Peter opened his mouth and said."
Acts 10:24

With acknowledgment of my debt to Winston Churchill, I am calling the subject of this address "Our Finest Hour". I have chosen this text because it is a past record of a victorious service. Those privileged to be present on that eventful day had an experience that they could never forget. That hour of worship was one of those high hours of the soul from which all other hours took on new meaning, new purpose and new power. Something took place in this service that was so transforming that they simply could not forget it. Now, the wonder of it is that a service of this kind does not belong to one single generation, but to every generation. It was no more at home in the first century than it ought to be in the twentieth century. It did not fit into the private residence of Cornelius any better than it would fit into our sanctuary. Nor was it more needed in that distant day than it is needed in this day. Here then is a victorious service such as we ought to have in our own churches Sunday by Sunday.

Now, in calling that hour in which we as ministers are privileged to lead in the public worship of God our finest hour, I realize that I am making a high adventure of faith. Of course, we are aware that the hour of public worship is not always our finest hour. Sometimes it seems the very opposite. Sometimes it seems nothing more than a dreary trudge through the Valley of Humiliation, or a pathetic and futile effort to climb the hill Difficulty. Sometimes our agony is so excruciating that we cry with Paul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" Sometimes we finish the hard ordeal feeling as if we would like to press a button and slip out of sight. We should like to go as wounded King Arthur to some Vale of Avalon for rest and healing.
In my last address I dealt with that part of the worship service that ought to reach its climax in the service. If this is to be the case, how are we to bring it about? Naturally, I am assuming that the minister before he goes to the pulpit, has not only prepared his sermon, but that he has done something even more important, that he has prepared himself. Now, assuming that the minister has prepared his sermon, how is he to deliver it?

To begin, let him see to it that he does deliver it. Recently I was at a church service where two different boys to bring my paper. One of them was very careful. Often he would put the paper into my hand. When he did not do that, if the day was windy or rainy, he would put it inside the screen. He would see to it that I had a chance to get it. The other boy would throw the paper almost anywhere. If it happened to be a windy day, the chances are that I would not find it at all. If it was a rainy day, I could usually count on finding it in the biggest puddle of water in the yard. It is possible for the minister to be thus careless about the delivery of his sermon. How, then, shall we deliver?

1. Be natural. Be natural in your attitude and be natural in your voice. This you as to do not because you have the best personality of any man or the best voice of any man. There are others superior to you in both. You are to be natural because your personality and voice are your own. You may not like your particular garden spot, but it is your only chance to raise fruits and flowers. It is all you have. Therefore, use what God has given you because it is yours.

Now, the are ministers who forget this, thus they seek to somebody else. By doing so, they at least fall into these glaring faults: First, they become self-conscious. The man who is trying to be somebody else to watch
himself or he will forget the particular character that he is seeking to play.

For instance, I know a man who has a brogue which is not quite natural to him.

But in spite of this he manages quite well so long as he is on his guard. But when he forgets himself, he lapses into ordinary English. The fact that a minister who plays a part has to be constantly on guard against his real self makes him self-conscious.

Second, the minister seeks to be somebody else must put himself more or less in a strain. It is hard to pretend to be rich when one is poor. It is a strain to pretend to know when one does not know. It is a tremendous strain to play young when one is old. It is always a strain to try to be something that you are not. This strain is hard both on the minister and those who hear him.

It happens that I have a sensitive throat. I have heard a man so use his voice as to make my throat hurt out of sympathy for him. Be natural, therefore.

To refuse to do so leads at once to self-consciousness and strain.

Third. In an effort to be somebody else, we are likely to lose the charm that is our own. Naturalness is one of the most charming characteristics that any individual can have. When Will Rogers was killed back in 1935, his death was lamented by more people than any other man who had died up to that time.

Why was this the case? What was the secret of his popularity? Certainly one great factor was his naturalness. He never ceased to be himself. Being natural is a bit like wearing clothes that fit. Even clothing that are made out of ordinary material will look well if they fit the individual who wears them.

On the other hand I do not care how fine the material, if the garment doesn't fit it makes the wearer look awkward and ugly. Had David gone out to meet Goliath in the armor of Saul he would have looked ridiculous, because Saul's armor did not fit him. Not only so but he might have been right. David won because he dared to be himself, both in dress and otherwise. When I was just just getting well into my teens, I made up my mind that I would stop wear-
the custom made garments that other farmer boys about me were wearing. I was going to get a tailor-made suit. To this end I sent off and got the catalog of Montgomery, Ward & Company. I turned over to the tailoring department and saw the picture of a magnificent chap who looked just like I wanted to look. Therefore, though the suit cost the forbidding sum of $13.50, I made up my mind I was going to possess it.

Now, there was one catch. There was no tailor about to take my measure. Therefore, it became necessary for me to take my own measure. Blessed is the man that can take his own measure. I took mine and sent off specifications and in due course, the suit came. I tucked it under my arm and went upstairs to put it on and to come down and surprise the family. I did. You might have tried that stunt on every form of man and beast, but there was nothing in the heavens above or the earth beneath or the waters under the earth that it would have fit.

Mindful of the fact that the catalog said specifically, "We are not responsible for the fit of a tailor-made suit," I was in deep distress. In spite of this stern word from the catalog, in sheer desperation I wadded the creation up and sent it back, writing only: "I know that you are not responsible for the fit of a tailor-made suit, but I cannot use this." A few days later I received a check from the company, not only refunding my money, but paying express charges both ways. I have always deeply appreciated it, but I have never fully understood it. But my guess is that when they looked at that suit they said, "Anybody that is even as approximately deformed as this suit indicates, needs help and needs it badly."

Now, what was wrong with my suit? It was not that it was not well made. It was not that it wasn't of beautiful material. It had all these qualifications. The only objection was that it didn't fit. It was a misfit, and the cheapest of
all cheap things is a misfit. Therefore, when we go out clad in armor not our own, using a voice not our own, trying to be a personality that is not our-selves, we become self-conscious, we strain, we also lose what charm we have. So I beg of you, be yourself; your best possible self, but be yourself. You cannot win in any other way.

2. In delivering your sermon, use every power that God has given you. Use your imagination. If you have little, seek to cultivate what you have. Make your people see things. It is perfectly amazing how some ministers can so discuss one of the live characters of the Bible as to seem to be performing an autopsy upon him, while another can make that same character seem as vividly alive as the friend who is sharing his pew.

Dare to tell stories. It is said of Jesus that he spoke few things unto them in stories and without a story spoke he not unto them. Every preacher ought to make a study of how to tell a story. Let me warn you against one thing, and that is putting in too much detail. You can kill the most thrilling story by crushing it to death under details. For instance, we begin in this fashion: "Jim Smith and I were walking down the street on Tuesday. No, I don't believe it was Jim, it was John Jones." And then we start over again and say, "Let me see, it was not Tuesday, it was Wednesday." And before we get through nobody knows who it was or when. Beware of too much detail.

Do not be afraid of a story that has in it a touch of tears. I do not think our modern congregations are suffering unduly from too much emotion. I sat by a minister at a banquet some time ago. He was a typical doctor of philosophy and a lovely gentleman. In the course of our conversation he warned me earnestly against appealing in any way to the emotions. I was not disposed to argue the question but I had a strong conviction that the malady from which his congregation was suffering was not emotionalism. In fact, I dare say that the pews of his church gave way to their emotions quite as often
the members of his congregation.

Of course, I am not making an appeal for mere "sob stuff". I am only asking that we deal realistically with life as we find it, which is a mingling of joy and sorrow, laughter and tears. Some years ago I attended a service along with Bishop Hughes. I did not know him very well then. I have come to know him since as a most choice soul. At that time he looked to me like a man who did not have a tear in his make up. Yet as the minister preached that day with tenderness and power, he wept along with the rest of us. When the sermon was over, he made this remark: "It helps me to cry like that. It always purges something clean out of me."

There is no skate on thin ice, do not hesitate to use clean and wholesome humor. Laughter and tears are next-door neighbors. It is my conviction that humor does not belong simply to the theater, to the movies, or to the club, or to the lodge, or to the home; everywhere, in fact, except in the sanctuary. I know there is a certain type of humor that has a place there or anywhere else. But I am convinced that laughter is just as pious as tears. The minister who has no sense of humor is very prone to major on minors. Blessed, therefore, is the minister who has a sufficient humor to "sweeten bitter things with gentle laughter."

Now, in saying this I am not forgetting that there are many excellent and consecrated people both in pulpit and pew who think laughter has no place in the sanctuary. It would never have occurred to me had I been a friend of the prophet Amos to have told him a joke. I do not think he would have seen the point. I would have hesitated before relating even the most ludicrous experience to the prophet Jeremiah. Nor would I have felt very much at home in saying something extremely ludicrous to that saintly Englishman who graced the pulpit of Fifth Avenue, John Henry Jowett.
To cheerfully, they wrote that he would make the truth have written of him that he laughed, but because he was so unfortunate, wet with tears and most affected had deeply sought sobbing all the while the story that this cheerful man, the sun light of all sunny grace, should be interpreted on the scaffold. My dear the Bibles and Jesus wept because Bible and Jesus wept, but it is never said that he laughed. What a queer sad day! I thank your sermons of that house. Remember that the

"Death to all! Make the last impression of the committed sermons,"

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To see that Jesus had a delicious sense of humor it is only necessary to read the gospels. Look at this picture. One friend approached another and said, "Pardon me, but there is a note in your eye." The friend might have answered, "What of it?" Or he might have said, "What does it mean?" 

On another occasion when he was rebuking the Pharisees, he said, "You Pharisees are very careful. If you get a goat into your vine, you strain and strain. You would not drink a goat for anything. But if you get a camel in your vine, you gulp him down, hair, hoofs, and all. You strain and strain. You would not drink a camel for anything. But if you get a goat in your vine, you strain and strain."

Learn to laugh at yourself and laugh with others. Never forget that one can be just as serious in the telling of something that will make them laugh. The reason some people object to humor in the pulpit is because they have never distinguished between solemnity and seriousness. They do not mean to be funny. On the other hand a man may be very solemn and very serious, and have no conscious playful faculty or ability. Some people are so solemn that they are considered to be stuffy and uninteresting. Yet they do not mean to be so. And yet some of those who are most serious are the most attractive and the most interesting. Always we are to be serious, but that does not mean that always we are to be solemn. Cultivate the habit, then, of laughter.

3. Finally, we are to be in earnest. There is something fascinating about an earnest man. An earnest man makes possible the presence of God in his own heart. But no half-hearted Christian can walk with a whole-hearted
Christ. When the friends of Jesus looked into his face one day, they read there the meaning of a passage of scripture that they had but imperfectly understood before. They said, "The zeal for God's house is burning him up." Even an ordinary house on fire is interesting. A man on fire is the most interesting something in the world.

But if you want to be uninteresting, just be half-hearted. The author of the 119th Psalm says, "I hate men who are half and half." So do we all. In that respect we are kinsfolks of Jesus Christ. The only example of divine disgust we have in the New Testament is when Jesus said of a certain church, "I know you, that you are lukewarm, you are neither cold nor hot; you are half-hearted, you are straddlers, you/sitters on the fence, you are hitters of the middle of the road. You have never known the majesty and the might of gathering yourselves together, hurling yourselves like a projectile for life or for death into a great cause." The man who stands in the pulpit, if he is to represent his Lord, must be a man who in laughter or in tears is desperately in earnest.

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"Oft when the spell is on me to deliver
Melt the illusion and the truth lies bare
Desert or throng, the city or the river,
Melt in the lucid paradise or air.
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Slaves who should conquer, bound who should be kings
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Here, then, is one man's opinion as to how to make the worship service our finest hour. We are to remember constantly what we are there to do.

This will save us from wasting time by starting late, by becoming mere bulletin boards, by peddling out feeble anecdotes about ourselves. It will drive us to the matter in hand like an arrow to its mark. Thus we shall seek in earnest naturalness so to deliver the message that God has given us that those who hear will not be faithless, but believing.
I. This sense of emotion will arise we from resting the time of our

the musician to prove to fall.

Khwe's busines, we shall truly be saved from perturbation until the time when

Thus enter the serenade with the consciousness that we are in the

that you have a right to begin your serenade by anything "Shine with the Lord.

you are listening to a message that to at once you're and the

calling on. We take it that you have taken time to listen to this

called man. We take it that you are more to take it that you are more to take it.

"Shine with the Lord. The same as they are commanded those of God.

our seat is a path. "Shine, therefore, as we all here present

are God's ambassadors. The same as they are commanded those of God.

to end what he there to do, in a minute of secret, you are there

publicly, what I have experienced, to hear the musician to proceed who has

The next annexation, it seems to me. If we are to make the hour of

our flagship hour

are at part. Here they are we to make the hour of figure to be

the mean that's the experience which are men. may know that the figure that

taking the musician and safing it to the heart of the consciousness to about

premed with the consciousness of the fact that the pleased! May spirit to

we are here. That something the business from above! I am convinced that to

more than forty years. I am still as I face each moment a bit like the

something to utilize that it's a happening at this point. After explaining for

very low indeed, I can never took upon it to that another sensation. If it

ever come to it an something that the altogether consciousness. Hence I am

the hour in which I should read in public even without a chime. I can

but in spite of all this failure, I confess that I can never come to
congregation by being just a little late. There are people, and some of
them get into the ministry, who are constitutionally behind time. There
is never a day that they cannot find some traffic jam or some other cause
for delaying the meeting of which they are a part. They seem never to
realise that in wasting the time of others, they are wasting the lives of
others. Every minister ought to be sensitive to the other man’s time.

To be late, therefore, at any sort of a meeting is a great discourtesy.
It is also to cheat people out of the stuff of which life is made. But to
be late at a worship service for which you are responsible is worse still.
It is an affront to God and man. The tardy minister is little likely to
impress his people that he is an intense and ardent crusader. He rather
gives the impression that he is a kind of ecclesiastical vagrant who is
saying to himself, “Well, it’s about time to begin the service. We don’t
expect anything of it, but we might just as well drift in into it.” He
man has a right to waste both time and influence by being late.

2. If we are possessed by a sense of mission, we shall not waste the
time of our people by making needless announcements. Most churches today
publish a bulletin, also. Most congregations can read. It is a futile
thing, therefore, for a minister to make the usual announcements when they
are already printed. If an announcement is usual, it is not interesting
any way. Folks are only interested in the unusual. Yet I have known
ministers to read the bulletin through to their people from beginning to
day, and then say, “Now, that is the bill of fare for the week.” In my
opinion that is just a painful way of wasting time. Making routine announce-
ments, generally speaking, is a bit like the ticking of a clock. We do
not notice the ticking of a clock while it is ticking. We only notice it
when it stops. Do not, therefore, allow yourself or your people to turn
you into a bulletin board.
3. If we come into our pulpit with a sense of mission, it will save us from talking too much about ourselves. Now, there is a type of personal experience that is always in order. Many a time what we say about ourselves, especially if we are bearing witness to the saving and guiding power of God in our own lives, will be at once the most interesting and the most helpful part of our sermon. Therefore, we never apologise for such testimony. Would it not have been ridiculous had Paul said, "Pardon me for this personal reference, my brethren, but I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." There are times, therefore, when personal references are altogether right and helpful.

But the talking about one's self to which I refer is the prefacing of our sermon by telling either the tragedies or the triumphs of the previous week. Sometimes we parade our tragedies. We have been having a hard time and we are eager for our congregation to know it. Recently we had to sit up with a man who was dying, or we ourselves or some member of our family has been ill. Therefore, we have come to the pulpit without proper preparation and with an all-round sense of inadequacy. Hence we feel called upon to make excuses.

Such a course in my opinion is a mistake. It is my own personal conviction that we ought always to trust God and do our very best without mentioning our handicap. By making excuses we merely lessen our chances of victory. When we thus offer alibis, we do two things; First, we cater for sympathy. We say to our people, "Pity me, I am in a bad fix." Second, we are thus likely to kill whatever expectancy our congregation may have brought to the service. "You may have come to church today expecting little, we say. Well, you need not expect anything." Therefore, since excuse making is at once an appeal for pity and a foe of expectancy, let me urge that you never begin your service with an alibi.
There are sometimes tempted to parade our triumphs. We have had a busy week. We have met some very important people. We have gone to great cities and addressed important meetings. In fact, we have done so much that the wonder is that we have been able to live through it all. Having thus heard our boasting, it will not be surprising if our people feel like singing, "And are we yet alive and see each other's face?" But if we bear in mind our mission, we shall be saved from trivial talk about ourselves, and go at once to the business of the day — the leading of our congregation in worship.

II

How shall we lead?

1. Music. Since music ought to be a helpful part of every service, happy is the minister who keeps on good terms and in touch with his choir leader and with his choir. If this is not the case, sometimes the selection of the choir will flatly contradict what the minister has to say, or there will be a solo that has no meaning at all. I have heard soloists who had power to lift the hearers into the very presence of God. But I have heard yet more soloists who had to be endured rather than to be enjoyed. At last I knew how to sympathise with the woman who had suffered many things of many physicians, and was nothing better but had rather grown worse. Even so have I suffered from certain soloists.

Not only should the minister consult with the choir, but generally speaking, he should select his hymns, and unless there is a reason, participate in their singing. There are some ministers who remind me of the old time circus man who stood in the ring and popped his whip and all the animals and all the people went through their acts, while he was simply an onlooker. The minister ought to be more than a director of worship. He ought so far as possible to participate in every part of it.
2. I am blessed is the congregation who has a minister who can read the lesson to the edification of the saints. I used to have an English teacher who would read a selection to the class and make it so sparkling and gripping that I would hurry off at my first opportunity to buy the book from which he read. Oftentimes when I bought it, I found it thoroughly prosaic. What beauty it ever had had been born of the impressive reading of the teacher.

Now, I have heard ministers so read the Bible as to produce an opposite impression. I am afraid I have done the opposite myself. I am not a good reader. Because of that I have made a habit across the years of memorizing my scripture lesson. I got into this habit largely by accident. But having begun, I continued so that when I read the lesson from memory it got almost a unanimous hearing. Some listened because it was out of the ordinary. Some to see if I could get through with it. Thus, as Paul would say, "Whether in jest or in earnest, the scriptures were listened to, and I therein rejoiced, yea, and will rejoice."

Now, I would certainly not recommend that every minister memorize his scripture lesson. That would cost those not having an easy verbal memory far more than it would be worth. But I do urge every young minister to read and re-read his lesson in the privacy of his study till he can read it with some degree of charm and power to his congregation.

Next is the public prayer. In my opinion we are far ahead of the ministers of a generation ago in our pastoral prayers. When I was just entering the ministry it was the fashion for every minister to have at least one dimension in his pastoral prayer, and that was length. I am glad that that has gone out of date. How many times have the saints been wearied by hearing some brother make a long oration in the presence of God in the form of prayer? It was the style then to ask for everything under the sun, and
whenever we asked for everything under the sun in every prayer, we usually get what we expect and that is nothing.

Now, it is the purpose of a prayer to lead the congregation to worship, to bring them into the conscious presence of God. And the high art of being able so to voice the longings and the aspirations, the joys and the sorrows of our most backward saints and of your most mature saints in such a fashion as to enable them to say "amen" in their hearts is indeed a high and heavenly art. It is one that is not easy to attain. It is one worthy of much prayerful consideration. I confess that as I have grown older, I have given more and more time to the preparation of my pastoral prayers. If we do not do this, we are likely to find ourselves praying about the same routine prayers Sunday after Sunday. Let us study to make our prayers helpful in the worship of God.

Now, there was a time when we called this first half of the service - the singing, the reading of the Scripture, and the prayer - the preliminaries. Of course, it was an unfortunate and rather slanderous name. Furthermore, I think we can safely say that we never quite meant that shabby name. Yet we came too nearly doing so. But today we seem to go to the other extreme. It is the service that now must often take a secondary place. Having come to regard the first half of the service of importance, some are in danger of coming to look upon preaching as a mere appendix.

This, I think, is a tremendous misfortune. The priest has a tendency in the modern pulpit to push the prophet out of his place. Now, the work of the priest is important. It is highly important. But, in my opinion, it is not so important as the work of the prophet. It is easier to be a priest than it is to be a prophet. It requires less of study and less of character. The truth of the matter is by far the hardest thing that a minister is called upon to do is to speak for God. Being the most difficult, it is also the
on to a grand atrocity in the session of the preacher.

cannot be played upon the fire part of the sermon, but it ought to move
or seen seat, waggert lad, as in this place. For much emphasis, therefore,
I turn round with a face cool from all danger, it is then that I have met
hand message from God, moreover be the spoken at the time had been fresh.

or the sermon, moreover some minutes late had stood up and detestated a great
peace, but had left them when I have entered the church in the hearing
other cantate have attached up to meet God. I have been detestated by the
been hated by the people, those who are of the goods which I am sure of
have patronized to eat in the pew I have unamused formand the case. I
have

How, speaking out of my own personal experience, when I have been

detestated by the message from God.

Instead of speaking in the presence of the preacher, in the

in the hand. If the most not to begin a question and end in a anti-church.

full of life from the human affairs to lose life. If the million other

means that the service ought to reach the utmost through the sermon. The

whether service and the sermon. The service ought to be a whole. It rather

does not mean that there is an occasion between the so-called

in my opinion to preach. It to myself, the preacher, the fire take of the

It for one round the world. In the, therefore, the fire take of the

 Außerdem, It has been well said that when the light goes out in the put-

heavenly. Great ages of the church have been an age of great
Lest I myself should be a castaway. 1 Corinthians 9:27

"Lest I myself should be a castaway". When Weymouth translates this passage, instead of castaway he uses the word rejected. When Moffit and Goodspeed translate it they use the word disqualify.

"Lest I myself should be disqualified". The danger that Paul is facing is not of the ultimate loss of his soul, though that might be included. He is rather facing the peril of becoming useless. He sees the possibility of becoming more shattered and broken crockery. He sees the possibility of degenerating into savourless salt that is henceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men.

Now, this work of Paul's is very arresting. It is arresting in the first place because of the man who said it. Paul was a man who had a rich religious experience. In the language of our fathers, "he had been mightily saved". One day as he journeyed from Jerusalem to Damascus there was a flash and a fall. Then he rose, brushing the desert sands from off his garments, to say from out of his own experience, "It is a true saying and worthy of universal acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners".

Not only had Paul been mightily converted, but he had been greatly used. Even his enemies had to confess that he had turned the world upside-down. He had gone up and down that hard Roman world, and had breathed upon it like a reviving springtime. It is impossible to overestimate the usefulness of this man. He was useful in his own day, and we feel the impact of his passionate personality to this hour.

Not only had he been mightily saved, and not only had he been greatly used, but he had been a growing Christian and a growing minister. At the Council of Jerusalem when he had met his Lord for the first time, Jesus had spoken to him
this word, "Rise and stand upon thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in which I will appear unto thee". Paul, having been mightily converted, was not content simply to try to maintain his hold upon these things. He passed on to those things, larger revelations, more intimate fellowship with his Lord.

So fully was he successful in this that there came a time when he claimed that there was no question that men could ask him about himself that he could not answer in terms of Jesus Christ. He put it in these words, "For to me to live is Christ." That is, Christ was the source, the author of his life. Paul did not reckon that he had lived a life worthy of the name till he had met Jesus. Not only was Jesus the author of his life, but Jesus had kept him through the stormy stressful years. Not only had he saved him and kept him, but he had become the product of his life. Paul meant, for me, "For me to live is to reproduce Christ". And to me, Paul, in any set of circumstances, is to be reminded of Paul's Lord.

Not only could he answer as to the author of his life and as to the one who had kept him through the years, but he declared, "For me to live is to become more and more like Christ". Christ had become the goal of his life. Here is the red hot passion of his soul, that I might know him and the fellowship of his suffering, and the power of his resurrection being made even conformed unto his death. Paul had been through the years a growing Christian, till he could now say, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live". He could affirm, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day". It is this man of such vital religious experience that is haunted by the possibility of becoming disqualified.
In answering this question it is necessary for me to use an outline that is entirely conventional. I use it simply because I do not know how to avoid doing so.

If, then, we are to keep fit to preach, we must look well to our physical bodies. We have run far past our fathers in a right regard for these bodies of ours. There was a time when they looked upon the physical as something that was inferior if not positively wicked. Their bodies were assets, they were liabilities. The body was simply a ball and a chain about the ankle of the soul that held back the runner from making the speed that he could have made had he not been hampered by the flesh. One of the greatest of the saints, you remember, spoke of the body as an ass. The body was neglected and treated with low consideration, therefore, something to be abused and of which we ought to rid ourselves just as soon as possible.

But, instead of that being the truth it is the very opposite of the truth.
3. He is answering because it puts the responsi-

bility for such failure where it belongs, that is

on the shoulders of the person himself. Nobody

caused him to fall, Paul, but Paul. Nobody can

disquirefy you except you. Nobody can disagreefy

me but me. That is not to say that others

cannot hurt and harass, and bring them
can their doors in our faces, wound us, and

hurt our eyes with tears. Yet, nobody

can disagreefy your but yourself. The other

day a minister whose acquaintance had not

been realized said to me with bitterness

been realized said to me with bitterness

wet the heart. "He felt that he had

been in large measure disagreefyed,

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in which sense he was at the height of his

in which sense he was at the height of his

I never got the heart. He felt that he had

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of the truth. This body of mine is my friend. It is a divine gift. It is the house in which I am to live. It is the instrument that I am to use. It is the car that I am to drive. Of course, if I make of it a miserable, tumble-down, jalopy, I might still be able to get along after a fashion, but if I take care of it and bring it to its finest possibilities, I can get on far better. This body is that through which I am to preach, and if by abusing it I make it incapable as an instrument then my preaching days are over.

I know that we have certain individuals belonging to our church who seldom attend services, but they do not leave us altogether desolate. They are with us in the spirit. I used to have one such out-in-Texas who would report to me week by week, that while he was not with me on Sunday he was with me in the spirit. By and by I got tired of listening to him and I said one day, "Brother Brown, I think spirits ought to be treated in one respect like dogs. If you can't come along and look after them you'd better keep them at home. An audience of ghosts is never an inspiring audience, and when it comes to taking up the collection, they count for naked nothing. But, an audience of ghosts is just as good as a minister who is a ghost, and unless you are present with your congregation in the body you are not going to be present with them at all in any helpful way. Therefore, you ought to look well to your body.

Every minister, therefore, owes it to his Lord and to the work he is undertaking to do all he can to keep as sound and strong his body as possible. He ought to learn what he can do and what he cannot, and act accordingly. There's not use for any man to be foolish enough to say that, "I can do anything that anybody else can do." That isn't true at all. What is one man's food might be another man's poison. I am simply urging upon you the plain, common-sense necessity of your
KEEPING FIT

learning how you can keep in your best physical condition and acting accordingly.

To this end you ought to learn what are the most useful eating habits. Some folks help themselves by the way they eat, while other folks handicap and finally kill themselves by the way they eat. Some people can eat a hearty meal and then preach. Others cannot. I, for one, belong to the latter number. I wouldn't dare eat a heavy meal and undertake to preach. I do not know of any situation in which I have found myself across the years that has been more fraught with wretchedness than to stand before the congregation with a full stomach and an empty head. Learn how to eat so as to meet your own physical needs.

Then, every minister ought to learn how to exercise. Some young preachers enter the ministry from athletic careers in college, but having entered the ministry they cease to take exercise altogether. They allow themselves to become physically flabby and soft. Then they have to consult a physician and the physician tells them they ought to play, and they hurry out some Saturday and play thirty-six holes of golf, and do themselves more harm than good, and sometimes even fall dead in an effort to catch up with the procession. Seek to keep your body in good repair by taking physical exercise of some kind every day.

Then, learn how to rest. Just remember that man is so constituted that he can do more work in six days than he can in seven. That is true of the layman. It is no less true of the minister. Do not think that because you are a minister you can walk roughshod over the Ten Commandments and get away with it. You can no more disregard the Ten Commandments and get away with it than you can the law of gravity. Jesus himself couldn't. If Jesus had flung himself down from the temple he would have broken his bones, and he knew it, just as any
Therefore, I make bold to say that the most religious thing that a tired man can do is to rest. Every man ought to rest one day in the week. Every man ought to take a vacation. I have seen those here and there who had conscientious scruples against taking a vacation. They would spring their old chestnut, "The devil never takes a vacation, therefore I am not going to take one." I am thinking now the need to say that, called of all the friends. He had a constitution that should have made him a good preacher at eighty, but he was conscientiously opposed to a vacation. While he served the Lord, he imitated the example of the devil. You know, "Jesus said, "Come ye, yourselves apart, and rest awhile." But he would take one Sunday in the year and preach that Sunday somewhere else with the results that when he should have been at the height of his power, he was a total wreck. He had become disqualified.

A man who is dead tired is unfit to preach. The truth of the matter is he is unfit to live with. He is apt to be irritable, and babyish, and whiny. Elijah was a great man, a tremendous man, and yet we find him one day under the juniper tree telling himself and telling the Lord that he was the only good man in the world and that he hoped that he wouldn't be here long. He is actually asking God to let him die. In so doing, he is not quite honest. A man who is utterly exhausted forgets how to be. If he had been that utterly-exhausted if he had really wanted to have died, he wouldn't have had to pray about the matter. All that would have been necessary was for him to stop around Jezreel for a few hours and Jezebel would have fixed him up.

What was the matter with Elijah? It wasn't that he was a weakling. This was in large measure the matter. He had passed through...
Some of the most stormy, nerve-racking experiences that a minister could possibly have. He had exhausted himself nervously and physically, and when he had won the battle, he trotted seventeen miles from Carmel to Jezreel, in his enthusiasm over his victory, and had received the astonishing word.

When he got to Jezreel, and Jezebel sent him word that he had better look out, he turned and ran another day's journey into the wilderness. He was utterly exhausted. Therefore, he was un-fit for service and the Lord didn't even try to use him any more till he had given him a thorough rest. The most religious thing that a tired man can do is to rest.

Not only ought a minister to rest, somewhat, week by week, but every minister ought to take a vacation every year. He ought to do it for the sake of his own congregation. He ought to do it for the sake of his family. He ought to do it for his own sake. If he refuses the chances are that he will impair his ministry, and if he keeps on refusing the chances are that he will cease to preach long before it was necessary. The chances are, further, that he may get to heaven ahead of time. Now, it never has struck me that that type of piety is most beautiful that is all a great hurry to get to heaven. The best way to get ready for the life to come is to love this life, and live it as bravely and as faithfully as we can. And personally, though I am hoping to make my calling and election sure, I do not have any desire to get to Heaven ahead of schedule. I want the reception committee to have their lamps trimmed and burning as well as mine is when I arrive. So, do not wear yourself out and impair your usefulness and shorten your life by disregarding the ordinary laws of health.
KEEPING Fit

The necessity for this was impressed upon me by
Here I am speaking out of quite a painful experience. When
I entered the ministry the atmosphere was tense with enthusiasm and
mine was the day of the topica era.
high expectancy. One cry that rang in my youthful and ardent soul
was this, "Evangelize the world in this generation". It was a vastly
hopeful era. I set myself to the task with urgency and earnestness. I
sought to shorten the time. I was going to evangelize my part of it
in a single year. The result of it was that I went home one night
from a series of meetings where I had paid absolutely no attention
to my physical needs to be taken with a chill and to have to spend
long weeks in bed.

By and by when I was able to be up once more I was little
better than a wreck. Many a time I have had to sustain myself with
the pulpit as I tried to preach. Then one day, after consulting a
wise physician, I came home and said to my wife, "I am going to
quit being sick now, and I am going to get well", and under God I
did get well. I feel about it like Geland did when he said, "I
bound up his wounds and God healed him". Under the direction of my
physician I started to keeping the laws of health that were laws for
me, and I got well.

This was a painful experience but it has been worth far more
than gold to me. It has taught me to rest when I am tired, and since
that day, now nearly forty years ago, I have not consulted with flesh
and blood. You will find in most every church a very few people who
do not think the preacher needs a vacation. But do not let misguided
friends impair your ministry. I would not urge you to adopt
my methods. They might not fit you, but I learned fairly early that
in some matters it was better to announce to the official board rather
than consult with them. And in the matter of vacation I always ann-
ounced. I would simply say, "I am starting my vacation tomorrow and
KEEPING FIT

will be back at a certain date. I began quite early to take a month of each year, and for about the last twenty years of my ministry I have taken two months, and this has enabled me in some measure to keep fit, though my past life has been given to the downtown church.

Let me urge you, therefore, to look well to your physical needs. I had an old school friend who was not a Christian. He was brilliant, but might have been a most useful man, but he largely wasted his substance for the best years of his life in riotous living. At last he drew to a sharp halt, and he said, "I have quit running around. I have quit dissipating altogether." Then, he added, "Don't misunderstand me. I haven't become a Christian, not yet." He said, "The reason I changed, I just got tired of hurting." And so, lest you should get tired of hurting, use an ounce of prevention that's worth a whole ton of cure and look well to your physical needs.

II

Now, if you are to keep fit to preach, you must look well to the cultivation of your mind. If it is you must be a growing man.

Now and then I meet a young chap who has just come out of the seminary, and he has a feeling that during those busy years he has laid up a stock pile of knowledge that ought to last him through the remainder of his days. But while he has sat at the feet of the learned he has managed to scoop out a reservoir that holds so much information that he can draw on it till he is an old, old man. Now, if you look upon your college career in that light, it would have been better by far if you had never gone to college. Just remember that the folks to whom you are to preach will care very little about your degree. They will care very little about how much you know.

Sundays and Common Sense to Speak English and Effect
that you learned in the seminary. It is only what you can do for them in terms of practical preaching that will really count.

I knew of few ministers more pathetic than those who look to their college training to get them by. When I went as a teacher to a certain town in Tennessee there was a minister who had just been moved, to the great delight of all his parishioners. This young minister in preaching a sermon on the advantage of entering the ministry named as one advantage this, "That you didn't have to start preparing you sermon until Friday unless you so desired. You could be a man of great leisure", and oftentimes he would remind his people that he supposed he had spent more time in school and knew more about Greek than any member of his congregation. Possibly he did. I doubt if there were a hundred men in his congregation who could have read a chapter of Plato at sight, and yet he did not greatly impress his people with his bigness. He only impressed them with his littleness.

Let me urge you therefore to make a habit of working. Let your mornings be spent in your study unless some emergency arises. Make a habit of it. If you fail to prepare a sermon in the early days of your ministry, you are likely to keep on failing. Or, if you prepare in the first few years of your ministry, and then accumulate a sufficient quantity of sermons to permit you to relax and quit, then you will lose your capacity to prepare. Every minister ought to hang over his desk these words of Jesus, "Remember Lot's wife". Mrs. Lot didn't expect to tarry long on the road from Sodom to safety. She was just going to pause for a little while, but pausing for a little while, she petrified, and was not able ever to start again. So many a preacher has done. Fail-
This is a danger to the church, ministers of every denomination. It is peculiarly dangerous to choose of own will to the case for two reasons. We found it exceedingly easy to move, if they were found for our longness in our present age for the next. Second, in power. A minister, who fasts, maintains a minister, where he will rest, or cannot maintain. Surely, our greatest blessing is what every church has a measure. It ought to be, an engine in the measure of every church, and not a measure of an engine. But such is not. The power and the poor conclude that measures have invented what the minister is not to become the channel of which he is not. Not this would be the case, every.
KEEPING FIT

ing to prepare new sermons, he has reached the place where he can no longer prepare new sermons.

Now, don't misunderstand me. I am not urging that every sermon you preach be new. It is perfectly right and helpful to repeat such a practice. It develops fluency. It enables you to make the old sermon into a better sermon. The only objection to preaching an old sermon is that it was not worth preaching the first time. If you have preached a really good sermon, repeat it. But don't repeat that and do nothing to make it effective, just preparing new ones. Remember that if you fail to prepare new sermons you lose your ability to do so you were because the result of your capacity to prepare. Arrested development.

Paul was a growing preacher. We get a hint of the secret of it as we read a bit of one of his letters. He is writing to his own son in the gospel. As he writes, a breeze comes in and fans the thin hair about his temples, and the old man shivers. A moment later it comes again and he shivers a bit more. Then I see him fumble behind him as if in search of something, then he smiles, a whimsical smile and says, "Oh, how silly of me. My cloak, I remember now, I left it at Troas with Capernaum. He takes up the pen and continues his letter, "Dear Timothy: When you come I wish you would bring my cloak, and do your best to come before winter for my rheumatism is hurting me, and I am finding it quite uncomfortable."

Then, as we read between the lines we may guess that another thought crept into the mind of the great preacher. He remembered that his son, Timothy, might be a bit overloaded, and so he seems to add, "If you find that you are so heavily loaded that you cannot bring the cloak and the books, then, leave the cloak but bring my books and parchment. I can afford to be uncomfortable, simply and I can afford to have rheumatism, but I just can't get on without my books." When Jesus died he refused the medicated wine. He determined
KEEPING FIT

to meet his Father with faculties unclouded by any drug, and so it
would seem that Paul was determined to meet his Lord intelectually
alert and alive. This was so close to him when he wrote this letter
that he could almost reach out and touch him with his hand, and yet
he sends for his books and his parchments because he is going to meet
God as a growing preacher.

III

Then, as the supreme and all inclusive necessity, keep vital your religious experience.

This I say undergirds all else, because if we are vitally Christian, if we have a zeal that is according to knowledge we can readily understand how necessary it is to care for our bodies. We can readily see how religious it is to care for them, in the realization that this body is not only the house in which I live but it is also the temple of the Holy Spirit. Naturally, also, we can see the necessity of giving to God our best intelectually. We can see how wicked it is for us to serve Him with only a fraction of our mental ability. Therefore, let me urge you to look well to the cultivation of your own spiritual life. No sadder words can be said than this, "They made me keeper of the vineyard but mine own vineyard have I not kept".

In order to keep spiritually fit, first reaffirm your vow of dedication day by day. Remind yourself that you did not choose your Lord, but that He chose you and ordained you and sent you forth to bring fruit, that your fruit might remain. Remember also that He, Himself, said that, "Apart from me you can do nothing". If you entered into the sheepfold by the door you entered by the vow of dedication. You entered by the door of obedience, you entered by this door because you submitted to Him. As you submitted to Him, you kept close to Him which is the best way to develop spiritual growth.

Then, making this vow of dedication, it is helpful to read the best of devotional literature. It is, above all else, helpful to read
he and this word also because the
minister in my opinion is tempted beyond
proof of others, I am aware that those who
know little about it and are wrong think
that the opposite is true: they believe that we can
by pass the valley of Temptation and reach the

But nothing is further from truth. Others have
their temptations, but mine are more
subtle. I have found that we,

The first, we need to learn how to preserve
the freed, we need to learn how to preserve

cultivation of our own spiritual lives.

in order to do this
KEEPING FIT

Personally, I find that nothing helps me to pray so much as the reading of the word of God. Sometimes, when I come to my hour for my own private devotions, I come as you do, utterly dead and listless. But, as I turn to the word sometimes the fires are rekindled. Take for instance a passage like this, "Behold I go down in spirit unto Jerusalem not knowing the things that shall befall me there save that the Holy Spirit witnesseth in every city seeing bonds and afflictions abide me, but none of these things move me." And when I get that far I can at least pause and say, "Well, I'm mightily afraid that they would move me, but I would like to be like that, to have that high courage." And then instinctively I turn my eyes and my heart toward God.

Therefore keep on, good termstedeGod it will enable us to put first things first. Now, there is a great temptation for the minister to put first things in the second place. Often times it seems that he has a deeply religious reason for doing so. It is a perfectly right and worthy ambition for every young minister, as he enters the ministry, to long to be the best possible preacher and to fill the best possible position in the church. No man ought to be satisfied with being and doing less than his best. But, sometimes we get absorbed in these things, we become more keen about the particular position that we desire than about doing the will of God. I have found in my own experience that this is a distressingly easy sin into which to fall.

Be eager, therefore, to do your best, and to fill the best possible position. But, if it so happens that this position does not readily come, try not to let it embitter you or to make you put that as the first aim of your ministry. Remember that is possible for the minister
KEEPING FIT

to be just as selfish in his pursuit of the ministry as the gambler is in the pursuit of his gambling. Self-pleasing may be the supreme law in both their lives. Now, self-pleasing is always disastrous but it is not always disastrous in the same way. One man can make self-pleasing the law of his life and go to the United States Senate. Another may make self-pleasing the law of his life and go to the gutter. One man can make self-pleasing the law of his life and end up in the penitentiary, and another man can make self-pleasing the law of his life and end on the platform of a popular pulpit, or even in the episcopacy. It is not the differing goals that signify, it is the common motive of self-seeking that lies back of both goals. It is only as we seek day by day to keep within the will of God that we can have any way of guaranteeing that we shall not fall into the tragic error of putting second things first.

3. Third, then, we need to keep vital religious experiences in order to keep alive our compassion. This ministry in which you are entering will make great changes in you. There are some people that it makes very tender. There are some people that increasingly have an understanding heart. There are some ministers that increasingly with the passing years become able to rejoice with those that do rejoice and to weep with those that weep. But such benificent results do not always follow. The ministry may become very hardening. It may rob you of an understanding heart, and it may dry up the fountain of compassion within your soul.

All this depends on how you meet the situation that will arise in your ministry day by day. You have entered a vocation that will bring you face to face with much joy. You have also entered a vocation that will bring you face to face with much of suffering and much of sorrow. You will see people with their hearts broken. You will be called to talk to those in whose lives there has been the setting of
times when you will be as perplexed and bewildered as the one who is appealing to you for help. Then will be times when you will have no feeling worth to say. But even then, if you have a presentiment of compassion, will your heart be as unresponsive as that which drove me to crimes of passion.

We have seen thousands a month to whom we would no more turn in an hour than a man would to the paradise where of. I knew that he was well as other men, but to whom we would have seen our fellow to whom we must look as a frightened child to go as naturally as a frightened child.
Now, don't misunderstand me. I am not urging that every sermon you preach be new. It is perfectly right and helpful to repeat your sermons. It develops fluency. It enables you to make the old sermon a better sermon. The only objection to preaching an old sermon is that it was not worth preaching the first time. If you have preached a really good sermon, repeat it. But don't repeat that and do nothing else. Remember that if you fail to prepare new sermons you lose your capacity to prepare.

As you think over the ministers whom you know, you will think of some to whom you would not dare tell a story of shame. You would never dream of coming to them to unpack your heart with words if you had fallen upon evil days. Then, thank God, there are others to whom you would go as a wounded child would go to its mother. You would know that there you would find compassion, that there you would find an understanding heart. One minister preached his compassion from a bitter heartache that he was called on to witness as a young man. "Since then", he declared beautifully, "I have gone among my people feeling somewhat as the man who walks over the battlefield after the battle. I have given my best hours to caring for those wounded in body and wounded in soul".

As a student years ago, I knew a choice young man in many respects. He was brilliant, gifted and yet cynical. He had scars on his soul that were made not through any fault of his own. His father had been an avowed atheist, His mother against a Christian, but under the jeers and under the cynical ties of her husband she had given up her faith and had come in utter bitterness to share his unbelief.

Now it was while she was at her most bitter rebellion that her

...
son was born. He came with the scars of their cynicism upon him. And while, normally, he was bright and witty, always sarcastic about religion. One night as we talked far into the hours of the morning he opened the doors of his heart and let me have a glimpse of the inside. How was he finding life? He told me that for ten years he had gone to bed, secretly hoping that he might not wake in the morning.

One beautiful Sunday we went together to hear a distinguished minister preach. His sermon was an intellectual treat. There was considerable conceit and arrogance about it, but it was otherwise quite satisfactory. But as we came away, I said to this young man, "How did you like him?" He spoke in bitterness. He said, "He reminded me of a man standing at a safe distance on the river bank watching some unfortunate chap drown, and saying, 'You fool, you, you had no business falling in there to begin with'. I do not know of a worse criticism than that. We lose our fitness for this ministry when the fountains of our compassion dry up. God can not cease the man who has lost his tenderness of heart. Therefore, you must keep close to your Lord. Again and again I have come to him to say: to him that if there is to be any great compassion, if there is to be any worthwhile serving, 'Thou, thyself must love and serve through me'. It is only as we walk with him that we can share his tenderness for needy people. Last of all, it is only as we keep close to our Lord that we can maintain, to use Paul's words, the 'spiritual glow'. Most of you, I think, are entering this ministry enthusiastically and expectantly. I certainly hope that is the case. If it isn't, I tell you frankly you ought not to enter. And I will say further that you will be useful very largely in proportion to the way the fires of your enthusiasm are kept burning on the altar of your heart. God has never been able to do very much with the man who has left his first love.

It is just this loss of the gleam and the glow that takes place...
in so many about mid-life that has led to the demand of so many congregations for a young preacher. "You know," they say, "we want a young preacher so he can appeal to young people." Now, as a matter of fact, a young preacher makes no especial appeal to young people. If he has any especial appeal at all, it is to old people. Often times they feel that they are young again in him. Young people do not care whether the preacher is nineteen or ninety, just so he talks their language and says something that is vital to them.

But, so often we lose the vision splendid and it fades into the light of common day before we reach middle life. A farse Presbyterian minister said to me some time ago, "Our people are so afraid of old ministers that though we have a hundred churches all with pastors in our presbytery, I am the oldest man of the lot, and I am only forty-five. Now of course to lose the ministry of the man by the time he gets to be forty-five is sheer nonsense. Any man who is growing in grace and in knowledge will be able to preach far better from forty-five to sixty-five or even seventy-five than he could from twenty-five to forty-five.

But why this appeal? It is this. When we lose our enthusiasm we are old whether we are seventeen or seventy. Once let your expectancy die, once get to the place where you go about your task on leaden feet, once tell your self that you can display the unspeakable riches of Christ and that folks will treat them as worthless geegaws of the market place because you handle these priceless wares in that fashion, and your days of usefulness are at an end. It is far better for the minister to lose his right arm than to lose his expectancy and to lose the glory of his early enthusiasm.

Such a loss is by no means necessary. I was talking to a man sometime ago who entered the ministry about the same time I did. He was one of those pitiful characters who had let the ministry sour in
his soul. He told me with considerable bitterness that he had not
got the break. He felt like the bishop had disqualified him by not
giving him what he desired, and the fires had all gone out and his en-
thusiasm had died down to grey ashes, and he was no longer a seer of
visions nor a dreamer of dreams. Such a man can not be useful.

But, if we stay close enough to our Lord to maintain the spirit-
ual glow our life will be as the path of the just ever is, as the
shining of a light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.
The best years of our ministry ought to be the latter years. "Blessed
is the man that walketh not in the council of the ungodly, nor stand-
eth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.
But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he
meditate day and night, and he shall be like a tree planted by the
rivers of water that bringeth forth his fruit in his season. His leaf
also shall not wither."

I like that great word, "His leaf also shall not wither". There
are evergreen trees, as you know, and there are evergreen lives, as a
man of poetic mind has called our attention. I remember an evergreen
that stood on the hillside above my old home in Tennessee. I have gone
to it in the flush of early spring when other trees were decking them-
selves in their Easter finery and found it a little commonplace. Then,
I have gone in the noontide hush of mid-summer when all the other
trees were in full dress, and it looked more commonplace, still. I've
gone again in the golden glory of autumn when other have decked themselves
in their royal robes of purple and gold and it looked positively out
of place. But I have gone, also, in the bleak days of winter and then
it stood out in its amazing beauty. Its leaf had not withered.

Therefore, look well to your body. Look well to being a growing
preacher intellectually. Look well to your spiritual growth lest by any
means when you have preached to others you yourself might be disqualified.
KEEPING FIT

Vacation I made it a rule to announce. I simply said, "I am starting my vacation tomorrow and will be back at a certain date". I began quite early to take a month of each year. As I have grown older I have taken two months. This has enabled me in some measure to keep fit during a ministry given almost wholly to down town churches.

Let me urge you, therefore, to look well to your physical needs. I had an old school friend who was brilliant and charming. He might have been a most useful man. But he wasted the best years of his life in riotous living. At last he drew to a sharp halt. "I have quit running round", he declared. "I have given up dissipating altogether". Then, he added, "Don't misunderstand me. I do not mean by this that I have become a Christian, at least not yet. The reason I have changed is that I just got tired of hurting". Even so, lest you should one day get tired of hurting, use an ounce of prevention and look well to your health.

II

If you are to keep fit to preach, you must look well to the cultivation of your mind. That is you must be a growing preacher.

Now and then I meet a young chap just out of the seminary who seems to feel that he has laid up a stock pile of knowledge that ought to last him through the remainder of his days. By sitting at the feet of the learned he has managed to fill a reservoir with so much that will prove inexhaustable. Now, if you look upon your college, set in that fashion it will do your more harm than good. Few ministers are more pathetic than those who look to their college training to get them by. No more will you win through your degrees. Just remember that the folks to whom you are to preach will care very little about such matters. They will care immensely whether you have the sanctified common sense to speak helpfully Sunday by Sunday.
“Putting it Over.”

My reason for presuming to discuss this question with you is this: I have been ordered so to do. Under no other circumstances would I have the audacity to discuss such a question before a body of this kind. So I am going to ask you to accept this fact as my one excuse and apology for what would otherwise seem a most immodest procedure.

How is the preacher to be a success? How is he to succeed in hitting the bull’s eye? This is the question to which I am to address myself. And by success I mean success as the word is generally used. By it I mean that the preacher accomplishes something of that for which he was called and which he set out to accomplish. What manner of man must he be in order to work victoriously at this most fascinating and difficult of all human tasks?

Now, understand that in the discussion of this morning I am to speak of the work of the ministry particularly on its human side. Of course we assume at the beginning that real success must be from the Lord. We recognize the fact at the very start that "It is not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord." But there are certain characteristics that belong to the preacher himself as an individual, as a man, and that I consider essential to real success.

It will perhaps surprise you somewhat and possibly you will in no sense agree when I say that the fundamental requirement for the preacher who is to really put over his job is that he be interesting. If he is not interesting, if he is a bore, if there is nothing of winsomeness about him, - I see no chance for him, however gifted or learned or profound he may be.

First of all, he must be interesting as a man. He must know in some measure how to gain the attention and friendship and love of folks. He must be a good man to have around. He ought to be a man that you would be glad to welcome in your home amidst the festivities of a wedding. He ought to be a man that you would be no less glad to welcome when the crepe is on the door and the blinds are drawn and you are face to face with the solemn mystery of death.

Did you ever think what a marvelously attractive man Jesus was? What a spell He cast over men! How He charmed them! How He fascinated them! That is not true of Him with reference to one class, but to all classes. How the young men gathered about Him! And the children, - why their mothers could not hold them in their arms when Jesus was about. They struggled down out of mother's lap to climb into the arms of this marvelously attractive Preacher. Jesus was attractive in Himself, attractive because of what He was.

And mark me, this business of being interesting and attractive is worth all the preachers' study. However largely we may be gifted by nature in this way, our powers can be increased. And however little we are gifted by nature, our meager equipment can be greatly enlarged. We can if we will make ourselves more interesting as individuals, more acceptable, more attractive. Not that we are to seek to do this by simply studying how never to make a positive statement and never to give offence and never to differ with the one to whom we happen to be speaking, - this is the surest way to be unattractive. There is just one individual more repellent than the one who differs with you and wants to argue on every
single question and that is the man who wants to agree with you on every single question. He is too sweet. He is like bonbons sopped in honey. One of the surest ways to become more interesting as an individual is by being more interested in others. And we will become more interested in others as we give ourselves a chance to know them better and enter into their fellowship, for I believe it is profoundly true that most of our lack of sympathy and lack of interest in others is born of our ignorance of them. Before Ezekiel started to preach he said he "sat where they sat", and that is a good seat for every preacher. We need to sit in the seat of the other fellow. The rattlesnake is never ill except in one season and that is in that season before he casts his skin, and he is almost blind. His ignorance makes him irritable. And many an individual and many a preacher has been made irritable and unsympathetic and repellent for the same reason, the ignorance of the real needs of his brother, of his real struggles, his joys and his sorrows.

Then the preacher ought to seek to be interesting as an advertiser. I know here we get on thin ice for there are a great many good and sincere and earnest people who do not believe in advertising. Personally I do. I believe in it in the first place because I see no moral or religious reason why we should not advertise. There is certainly nothing criminal in announcing an attractive subject upon which you are going to speak. Now if there is nothing morally wrong in advertising the only question to be asked is: Will wise and judicious advertising secure for the preacher a better hearing than he would otherwise get? If it will, then he ought to advertise. Because every preacher, if he is really called to preach and is in earnest about his job, wants a hearing. There is absolutely no thrill in an empty church. There is an utter lack of inspiration in a lumber yard even though that lumber yard be well polished and arranged in a most orderly fashion in the dim, religious light of a noble building. A church building and preacher without a congregation can send a man to the juniper tree if there is any earnestness in him. How many times I have looked at the eager upturned faces of a hundred empty pews and said, "Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me!"

If a preacher is to do any good he must have a hearing. I know we excuse our empty houses by saying that the Master preached His best sermon to one woman. But He was not announced to preach at that particular well curb that day and when the service was announced the whole city came out to hear Him. And if you are going to succeed in some way you must get an audience. Is there anything more depressing than coming into a great church building with people swarming all about the busy streets on the outside and practically nobody on the inside, and then old Dr. Dry-as-Dust gets down and prays and thanks the Lord that "where two or three are gathered together there is He in the midst". - when you know that he is not half so keenly conscious of the divine presence as he is of the human absence.

You can not convert an empty pew. In some way you must compel men to come. I believe it is a positive sin to preach to 500 people if by judicious advertising you could preach to a thousand. I know that there are those who say that while the merchant advertises his wares the preacher advertises himself. I know that in the eyes of many it is more dignified to keep your services a bit of a secret and go through them largely alone in the privacy of your church. But I can not but believe that God is more honored and that the cause you represent is more advanced by getting a congregation in any legitimate and honorable way that you can.
So I believe in advertising. I believe in it because I have seen its good results. It brings results in every other undertaking to which men set themselves. By the most glaring and glaring of advertising the picture shows and the theaters are forcing the people to look their way and are creating a strong current in their direction. My belief is that the church of the future must create a strong current flowing in their direction. They must win the attention of folks and make folks look at them. And one way to do this is by judicious, honest advertising.

Believing this to be true, it is my own practice to advertise. I never let one single week pass without it. If I can bring it to pass that when the word church is mentioned the average individual instinctively thinks of the Representative Church, then I am far sure of a continuous hearing.

Now, if advertising is to do any good, it must be interesting advertising. It must be such as will attract. There is such a thing as so advertising as to defeat your own cause. I heard a prominent man say sometime ago that the advertisement drove away quite as many as it brought. Whether that is true or not depends upon whether the man who is doing the advertising knows how to do it.

How may we advertise attractively? In the first place, there are certain subjects that are interesting in themselves. They are topics maybe of a local interest, maybe the discussions of home problems. In such cases you may state clearly that about which you are going to preach so that everybody will know. There are other topics in which people would not be interested simply because they know nothing about them. But they can be so named as to quicken interest and awaken curiosity. And mark me, I am not one who objects in the least to people coming to hear me from curiosity. All I ask is that they come. The curious are the adventurers in this world. They are the live folks, and if you have no curiosity it is because you are dead, mentally dead.

So there are certain subjects, and they are many, that you can so name as to excite curiosity and quicken interest. For instance, I preached some months ago on Hosea's wife. Suppose I had announced that in my newspaper advertisement just as it stands, - "The Wife of Hosea." What then? Well this: There would have been possibly 5% of those who read your announcement who would know who Hosea's wife was, that she was an unclean woman. And they might have decided that they knew as much about her as the preacher and that they did not care to hear any more. The other 95% would have looked upon her as some character infinitely removed from them by time and space and circumstances and they would have had not the slightest interest in her whatsoever. So instead of announcing a sermon on "Hosea's Wife", I announced a sermon on "The Prodigal Wife." The subject then became as new and as interesting as the last domestic tragedy around the corner and people came. Study to name your subjects interestingly and you will find that your study in this particular is as profitable as in the preparation of the sermon itself.

Of course it is understood that you may also name your subject honestly, that you will not announce your subject and preach on another. Otherwise there will come a time when you will cry, "Wolf, wolf", and nobody will come. The business world has learned that in
Putting it over

being scrupulously honest in living up to its advertisements, and cer-
tainly we have a right to expect as high standards of the pulpit.

And not only must the preacher be interesting as an advertiser -
he must be interesting from the moment he steps into the pulpit. He
must do so or the hearing that his advertising has brought him will go
for nothing and worse than nothing. People will not stay long to be­
hold a death's head. He must not only be interesting to hold his con­
gregation, but he must be interesting to do them any good while he is
holding them.

What is the good let me ask of preaching to an audience that is
not listening? Why keep on talking when nobody is paying you any
attention? The moment you lose the interest of your congregation that
moment you begin to waste your time as well as theirs. You must have
attention or nothing is possible. What you say may be as true as the
Sermon on the Mount, it may be as profound as Paul's Letter to the
Ephesians, - but if nobody is listening you might as well be making
mud pies. Watch your congregation. Give it just as close attention
as you do your sermon, and if ever there comes a time that you have to
part company with either your sermon or your congregation, then for
heaven's sake stick to your congregation. The habit of talking with­
out being heard is one of the great perils of the modern pulpit.

But the big question is how are we to be interesting. I think
we all realize that the holding of attention depends upon the interest
we awaken. How is the preacher to be interesting? First and fundamen­tally
I answer by being himself. Dare to be yourself. I know society will
seek to disindividualize you. I know cowardice will tempt you in another
direction. I know custom and convention will sometimes make your battle
hard and you will need much prayer and much faith and much grit. But if
you hope for success determine in the solemn secrecy of your soul that in
spite of the world and the flesh and the devil, you will be yourself.

For mark you, my young friend, this is the rock upon which many
a good ship has foundered and gone down. They were afraid to steer by
their own compass. I was preaching some weeks ago in a very small
church near Nashville, Tenn. The pastor of that church made this rather
pathetic remark. His situation, he said, was very hard. His people were
close to the city. They could hear good preaching there and after they
had heard those great preachers he could not interest them. In making
that statement he was forgetting that important factor called indi­
viduality. It is perfectly true that there were men in the city more scholarly
than he. There were men preaching there who were more gifted in every
way. But there was not a man in all that city who had had just his
vision of Jesus Christ. There was not a man there who had had just his
battle with sin. There was not a single man there who had journeyed into
the infinite by exactly his road. There was not one there who had drunk
from exactly the same springs along the way or who had found just exactly
his havens of refuge and retreat. And if he would only dare speak the
truth as God had revealed it to himself, he would be interesting. Every
man is interesting who is genuine.

And heart, it is equally true that no man is very interesting
who is not genuine. You may not like your garden spot, but mind you, it
is your only chance. You may cultivate it. It is your only chance to
raise a crop. If you won't dig in your own garden then you will never
raise anything. Nor will you ever discover any of the mysterious powers
that lie embedded there. You know the story of the Golconda diamond mine.
How did the owner of that garden miss finding the mine? By despising his own field. His eyes, as the fool's eyes, "were at the ends of the earth."

So write this word large over your desk in your study and on the wall in your place of prayer: "Be yourself." Thus you will avoid that fatal mimicry that we sometimes are forced to see in the pulpit. The tones of your voice will be those of your own voice. The attitude you assume will be your attitude. The message you deliver will be your message. You will thus avoid that deadly professionalism that sometimes gets hold of us and works our ruin. In this way you will not be preachery. In this way you will remain human.

And please remember this, if ever by your failure to be yourself you cease to be human, a real flesh and blood, genuine man, your days of usefulness are well nigh over. Whenever you become more preacher than you are man expect to find yourself practically alone when the hour comes for service. The world is made up of human beings that are interested in other human beings. And if you are not human folks will not want to hear you. They will endure crudeness. They will endure ignorance. They will endure even coarseness or vulgarity, but they will not endure artificiality. They will not tolerate an ecclesiastical counterfeit.

I know a preacher to meet him on the street is to feel his humanity. If you would prick him he would bleed. But once let him drape himself in that enormous Prince Albert and climb into the pulpit, all his humanity slips away from him. He is nothing more than a preacher staid, theological, faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null, just an artificial flower, that is all.

And what is the matter with an artificial flower? It is not that it is poisonous. It is not that it stings you as a stinging nettle. It is not that it pricks you as a thorn. What is the matter with it? Well, for one thing there is something lacking about it. It has never mined in the garden for the treasures of real beauty. It has never been christened by the baptism of the dew. It has never held its cheek up to the sun's magic brush. It has no life. And when the preacher ceases to be himself he becomes a mere artificial ecclesiastic without the fascinating gift of life.

Second, to be interesting you must be simple. Whatever we may say about the preaching of other days, the time has certainly passed when men are coming out to your church to puzzle their brains over what you are talking about. You have got to speak not simply so that men can understand you if they listen attentively, but you have got to so speak that they can not help but understand you. You have got literally to force your message in upon their understanding.

Let others seek the reputation for profundity if they will. Let others be spoken of as "the preachers" if they covet that questionable compliment, but do you seek in your study and upon your knees the fine, Christlike gift of simplicity. It is the simple preacher that grips and holds and saves. Men have enough perplexities of their own without perplexing themselves over the abstruseness of your thought or over the jaw breaking words of your vocabulary. As you love your own soul and the souls of others, cultivate simplicity. (Billy Sunday.)

In the third place, if you are to succeed as a preacher you must
be an optimist. Now, by an optimist I do not mean a man with little heart and no brains who declares that there is nothing wrong with the world. I do not mean a preacher like the man who fell out of the twentieth story window of a skyscraper and passing some friends sitting in the fifth story window shouted, "I'm all right so far." By an optimist I mean a man who dares to face the grim facts of human sorrow and human sin, but who faces them confidently, hopefully because he is a man of faith, faith in God and faith in his brother.

However great you are, however magnificently gifted, God can not use you if your back is to the future and your face to the past. If for you the best days are the days that have dropped into the sunset then you have already flung yourself upon the rubbish heap. And mark me, men will not long throng your church to hear you croak and whine and call attention simply to the discords of life and survey in their presence the warts and carbuncles of human society.

It may be that you will be hard hit before you have gone far in the work of the ministry. It may be that you will be sore wounded in the fight. But don't, as you value your usefulness, become a grouch. Don't become a chronic whiner, an everlasting grumbler. Don't spoil your ministry and endanger the souls of those committed to your care by nursing your wounds and hugging into everlasting life your defeats and failures.

Any individual who is a grouch is hard enough to endure. Anybody who is always whining and groaning and grumbling is a great enough obstructionist. I do not wonder that one man was locked up in South Africa during the war, not because he was unsympathetic to the cause of England, but because he was continually prophesying defeat. And the preacher who has lost heart and lost hope might as well be locked up. I believe it would really help the cause.

"Did you tackle the trouble that came your way
With a resolute heart and cheerful,
Or hide your face from the light of day
With a craven soul and fearful?" etc.

In the fourth place, the preacher who would succeed must be in earnest. Now by earnestness I do not mean simply long facedness. I think the man who gets too in earnest to laugh is too in earnest to do his best work. Laughter is as much a part of God's program for this world as tears. And the preacher can have as serious and as helpful purpose in the creation of a laugh as he can in the creation of a sob. If you do not know how to laugh learn how. Your face might break at the first or seem like it is going to, but it will get flexible after a while. Seek for something to laugh at. Why there is some real humor in the Bible, some really genuine humor. If you can't find it then don't forget that there is a great deal of genuine humor in the way we often interpret the Bible.

But what I am saying is, if you are called of God into this holy work, do be in earnest. A half hearted man engaged in any enterprise is disgusting. But a half hearted man engaged in the work of the ministry is maddening. To succeed, to be interesting is to be in earnest.

Did you ever notice how a man who is genuinely in earnest about his job can be interesting in his discussion of it? Why I have even
seen interesting book agents. I joined a crowd in Washington sometime ago that was standing about a burning building. The reason they were looking at it was because the building was on fire.

And the history of the advance of the Kingdom is the history of a few souls who have got on fire. Here is a man coming out from the service in Aldersgate Street. He declares that "his heart has been strangely warmed." And that man mounts his horse and rides literally through the century, and as he rides a moral springtime comes to the world. And Methodism was born of a soul on fire. Wesley was in earnest.

So you be in earnest. If you are you will prepare your sermons before you try to preach them. You will know what you are going to say before you say it. You will know your goal. You will see your hitching post and when you get there you will have the good sense to stop because you shall have accomplished your purpose.

How is it that some preachers have such poor terminal facilities? It is not because they have so tremendously much to say. It is because they never know exactly where they are going. They get to one hitching post and they see another just below that looks quite as good and they drive to that till by and by they drive their congregations away. It is perfectly amazing how much you can say in thirty minutes if you will prepare it with a definite purpose in mind.

It has been well said that when a ship sails for Europe it does not sail for the whole continent. It does not take a whole page out of the geography and sail for that. It sails for one definite particular point. But when many of us sail for Europe we want to hedge the coast from the north of Norway to the Straits of Gibraltar.

If you are in earnest you will not only prepare your sermon, but you will preach purposefully. You will shoot to kill. You will not study as the juggler at the circus, how not to draw blood, - you will study the opposite. You will remember that the greatest of issues are at stake, that you have something more to do than merely to entertain or even get folks into the church, that your task is to change the skin of the Ethiopian and the spots of the leopard, and so to prophesy in the world's moral graveyard that the cemetery shall become a recruiting ground for the Army of your King.

These I think are some of the qualifications that a preacher must have who would be in a real sense genuinely successful. He must be an interesting individual, interesting because he is human, because he is simple, because he is optimistic and forward looking, because he is dead in earnest, a really great heart guiding precious souls from the City of Destruction to Mount Zion.