What is the measure of my debt? It is measured in terms of my ability. Jesus told a story of a certain man who, upon going into a far country, distributed his wealth to his various employees. To one he gave five talents, to another two and to another one. But when he came at last to reckon with them he did not expect as much of the man to whom he gave two talents as the one to whom he gave five. They were judged according to the faithfulness with which they had handled what was put into their hands. The larger your opportunity, the finer your abilities, the greater your obligation. God Himself is subject to the same law. He has weighted Himself with infinite obligations.

This fact is made clear to us, especially through the life and death of our Lord. There was a time when men felt that God, having flung His world from His hands, left it to run its course, and lolled at His ease, while men struggled and suffered and died. But Jesus shows us that God throws Himself into the raw sore of every man's wound. In all our afflictions He is afflicted. Nobody suffers that He does not suffer. His pain is as much greater than ours as He is greater than ourselves. The cross is not a single event in the life of God. It is a revelation in time of what God has always suffered in an effort to discharge His obligation to His children.

II

Now just in so far as we recognize this obligation do we show ourselves climbing toward moral maturity. To never reach the place where we say "I ought," "I owe" and "I must" is to never, in the finest sense of the word, grow up. We must recognize that between Paul looking out towards perplexed faces that he has never
seen and crying "I am a debtor," and the man who goes his selfish way asking, "Am I my brother's keeper?" - between these two there is a space infinitely wider than that between the stars.

The Greeks understood something of this truth. You remember that old myth that tells us that when Achilles was born his mother went to consult the oracle at Delphi as to the future of her son. She was told that Achilles would either live a long life of inglorious ease, or a short life of victorious conflict. And being a short-sighted mother she chose for her son a life of cowardly ease and so dressed him up like a girl and put him out on an island where nobody lived but girls. (Remember that this story was written when girls did not count).

Now it so happened that the Greeks went to war with Troy and for a long time they tried to capture the city without success. At last they went to consult the oracle at Delphi. They were told that the city could never be captured unless they secured the services of Achilles. But nobody knew where Achilles was. Ulysses undertook to find him and traveled over the known world till he came to the island where nobody lived but girls. Then he disguised himself like a peddler, supplied himself with the trinkets that girls like, and went over and began to sell his wares. But there was one girl that looked on with quiet contempt. At last the peddler brought out a new suit of armor and a gleaming sword. Then it was that the soul stood up in her eyes. She dashed forward, seized the armor and put it on, seized the sword and began to wield it. And Ulysses said, "This is Achilles. This is the hero." He knew him because he chose weapons instead of toys - that with which he might serve and do battle instead of that with which he might play.
Now there are those of whom we do not expect a sense of obligation, babies, for instance. When our first-born was a baby he had colic for three months. He liked it so well that he extended it to six. Sometimes he would keep us awake far into the night. But after we had walked him he would not say, "Now I have kept you awake for four hours, and while I am still uncomfortable, I know you have work tomorrow, so I will just grin and endure it while you snatch a little sleep, that was not the case. No sooner would he touch the sheet after I put him down, than he would let out a howl. But I would not throw him out the window. I lived in hope that as he grew physically and intellectually, he might also grow morally and spiritually, that he would reach the place where he would say, "I am a debtor." But suppose this good day never comes. Suppose he becomes a physical giant. Suppose he becomes an intellectual genius. But suppose he still remains morally and spiritually as he was when he lay in his cradle. That means that while he has developed in certain directions, in those supreme qualities that go to make manhood, he is yet a baby. There are those today who seem in large measure to have outgrown conscience. Life is only a bunch of grapes to be squeezed. They laugh at any sense of obligation to God or man. What shall we say of such? That they have grown truly wise? By no means! It means that however intelligent they may be, that morally and spiritually they are imbeciles, morons, idiots.

Now, it is from just this type of idiot that the world has always suffered most, and from which it has most to fear today:

This was certainly the faith of Jesus: He introduced into literature a new type of villain. The usual villain is the man who shoots up the town, kills his wife and plays aggressive havoc with human relationships. The type of villain against which Jesus
thundered was not the aggressive doer of wrong but the passive
doer of nothing at all, the priest and the Levite who saw the
wounded man and passed by on the other side, the man who knew
of those who were sick and in prison and did not have time to
visit them, the rich man who was so busy giving banquets that
one day he hung his toe in the rags of a starving beggar that
was rotting at his door, and fell flat into hell without ever
seeing him. So, just in so far as you recognize your indebtedness,
in that degree you show yourself facing out toward moral maturity.

III

Now having acknowledged your obligation to the world,
what do you owe it?

1. You owe to the world to make the best possible of
your profession, whatever it is. For instance, I am under
obligations to make the best preacher that I can. And knowing
preachers for a space of years and having loved them as I do no
others, I am driven to the conclusion that most of us haven't
done our best. If you are a business man you are under obligations
to be the best business man possible. If you are a lawyer you are
under obligations to be the best lawyer possible.

In order to do our best we must have preparation. Of
those who never attend school only one in 160,000 wins distinction;
of those who go no further than the eighth grade only one in 40,000;
of those who go through high school one in 1,600; of those who go
through college one in 173. Other things being equal, the man who
goes through college has 900 times better chance than the man who
does not go to school at all.

Going to school is a very futile thing, however, if it
stops there. If I had my choice between the man who went to college and then quit work, and the man who never went but did work, I should choose the latter every time. If you feel that you have learned all that you ever need to know, I must say, May God have mercy on you. "Every man," says Emerson, "ought to go to college to learn its inadequacy." Preparation is good, but it is not enough. To reach our best means constant plodding to the end of the journey.

2. But not only do we owe it to the world to do our best professionally. We owe it above all else to be our best as a man and as a woman. It is possible to be a success as a preacher and yet be little better than a failure as a man. It is possible to be a good lawyer and a very poor man. You have heard that epitaph, "Born a man, died a grocer." It might as well be written, "Born a man, died a lord, and born a man, died a preacher." If ever you get to be more loyal than man then you have made a failure. The Bible has no fight to make on success, but it is possible to buy a certain kind of success at too high a price.

During the old steamboat days on the Mississippi two boats of rival companies set out from New Orleans to Memphis at the same time. They began to race. One of them carried a cargo of hams. The fireman noticed that if he mixed ham with wood the heat was intensified and the speed correspondingly increased. Therefore he threw in ham after ham. The result was that his boat won the race amidst great enthusiasm and applause, but when they started to unload the boat they found nothing to unload. It had burned up its cargo along the way. That is, in the process of making the voyage it had destroyed the purpose of the voyage. It often happens with ourselves. What is the good of winning the race if in the process you lose that for which the race is run? What
is the good of building a skyscraper if you yourself remain groundling. What is the use of building an airship that will enable you to outfly the eagle if morally and spiritually you burrow like a mole?

Now it is only in the being at our best that we can render the largest service to our fellows. We have come upon critical days. These are days that test the soundness of our economic system, and find it wanting. These are days that have brought to us a tide of lawlessness that has made us the most lawless nation on the face of the earth. Our crime business is by far the biggest American business today. What has brought this about is not for me to say. There are those who have a very easy reading of the problem. They say it is all a result of the Eighteenth Amendment. To my mind such a statement hardly rises to the height of dignified nonsense. But, be the causes what they may, the facts remain. These are rather desperate and trying days.

How are we to weather the gale? We have got to realize that life's supreme values are its moral and spiritual values. We have got to realize that without these values our material wealth has no foundation upon which to stand. We have got to begin to live according to the principles of Jesus. We have got to face our obligation to play a brother's part. There was a time in a cruder age when civilization could still live and yet be in obedience to the law of the jungle. People were separated from each other by dividing mountains and sundering seas. One city or one nation could be sick in its own private war without endangering those in other wars. But that day is past. Modern science has broken down all our partitions. We are today in a common ward and if one member suffers, all members suffer with him. Yesterday we
might have said, "You ought to recognize your indebtedness." Today we say, "You must recognize it or civilization will commit suicide." Long ago He who was at once our Supreme Teacher and our Saviour, made this declaration: "He who seeketh to save his life shall lose it, but he who loseth his life shall keep it unto life eternal." Few took Him seriously, but few take Him seriously today. But no truer statement ever fell from any lips, human or divine: It is true nationally. It is true individually. The nations that in the yesterday lived for themselves, are today in the graveyard of dead nations that are dead. They have died both physically and spiritually.

When the Titanic went down there was a wealthy man on board who had large holdings in the steamship company to which the Titanic belonged. He had observed his rights, and refused to obey the law of the sea and let women and children go first. He put himself among them. The result was that while other men went to their death, he reached his home in safety. But when he went out to his club in New York he found himself shunned. He went to London to find the same humiliating experience. At last in shame and desperation he built a house in northern Ireland, put a great wall round it, and, I am told, the peasants spit their contempt upon his gate as they pass. Seeking to save his life in the supremest sense, he lost it; for while some of him lived, the rest of him died.

Let us face then the fact that religion is not a thing to be dispensed with. These fine spiritual values - love, honor, purity, brotherliness - these are not luxuries. They are necessities. They are the wealth without which civilization rots down. They are the wealth that, possessed by you and me, will surely bring us into a newer and better day. I congratulate you upon your opportunity. I congratulate you that you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this. If, along with the physical and intellectual development, there
has been a corresponding growth in the things of the spirit, then you are the man of the hour, the man for whom we long and the man for whom we pray.

"God give us men. A time like this demands
Strong minds, great hearts, true faith and ready hands.

"Men whom the lust of office cannot kill;
Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy;
Men who possess opinions and a will,
Men who love honor, men who will not lie;

"Men who can stand before a demagogue
And damn his treacherous flatteries without winking;
Tall men, sun-crowned, who live above the fog
In public duty and in private thinking.

"For while the rabble with their time-worn creeds
And large professions, and their little deeds,
Mingle in selfish strife, Lo! Freedom weeps
Wrong rules the land and waiting Justice sleeps."
THE MINISTRY OF CHANGE

I

To this inner circle of friends, I am going to speak not about the past but about the future. In the more than thirty years that I have been a pastor I do not think I have spent five minutes informing my congregation of my own achievements. Possibly I have lost by not doing so, but if I had it to do over again I do not think I would see fit to change. All our doings are as a rule such "lean and mean doings" that there is little of which to boast save that a gracious and forgiving God has put up with us.

But the matter of which I am thinking now is your future and mine. When I was quite a young preacher and the affairs of my church got to running well, I was accustomed to think with pity of what a collapse there was going to be when I left. I could not but be sorry for the folks who would have to face rather lean and gray days with another pastor who could not do the job anything like so well as I. But believe it or not, every church that I have ever left is still living. I confess I do not see how they have managed, but it is a fact nonetheless. Heartened by this realization I have a fairly solid conviction that this church will continue to go and grow even after the catastrophe that is to take place at the forthcoming conference.

When a minister joins a Methodist Conference, he becomes a part of what is called the traveling connection. He becomes a traveling preacher. I have lived up to that description. This I announce without any apology. My first long pastorate was at Washington, D.C. It was my ninth appointment and my ninth year in the ministry. I had moved often and far, not through my own choice, nor because I had been asked by my congregations to do so. Much at times to my regret, I have found myself a kind of trouble-shooter. If there
was a hopeless breakdown in any conference in my state, which was then Texas, it seemed to me that I was sent there. I learned thus not of my own choice, but later through my experience, the value of change.

I have reached certain convictions in this matter regarding myself. They are not convictions that I apply to anybody else. But bear in mind I have no regret for the fact that I have been a much-moved preacher. Now and then one remarks of a certain brother, "He is a stayer." Well, that may be a compliment; it may be the opposite. If staying is a virtue, then a gum log would take the prize. We can no more say that every man who has a long pastorate is a success than we can say that every man who has a short pastorate is a failure. I used to know a church school superintendent who had once been a valuable and useful man. Every Sunday he announced to the school that it was his wish to die in the harness. But we all knew that he had been dead in the harness for at least twenty years. Whether a minister goes or stays, therefore, is a question to be decided by himself and his bishop under the guidance of God. I repeat, therefore, that if I had my ministry to live over again, I would follow the plan that I have followed. I believe it has helped both myself and my church.

One value of change is that it enables the church to make a new beginning. It often lifts it out of the rut in which even a good man may allow it to drop. "Ephraim is a cake not turned." The trouble with Ephraim was that he had the same pastor too long. He needed a new man to turn him over and cook the other side. Remember that no man, however effective, has everything. Every minister has his own gift, his own capacity; he has his own contribution to make. Not only so, but often a man of lesser ability can do for a church what a predecessor of greater ability could not do. A pastor who is too good relieves the church of too much responsibility. The congregation tends to become weak and ineffective because the pastor is so strong. A change under such circumstances is often helpful, even if it is to a weaker man.
For instance, years ago I went to be pastor of a certain church where I was totally unknown. The man I followed was fine looking. He had the best sort of a movie voice. He had a bewitching personality. In every way he was so impressive that his rather long ministry at that particular church had made him as popular as Santa Claus and Social Security all bound into one package. When I arrived on the scene, some few silly souls did not think I was vastly impressive. In fact they could hear the roaring of the breakers that told them that the ship was soon to sink.

Their attitude was so evident that I could not be stupid enough not to recognize it. I was patient for awhile, though I confess it made me hot under the collar. We preachers are a fairly sensitive lot. When I saw they needed a bit of wholesome instruction, I preached them a sermon on this text: "Now it came to pass after the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, that the Lord spake unto Joshua, Moses' minister, saying Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan." I undertook to show them that, while Joshua was nothing like so great a man as Moses, he was the man that the situation needed at that time. I emphasized the fact that in spite of his limitations Joshua did for the church of his time what Moses could not do. Each pastor therefore whether he seems more effective or less effective than some, has his own part to play. And within limits every change may be a change for the better if pastor and congregation cooperate.

II

What attitude are you going to assume to your new pastor? I am sorry that all the members of our church are not here. You who are listening perhaps need this lecture least. But it may not be amiss for you. This change will divide this congregation roughly into three groups.

1. There will be those who will take it for granted from the beginning
that the new pastor is no good. Even a man accused of stealing is assumed to be innocent till proved guilty. But some of you will condemn the minister without trial. You will tell yourself, "We have had good preachers now for a number of years. We are sure that sooner or later we are going to draw a lemon. I am going to assume that the expected calamity has come. Therefore, I am going to quit."

It is rather strange that any professing Christian would take this attitude, but it is taken by greater numbers than we might believe. In a church of this kind, every preacher has to draw his own congregation. There are some who heard your other pastors who have never heard me. There are some that have heard me that will not hear the next man. They will rather assume that the good days for your church have dropped into the sunset. They will forsake the sinking ship not so much because the ship is sinking as because they are not decently broad-minded enough to give a new man a chance. After the pastor has been here some six months, a friend will ask this man, "How do you like your new preacher?" He will say, "I don't know him."

What a cheap and common excuse! When you say "I don't know him" you will be telling the plain truth. But why don't you know him? "For the simple reason that he hasn't been to see me," you will say indignantly. But there are four thousand of you and only one of him. The real reason you don't know him is because you don't want to know him. Not knowing him, you do not like him. We do not fall in love with pictures; we only love those we know. Therefore, you exclude yourself from the help you might receive and the help you might give by being too petty to give an honest and earnest pastor a chance.

2. Then there will be a second group who will act a somewhat better part. They will refuse to condemn him without a hearing. They will tell themselves, "I am going to hear him once, but if I don't like him, it will be just too bad." So some Sunday morning after spending a prayerless hour with your newspaper you
will stroll out to church, congratulating yourself that you are so broad-minded that you are neither for him or against him. You are a colorless neutral. You will go seat yourself, an incarnate icicle, and say to him, "Thaw me out if you can." You will lie like huge stones across the mouth of the sepulchre and challenge him to raise the dead. If he fails, you will go away and say he is no good.

There is an old Proverb that says, "If you wish to find gold in India you must take your gold with you." There is a profound truth in that. If you wish to find gold in a sermon, you must carry some bit of gold in your heart. Remember that the merit of a sermon depends quite as much on the hearer as it does on the speaker. There were some audiences that Jesus could not touch. As they listened, they shrugged their shoulders and strolled off to talk about the latest news from Rome and the trades they were going to make when the Sabbath was over. You can kill the best sermon in the world and freeze the preacher to death by a listless attitude. It is fairly easy to preach to a congregation that is emphatically against you. It is a luxury to preach to a congregation that is enthusiastically for you. But the indifferent neutral is as hard to preach to as for a bullet to penetrate a bank of snow.

3. Then there will be a third group. I trust every one of you will be among them. These will realize that a church is a brotherhood. Because it is a brotherhood it is a cooperative organization. The pastor can no more do his work without you than you can do your work without the pastor. If you work together, there is no measuring your possibilities. If you do not, though he may be a genius, his efforts will be largely futile.

III

How then must we give this cooperation?

1. Assume from the beginning that the man who is coming to serve you has
something on the ball. That is a safe assumption. Assuming that your Bishop has some intelligence and some interest in the church, he would not appoint a man to an important church like this who is merely an experiment. Come to church the first service with the firm conviction that this man has something to offer. If hearing him for the first time he should happen to disappoint you, remember that the best ball player in the world strikes out some time. Give him another chance. Begin by believing in him.

I urge this because such a confidence is good for you. I urge it because such a confidence is immensely helpful to your minister. Maybe you will expect too much of him, maybe you will trust him too much, but I doubt it. Of this you may be sure, that he will be able to render his best in an atmosphere warm with confidence. Questioning distrust blights some speakers like a killing frost. But expectancy and confidence make him blossom into his best as a rose blossoms under the warmth of the sun. Believe in him. Expect something of him.

2. Look for the best in him instead of the worst. You will not come to the services in the attitude of a faultfinder. There are some hearers who can listen to a sermon and heartily approve ninety-nine percent of it. But there is one percent that they do not approve. Therefore, with strange and deadening unfairness they go away to magnify that one percent. They talk of it about the dinner table. They mention it to their children and friends till both children and friends get the idea that the new minister is a cheap skate who is not worth hearing.

But if you will take the opposite course, it will be worth vastly more to you as well as your pastor. It is hard for a new pastor to get the hearing of a large congregation. It is harder still for him to make any sort of a dent on a city. What he does in this direction will depend largely on you.

You can kill your new pastor by the thunders of silence. You can go away from service after service priding yourself perchance on the fact that you say
nothing bad, but meantime you say nothing good. Therefore scores of people who might have been interested and who would have enjoyed hearing him if they had had a chance will never hear him. There is no group in this church that can do as much towards selling your pastor to the city as you can.

3. Permit him to be himself. Since he is an individual, he will be different from any pastor you have ever had. Accept the difference. Remember that it is only by being himself that he can do his work. No two ministers can do their work in the same way. I know that you will be far too courteous to remind him of what some other pastor used to do. This I know from personal experience. But even in your own minds do not condemn him if he works in a different fashion from any other. Some preachers read their sermons, some preach from notes, some extemporaneously. All three of these may be equally effective.

The only suggestion that I have had since I have been here of improving my ways by following a former pastor was offered by one of my very best friends. He did it in good faith. He suggested that instead of baptizing babies in the cold-blooded fashion that is my custom, I gather them in my arms and kiss them as Brother X used to do. Now that is a good and wise suggestion. If I could carry it out with the gracious effectiveness of my dear, good friend, I would certainly take it up. But you see I am essentially different. What warmed your heart when done by him would make you want to gnaw a file and flee to the wilderness were I to undertake it. Be broad-minded enough to permit your preacher to be himself.

4. Finally, undergird him by your prayers. If in the first service that he speaks to you you can say with Cornelius, "We are here present before God to hear all things that are commanded thee of God," there is no measuring the help that you can give. These people came expectantly to hear Simon Peter because they had been praying for light and leading. They believed the preacher had
come as God's man. So you have the right to believe. Let him feel that as
the smoke ascends from the chimney so your prayers and sympathy are ascending
for him. If you do this, it will help you; it will enable him to do the
impossible. Paul never wrote to but one church, and that the backslidden
church of Galatia, without asking for their prayers. He believed that the
prayer of the meanest slave in all the Roman Empire could anoint his
apostolic lips with grace and power. So you may do. God forbid that you
should sin against the Lord by failing so to do.
THE MINISTRY OF CHANGE

I.

To this inner circle of friends I am going to speak not about the past but about the future. In the more than thirty years that I have been a pastor I do not think I have spent five minutes informing my congregation of my own achievements. Possibly I have lost by not doing so, but if I had it to do over again I do not think I would see fit to change. All our doings are as a rule such "lean and mean doings" that there is little of which to boast save that a gracious and forgiving God has put up with us. During the twenty-four years that I have served five of our largest down-town city churches I have seen some ten thousand unite with those churches. But I know that there were others that if they had had an opportunity would have done even more.

But the matter of which I am thinking now is your future and mine. When I was quite a young preacher and the affairs of my church got to running well I was accustomed to think with pity of what a collapse there was going to be when I left. I could not but be sorry for the folks who would have to face rather lean and gray days with another pastor who could not do the job anything like so well as I. But believe it or not, every church that I have ever left is still living. I confess I do not see how they have managed, but it is a fact nonetheless. Heartened by this realization I have a fairly solid conviction that St. Luke's will continue to go and grow even after the catastrophe that is to take place at the forthcoming conference.

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at Washington. It was my ninth appointment and my ninth year in the ministry. I had moved often and far, not through my own choice, nor because I had been asked by my congregations to do so. Much at times to my regret I found myself a kind of trouble-shooter. If there was a hopeless breakdown in any conference in my state, which was then Texas, it seemed to me that I was sent there. I learned thus not of my own choice, but later through my choice, the value of change.

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becomes weak and ineffective because the pastor is so strong. A change under such circumstances is helpful even if it is to a weaker man.

For instance, years ago I went to be pastor of a certain church where I was totally unknown. The man I followed was fine looking. He had the best sort of a movie voice. He had a bewitching personality. In every way he was so impressive that his eight years ministry at that particular church had made him as popular as Santa Claus and Social Security all tied up in one package. When I arrived on the scene some few silly souls did not think I was vastly impressive. In fact they could hear the roaring of the breakers that told them that the ship was soon to sink.

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II.

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What a cheap and common excuse! When you say "I don't know him" you will be telling the plain truth. But why don't you know him? For the simple reason that he hasn't been to see me," you will say indignantly. But there are four thousand of you and only one of him. The real reason you don't know him is because you don't want to know him. Not knowing him you do not like him. We do not fall in love with pictures, we only love those we know. Therefore you exclude yourself from the help you might receive and the help you might give by being too petty to give an honest and earnest pastor a chance.

2. Then there will be a second group who will act a somewhat better part. They will refuse to condemn him without a hearing. They will tell themselves, "I am going to hear him once, but if I don't like him, it will be just too bad." So some Sunday morning after spending a prayerless hour with your newspaper you will
stroll out to church congratulating yourself that you are so broad-minded that you are neither for him or against him. You are a colorless neutral. You will go seat yourself, an incarnate icicle and say to him, "Thaw me out if you can." You will lie like a huge stone across the mouth of the sepulchre and challenge him to raise the dead. If he fails you will go away and say he is no good.

There is an old Proverb that says, "If you wish to find gold in India you must take your gold with you." There is a profound truth in that. If you wish to find gold in a sermon you must carry some bit of gold in your heart. Remember that the merit of a sermon depends quite as much on the hearer as it does on the speaker. There were some audiences that Jesus could not touch. As they listened they shrugged their shoulders and strolled off to talk about the latest news from Rome and the trades they were going to make when the Sabbath was over. You can kill the best sermon in the world and freeze the preacher to death by a listless attitude. It is fairly easy to preach to a congregation that is emphatically for you. It is a luxury to preach to a congregation that is enthusiastically for you. But the indifferent neutral is as hard to preach to as for a bullet to penetrate a bank of snow.

3. Then there will be a third group. I trust everyone of you will be among them. These will realize that a church is a brotherhood. Because it is a brotherhood it is a cooperative organization. The pastor can no more do his work without you than you can do your work without the pastor. If you work together there is no measuring your possibilities. If you do not, though he may be a genius, his efforts will be largely futile. I read recently of a man strolling with his beloved along a sea wall. She toppled over. With fine gallantry he sprang in after her, grabbed her by the hair, but she wore a transformation, therefore it came off. He seized her by the arm, but her arm was cork, it gave way. He then grabbed her foot, but it was cork too. Finally he said, "Madam, I want to save you, but you must give me some cooperation."
III.

How then must we give this cooperation?

1. Assume from the beginning that the man who is coming to serve you has something on the ball. That is a safe assumption. Assuming that your Bishop has some intelligence and some interest in the church, he would not appoint a man to an important church like this who is merely an experiment. Come to church the first service with the firm conviction that this man has something to offer. If after hearing him he should happen to disappoint you, remember that the best ball player in the world strikes out some time. Give him another chance. Begin by believing in him. I urge this because such a confidence is good for you. I urge it because such a confidence is immensely helpful to your minister.

2. Having assumed that your pastor has something to give, hear him expectantly and patiently. If he fails greatly to impress you at the first service, remember that even the best of players strike out some times. What is more important, remember that the fault may be in you rather than in him. There is a wise proverb that says, "If you desire to find gold in India you must take it with you." What you bring to the hearing of a sermon will determine his helpfulness quite as much as the sermon itself. Hear him therefore expectantly and patiently.

3. Look for the best instead of for the worst. Have an open eye for something to commend rather than for something to criticize. If you are looking for the objectionable you can find it. You can find it in your new pastor. You can find it also in the best preacher that ever lived. There were crowds that shouted Paul down and refused to hear him. There were other crowds that turned away from the Master himself with a shrug of the shoulder saying with confident boredom, "He can't preach for nuts." I have in my mind a man who has alienated every chick and child from the church. This not because he is without interest in his church, but
because he had the habit of mulling over and criticizing the one percent of the sermon that he did not like rather than magnifying the ninety-nine percent with which he whole-heartedly agreed.

4. Permit your pastor to be himself. Remember that he is an individual. He is different from any pastor you have ever had. He must work his own garden or he cannot raise a crop. Naturally you would be too courteous to tell him that he ought to act like some former pastor. But you must not do this even in your mind. A friend urged that I cease to baptize babies in my cold blooded fashion and undertake the task in the manner of Brother Forney. Now his is far better than mine I am ready to admit. But were I to undertake to do it like him I would only make myself ridiculous. Permit your pastor to be himself.

5. Finally, pray for him. Paul never wrote but one letter, and that to the backslidden church at Galatia, without asking for the prayers of that church. He believed that the dullest slave of all the Roman Empire could by his prayers help to annoint his own apostolic lips with power. Once when the pew spoke out to the pulpit this was their language, "Now therefore are we all here present before God to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." These people had been praying for light and leading. Now that the preacher was present they believed that his voice was to be to them in a profound sense the voice of God. So it will be to you with the right cooperation.
A great many years ago, two ministers, both of them men of ability, went into a certain city to conduct a mission. One of these men was perhaps the intellectual of his day. He chose this particular city, not from any personal preference, but because he felt definitely guided of God. He had seen a vision of a man who said, "Come over and help us." Thus, assured of the will of God in the matter, these two men entered the ancient city of Philippi.

For a while, all went well. But soon a slave girl was converted who had been a kind of spiritualist medium. After her conversion, she was no longer willing to dupe people. Therefore, as a money-maker, she was cut. Her owners became indignant. Raised a mob to throw these two ministers into the public square and inflicted upon them indignities. They tore off their clothes and hit them with rods, until their backs were burned and until blood ran down their heads. Then, they were lodged in jail. The jailer was ordered with strong statement, as if they were professional "jail-birds," to see that they did not escape. Thus put under arrest, the jailer flung them into the prison, a dark, stenchful place, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

What a strange goal for men who had come to this city under the definite guidance of God! I am amazed as I read the New Testament, at how little concerned God seems to be over the comforts of his saints. We are all for comfort,—He is all for character. I can imagine that Simeon might have said to his friend Paul, who was the leader in this enterprise, "Well, if this is what you call definite guidance, I do not want any more of it. You saw a man calling for help,—we need somebody to help us, we are the ones that need help." But, instead of these men whining and pitying themselves, they began to pray. Then, prayer gave way to praise and they began "to sing to God" as Moffatt puts it. I wonder what they sang. It might have been the Shepherd's song. It might have been;

"I lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my strength. My help cometh from the Lord of all Salvation." It might have been that universal song of thanksgiving;

"Bless the Lord Oh my soul, Bless his Holy Name." But I like most to believe that it was
the forty-sixth Psalm, "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." As they thus sang, something happened. The prison doors were opened and their fetters broken.

Now, when the jailor was awakened out of his sleep, and saw the prison doors open, knowing that his life would be to pay if the prisoners escaped, and thinking they had gone, he was on the point of throwing himself on his sword. But Paul, with that passion for helpfulness, which always characterized him, shouted, "We are all here. Do thyself no harm." Then this jailor, full of awe and terror, bring Paul and Silas out of the inner prison and falls at their feet, and asks a question that is of vast importance to every living man. It is the biggest of all big questions. This is the case, in spite of the fact that it has been cheapened by much careless handling. This is the question, "What Shall I Do To Be Saved?"

How easy it is for us to mishandle great words so as to cheapen them. This word of exquisite music has come to sound, in many years, like instruments playing out of tune. It would seem that somewhere along its way to Jerusalem from the Jordan of Yesterday, to the Jerico of today it has followed many thieves that have wounded and stripped it and left it half dead. Some cheap writers of fiction have delighted to picture it—some crack-pot going about and saying "By it are you saved." But let us be open minded enough to face the fact that this question, that is every man's question, is at the same time the biggest question that confronts us at this hour and at any hour.

Think of the importance of this question.

1. Its importance is indicated by the large place it has in the purpose of God. It would seem that the only sorrow that God has known from eternity to eternity, is for men's lostness. If we can believe the Bible, the one passion of our Lord has always been the saving of man. It was for this purpose that he proclaimed his will by the pen of the Prophet and the harp of the Evangelist. It was for this purpose that Jesus came into our world. "I am come," he said, "To seek and to save." When the angel messenger
told of his birth, he said: "There is born unto you a Saviour." It was for our salvation that Jesus was born. It was for our salvation that he lived. It was for our salvation that he died. It was for our salvation that he rose from the dead. It is for our salvation that he lives and reigns.

Now, to treat lightly a matter that is of such vast importance to Infinite God, is not a mark of wisdom but of folly. In fact, it is supreme stupidity, and great souls are never guilty of such foolishness. "I am not ashamed," says the best intellect of the New Testament. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ because it is the power of God unto salvation." This amazing Book calls it "great salvation," that came at a great cost and seeks a great end. To treat it lightly, is an insult to your intelligence.

2. Then, we may believe in the importance of this question, not only because it occupies such a large place in the purpose of God, but because it speaks home to us, directing us to the needs of men. What do you need at this hour more than all else? What does your broken and bleeding heart need? What does your minister need? What is every man's need? It is somebody who can save. Where can we look for salvation in the coming days? Not to our Armies and Navies; Not to our atomic bombs; Not to our Statesmen; We must look to God. If God does not save us, then we are individually, socially, and Nationally, doomed, and damned. That is just plain fact in the case.

3. Finally, the bigness of this question is seen when we realize something of what salvation means. Our conception of salvation has been cheapened, because so often we have looked upon it as mere escape. When we are saved, we are let off from something. We do not have to suffer the consequences of our own sins. That is not the salvation offered us through Jesus Christ. Salvation is a positive something. It means broken fellowship between God and men restored. It means eternal life. It means Christ likeness. When God gives us salvation he gives us Himself. He comes to live with us, and to make us increasingly beautiful through His own nature. If we may believe our own Gospel, as a great Scottish saint said: "It means that one day the very angels of God will look at you and say, how like Jesus Christ he is." That is not a little thing,
II
What must I do to be saved? What is implied in this question. Mark you, I am not claiming that this pagan jailer was a theologian. Maybe he did not put into this question what it means or ought to mean to you and me. But, if we ask this question intelligently and seriously, what is implied in it.

1. When we ask it rightly we recognize the fact that salvation is a reality. Yes, and a reality that I do not possess. I think that was what first came home to this jailer. He certainly did not know of that salvation might mean. But, as he looked at these two men, I was convinced, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that they had something that he did not possess. Here were men, who were different. Here were men, who were singing and rejoicing in spite of shame and suffering. He was not like that. Therefore, he said, "What must I do to be saved?"

2. Not only did he face the fact that salvation was a reality that he had missed, but he was convinced that it was something that he might possess. That was a big step forward. When a young artist stood, years ago, in the presence of a great canvass by Titian, his cheeks glowed, and his eyes sparkled, and one who stood nearby, heard his whisper, to himself, "I too,—I too Titian am an artist." When this cruel jailer looked on these two saints of God, he said "I too, I too can be saved."

That was a great step forward. It is one that is often harder for us to take who have been reared in the church than for the pagan. The trouble is that so many of us have been inoculated with christianity so often that we do not have much hope of the thing taking on us. Now and then we act up in the presence of some one who is a beautiful christian and begin to hope, but I fear the vast majority of professing Christians never intend to be any better than they are. Often they have just enough christianity to make them uncomfortable but they see little hope of being different. Blessed is the man that grips christianity at its best and declares in his heart "This is for me."
The third something implied in this question is this; in order to be saved I must do something. I cannot hope for something by simply holding my hands and hoping for the best. I certainly cannot expect to be saved through utter neglect. God does the saving. But there is something that I must do. Not only so, but, this something that I must do, is not optional. In other words, I cannot be saved on my own terms. It is hard for a great many folks to accept that. They are willing to be saved provided they can dictate their terms to God. But this is impossible. This is the case, not because God is narrow minded and niggardly, as we sometimes feel. It is the very nature of things. The same law holds elsewhere. For, instance, if I make up my mind to raise a crop of corn, I cannot do so on my own terms. If I merely say, with a swagger, "other men may turn their soil and plant seed and cultivate the crop, but I am going to raise it in my own way. I am not going to even plant any corn, I am going to ask the Lord to look after it." But, if you are depending on your corn for a living you will starve.

If I make up my mind to be a mathematician, I cannot do so and dictate my terms. "Yes" I tell myself "I am going to be an Einstein but there is one thing I refuse to do, and that is I will not learn the multiplication tables. Or, I decide to play the piano. In this case there is an arbitrary condition that I have to meet. However wise and tolerant my teacher, there is no way that I can possibly hit the keys at random and make music.

The same holds good if I decide to have a strong physical body. I am eager to be fit. I desire to be physically adequate for my task. That being the case I cannot choose my own terms. The conditions of good health are not optional— they are arbitrary. I must do certain amount of sleeping. I must do a certain amount of eating. I must exercise. I cannot dictate the terms to nature. It is silly, therefore, to think that we can dictate terms to God. We cannot have spiritual life without meeting the conditions. That is something that I must do. That is something that you must do. That is something every man must do in order to be saved.

4. Finally, I take it that when this jailor asked the question, he asked it with sincerity of purpose. He was not seeking an argument. He was not eager to satisfy his curiosity. He was asking the conditions of salvation with his mind made up to meet...
those conditions. Tell me what I must do to be saved. And I will do that something, whether it is easy or difficult. I will do it whether it is popular or unpopular. I will do it whether it causes me to be one of a great multitude, or to stand alone.

When men ask this question in this fashion, he is not far from the Kingdom of God.

III

What answer did Paul give? Paul qualifies as an expert in the manner of an expert who has experienced salvation. Now, we are not to understand that this answer given by Paul is everything that he said to that jailor. But this is the very heart and core of his message. What, then, is the answer?

You will notice that he did not give the jailor and "I. Q." contest. This does not mean that salvation is not for the intelligent. Certainly many of the best minds of the centuries have been devout Christians. Yet, salvation is not simply for the clever. It is not merely for the intellectual elite. Since God has provided salvation for all men, He puts it in reach of all men. Therefore, there is no mental test.

What seems stranger still, neither is it through any moral test. There are multitudes who expect the power of God to save them as soon as they get through saving themselves. But it so happens that this salvation provided through Jesus Christ is for sinners, and sinners alone. Those that found the door of entrance more difficult in the days of Jesus, were the very decent and respectable people. This was the case, not because our Lord sets a premium on indecency. It was the case rather because these people trusted in their decency and respectability rather than in Him. God can never save you till you so realize your incapacity to save yourself that you give Him a chance.

What then is the answer? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." How simple. How old fashioned. Some of us stifle a yawn." Oh yes," we say, "I have heard that a thousand times before." Yet, many of us are quite hazy about what it means. What is it to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? It means just plain every day something. It means something that is so simple that some of us cannot accept it.

What, then, is it to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? It is to exercise the same faith toward Him that a patient does toward his physician. When I first went to Texas, I was taken violently ill. A physician was called and, having diagnosed me,
case as an acute appendix, he declared an operation would be necessary. I so believed in that physician that, under God, he saved my life. What was the content of that faith.

First, I looked him over and listened to him and decided he was a physician. I was convinced beyond peradventure that he was what he claimed to be. He had been to medical school and was, therefore, an accredited physician. Had I thought that he was a quack, or a layman posing as a physician, I would have had nothing to do with him. But, I was convinced that he was what he claimed to be, and what his friends claimed for him,—a physician.

Second, not only did I believe that he was a physician, but, as he talked to me, I became convinced that he was willing and able to help me. I knew that I needed help. I could not be sure that he could meet my needs. But, I was sure that without him I could not make the grade. So, having looked him over, and listened to him, I said to myself "here is a physician, who is both willing, and able to do something for my desperate situation."

Now, that was going a long way. But, had I not gone further, he could have done me no good at all. Having decided that he was what he claimed to be; that he could do what he claimed to do, I took the final and all inclusive step. I put myself in his hands. I trusted him, as we find it hard often times, to trust God, I lay down on an operating table, and went to sleep, knowing one false move on his part would cost me my life. And yet, it was only by trusting him in that fashion that he was able to save me.

What then, is it to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? I believe that He is what he claims to be,—God come in the flesh, Saviour of the World. I believe that He is able and willing to do what he claims to do. That He can save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. Then I take the final step. I put myself in His hands. I dedicate my life to Him. I begin here and now to follow Him.

It is this final act of committal, that is the important and all inclusive step. If we do that,—nothing else really matters. Without that nothing else arrives.

How were the first disciples that Jesus won saved? They had no definite conviction as to the deity of Jesus. They had no definite conviction as to His power to save.
but, as they followed Him; as they day by day came to obey Him, they came to say
"My Lord, and my God." So, if we believe enough to obey,—that is the way to victory.

This is the word of Jesus Himself. "If any man is willing to know His will he shall
know" So, if you find the path hard, I bring you this assuring word. However little
you may believe, if you will begin here and now to follow Jesus Christ the best you know
and will continue, He will bring you into the fulness of the light. So His first disciples
found. So countless thousands have found since then. The way of assurance is for every
one of us. All of us, in this fashion, may come to shout with Paul "I know in whom
I have believed and am persuaded He is able to keep that which I have committed unto
Him against that day." This is salvation. It begins here with unspeakable enrichment.
It lasts through Eternity. Who is so blind as to not claim it now.

Experence * Paul — I believed! I committed — Know
WORK YOUR OWN GARDEN

By the field of the ; by the village of the ; and there it lay, all ever grown with thistles, the surface covered with nettles, the stone wall broken down.

PART I

Here is a bit of ground that is a blot on the landscape. It is easy to imagine the scene. It is a lovely summer day. The author is out for a walk, the road he takes is hemmed in on either side by lovely fields where God and man have cooperated in the raising of an abundant harvest. Here is a field billowing with barley — here a nook of rustling corn — here gardens covered with flowers and rich in fruits. Everywhere are marks of intelligent industry and of a merciful God.

But suddenly the scene changes, this wise author comes upon a bit of ground that has entirely missed its purpose. Intended for a garden, it has become a Common. Once fenced in, the fences have been allowed to fall into ruins. The tragedy of the life of Esau is that he was a profane man. Profane comes from two Latin words, pro meaning before and fane meaning outside the temple. That is, Esau's life was not fenced just as this one time garden that had become a Common.

Nothing of ugly was fenced out and nothing of beauty was fenced in.

Since this bit of ground that was intended for a garden had become a Common, it was producing nothing of worth. It was entirely wanting in either fruits or flowers. The owner of this bit of land was making no contribution to his neighbors. In fact, he was not even able to meet the needs of himself, nor of his children. His was the tragedy of utter uselessness.

Not only was he useless, but he was a burden to the neighbors. This was the case because nobody can be entirely neutral. The fact that his land produces nothing of value does not mean that it was entirely barren.
Failing to produce the useful, it produces the useless and hurtful. His garden was rich in thistles and needles and poisonous weeds. Always to refuse to do the possible right is to end in doing the positive wrong. To refuse to help is to hinder. So here I repeat was a possible garden that had become a common. Here was a possible poem that had become a blemish, ugly bit of prose.

**PART II**

What had this man changed? What was intended form a garden into a common? Where did he go wrong?

I am quite sure that he did not **make** a common out of his garden of set purpose. He did not set down in the spring time of life and reach the conclusion that a common is better than a garden. He did not decide definitely that he preferred thistles and needles to fruits and flowers. He did not go wrong because of a definite purpose. Few of us do! No fly every bussese about the spider web because he has decided to give the spider a banquet.

He more did this man allow what ought to have been a garden to become a common because his bit of ground was not capable of anything better. The soil of this field to him might have been as fertile as that of some far neighbor, but of this we **are** might be sure, it was rich enough to have grown beautiful flowers and luscious fruits. This is intensified by the fact that it was rank with thistles and needles. Anything Any man who is capable of going vastly wrong is also capable of going vastly right. Every man has in him the possibilities of Judas. Every man also has within himself the possibility of becoming so Christ-like that one day the very angles of God will at him and say, "How like Jesus Christ he is."

If this possible garden did not become a common for lack of capability of being anything else neither did it fail because of it's unfriendly environment.

Of course there are foes that thwart our as well as .

There are pests with which every gardener has to do battle, but the fact that this man's neighbors were making a success of there farms indicates that success was
possible for him inspite of all foes.

I am not forgetting that these foes had their own ways in the garden of this failure, but this they did not because of the man's misfortune, but nothing reason of his. He allowed his fences to fall in ruin. His life was lived and without He had no compelling musts in his life. He had no 'Thou shalt not's'. Had he kept up is fences he could have had a lovely garden inspite of his foes. No evil can get in your life except atx your consent, even the eternal God himself must stand at the door and knock.

Why them I repeat, did this man fail? If he failed neither from a bad purpose or from lack of capability nor because of his envionment, what wrecked him. I know he failed through neglect. This tragedy was not that he missused his garden, but rather that he did not use it at all, for all that is necessary to change a garden into a wilderness is to do nothing. All that is necessary to loose lifes supreme values is to neglect them. "How shall we escape if you neglect so great a salvation." There is no escape. God, himself cannot give what we refuse to take.

PART III

Why did this man neglect his garden? Why did he refuse to cultivate it and present the finest possibilities. There are varied possible reasons:

1. He might have neglected his garden through over confidence. He might have been over conceited that he considered the acreage so rich that it could produce an abundant harvest without any serious work. It was not always the most gifted that give the best account of themselves. The most gifted is not the only one that loses the race because of over confidence. This superbly bright pupils that I knew both in prep school and in college did not turn out nearly so well as those of lesser gifts. In fact, almost every one of them was a failure.
When I think of some of the ministers I have known, who have fallen far short of realizing their possibilities, some of these have been men of meager gifts, but I dare say, more have been men of superior gifts. I am thinking of one now who became a Bishop (Don't think you know him, for you don't. If you do, he's the other one). When I first met this man he was as handsome as Appolas. He had personality plus. The Lord seemed to have emptied every winsome gift into his room hands. He did something with those gifts, but what he did was only a fraction of what he might have done. I think of him now as one of the biggest failures I have ever known. Some neglect their gifts because they are so rich.

2. Then there is another and far larger group who fail to work their gardens because their acreage seems so small and lean. For everyone who makes a failure of life because he thought too well of himself there must be scores who do so because they think too meanly of themselves. There are some who look upon their own gifts with contempt, just because they are their own. It is well to bare in mind that the Eternal God does not give his time and energy to creating nobodies. The fact that you are here means that you are a creation of infinite worth. You can do something for the world that none else can do.

Years ago I heard Mr. Cornwell deliver his famous lecture, "Acreas of Diamonds." I am told he delivered that lecture some 6,000 times. This lecture was based on the simple story of a man who owned a lovely garden in Asia. He cultivated this garden with diligence and lived upon its produce in contentment, but one night he had a guest who was a diamond merchant. This guest sat with his host way into the night talking with him about diamonds. He told him that if he only had one diamond the size of the end of his little finger it would be worth a thousand gardens like his.

This man began to look with contempt upon his own garden. He lay awake all night thinking about diamonds. The next day he sold this little acreage for a song. He then set out in search of diamonds. For long months he searched in vain, then at last his means given out, as did also his hopes, he ended by throwing himself in the ocean because he had nothing left for which to live.
But the man to whom he sold his garden began to work it with diligence. One day he uncovered something with his plow that sparkled in the sunlight. When he went to the village he took that little stone with him and asked the jeweler about it. It was a diamond said the jeweler. Later other diamonds were discovered. In fact that little despised garden became the Golconda diamond mine, one of the richest mines in the world. Many a time you will be tempted to despair of your own garden. That is a temptation that comes to all of us, but bare in mind it is your one big chance if you fail to work it, if you fail to raise a crop.

3. Then this man might have neglected his garden because he had no sense of mission. He failed to realize this bit of ground that was give him was a solemn trust. That is certainly trul of you garden and mine. "As the Father hath sent me into the world even so have I sent you." He has a definite purpose in every life. He gives to every man his work. Therefore, you owe something to God and you owe something also to your fellowman. To fail to realize your opportunity to make the best out of your garden is to fail to grow up. It is to remain morally, at least, a spiritual infant.

This is what the ancient Greeks meant when they told the story of Archiles. When this famous man was a baby his mother consulted the oracle Delphi to inquire of what manner of man her baby was to become. The Oracle told her that Archiles would either live a line of battle and victory or live a line of ease and uselessness. This most kind mother chose for her son the latter. Therefore, she dressed him like a girl and sent him to an isleand where nobody lived but girls. Being quite young he looked like a girl.

Then the Greeks went to war with the Trogans, for a long time they fought. At last in desperation they went to consult the oracle to find how their defeat might be changed into victory. The Oracle told them that they could never win except on one condition -- they must have Archiles to fight with and for them.

Now since nobody knew where Archiles was, they still seemed far from victory, but Ulysses, who was the shrewed and wise discoverer among the Greeks, set out to find the possible hero. In his quest he came at last to
to this island where nobody lived except girls. He then disguised himself as a peddler. He filled his pack with jewelry, with lipstick and will all those flimsy gee gawls in which girls delight. Arrived at his destination the girls gathered about him and bought eagerly, but one girl stood aloof and looked on with utter contempt. Then the peddler brushed the flimsy trinkets aside and displayed a sword. Then the sole of this girl stood up in her eyes. She sprang forward and fitted on the armour and began to wield the sword. There was his hero said Ulessees. He chose weapons instead of trinkets. To have no objective is to never grow up.

4. The final reason that this man neglected his garden was that he was slothful. He was just plain lazy. No doubt he would have liked to have a lovely garden if he could have had it by merely wishing for it, but gardens do not grow that way. We live in a world where worthwhile achievement is costly. God sets a premium on work.

In the stories that Jesus told he emphasises again and again his love and appreciation of whole hearted work. When you ask him if there were few that be saved, he answered neither yes nor no. He rather said strive to enter in at the straight gate. He points out that God himself is an eternal worker., and that those who would be like him must work also. "My Father works even until now and I work." There is no worthwhile achievement in any realm without solid, serious work. This is true in our daily vocation and it is equally true in matters of religion.

PART 4

What then does this wise man have to say to us? There are three vital words that we need to keep in mind:

1. Every man has in him the possible of a lovely garden. Some are more gifted that others, but God has as much purpose in a violet as he has in a giant redwood tree. He has given to you powers that he has given to no one else. You can do some things to enrich life that no one else can do. There is
a peculiar sense in which you are unique. God is counting on you just as really as he counts on the greatest genius that lives.

2. What God gives to us is not a finished product. You come into this world just a bundle of amazing possibilities. There are two roads that stretch before you today: one of them bends downward until it loses itself in the quadmire of failure and frustration and defeat. The other climbs upward until it reaches the realm of the heavenly and such beautiful living that the light will still linger even when the sun is set. You can change the most unpromising bit of acreage into a lovely garden by the help of God if you only will.

3. Whether you claim your possible or not is up to you. It is a matter of your own choice. If you neglect your gifts they will change from assets into tragic liabilities. In order for your garden to become a Common you do not have to choose the positive visions. All that is necessary is to neglect your garden. If you always follow the easy way instead of the right way, disaster is sure.

George Elliott brings out this truth in Romala, the greatest piece of fiction that she ever wrote. When Teitio Melima, the central character of her story comes on the scene she is as winsome as the first breath of spring. She is rich in possibilities but has this fatal defect that she always takes the easy way. He refuses to work his own garden. Little by little his garden grow into this he betrays the man who loves him best and to whom he owes the most. This he does not because he is vicious, but because he was morally soft. At last he died with the fingers of the he betrayed clutching at his throat. This garden that might have been beautiful became the ugliest of Commons.

Victor Hugo gives the other side of the picture in his story of Jean Val Jean, the greatest in fiction. Jean Val Jean spent nineteen years as a galleas slave because he had stolen one loaf of bread.
The first night of his freedom he robbed a kindly, old priest that had given him hospitality. When he was arrested and brought back with the stolen goods upon him the kind priest told the officers that the goods were not stolen but given. This was the first kindness that this prisoner had ever known. That night in the darkness Jean Val Jean stole back to the priest's house to bow on his knees in dedication to the higher way.

Under an assumed name he went into the manufacturing business. He became the mayor of the city. Then one day Jaberet came to him with a request. He said, "Why so, Jean Val Jean asked. "Because I have mist judged you," Jaberet answered. "You have missed judged me in what way." "I thought you were Jean Val Jean the ex-convict. "You thought I was an exconvict, how did you come to change your mind." "I changed it because the real Jean Val Jean has been arrested. He is now in a nearby town being tried for his life.

At this the mayor dismissed the policeman, then he squared his broad shoulders. At last that name that has hung over him like a black shadow has been lifted, but suddenly this question came to him, what about the man that is to suffer in your place. That question stayed with him. At last it drove him to the court room where his double was being tried. Here he made his confession and became God's freeman by taking the right way even though it was the hard way. It is easy to have a Common full of thistles and nettles. It takes consecration to God and hard work to have a garden. Which of these you have is up to you.
Not only did this man win his boys, but he won his wife also. That I know is not the ordinary. Women so often seem stronger in their religious faith than men.

Many a woman will go into the church and take every chick and child with her when her husband is a rank pagan, not only refusing to help but being a positive hindrance.

A wife without without consecration is a hindrance to the religious life of her husband. How often do we see husband.

It is a rare thing indeed to see a man stand true to the faith without the backing of the great apostle Paul. And doubtless he was fortunate his wife. But Simon had that backing. It would seem that he led his own wife into the faith. He was even hers for a personal mission. Simon was hers. But how?—also hers.

How can we be sure Simon's wife was a Christian? When Paul wrote his letter to the Romans more than a quarter of a century later, he sends salutations to that choice Christian Rufus, one of Simon's sons, and to his mother and mine. That means that Simon had not only helped to ordain Paul for his missionary work but had been host to the great apostle. His wife therefore had been a hostess not once but so often and so beautifully that Paul had adopted her as his mother and she had taken the great apostle as an adopted son. Paul you see, as some of us, had a black mammy.

Simon's Negro who as a convert to Judaism had come to Jerusalem to worship, became a Christian. From this experience he went to be an evangelist to his own family and to become one of the helpful builders of the primitive church. He built it not only through his personal ministry, but through the ministry of his family.

II.

How was Simon converted?

That is always an interesting question. Of course it is not the most important question. The most important question is, "Have you been converted?" But the method is still gripping and exciting. Our God is a God of endless variety. It would seem that no two of us find Him in exactly the same fashion. Jesus healed three blind men. To one He said, "Receive thy sight." He touched the eyes of the second. He
anointed the eyes of the third and sent him to wash in a certain pool. Had these three
got together for an experience meeting instead of rejoicing in the fact that they had
all been brought from darkness into light they might have become positively angry with
each other as to how Jesus had opened their eyes. In fact I suppose they would have
organized three separate churches, every one claiming he was right.

Look then how Simon came to be a disciple. It was a fateful Friday morning
long centuries ago about 9 o'clock. Simon sets out from a home in the country where
he has spent the night. Why Simon lodged in the country this particular night we are
not told. It may be that he did so because the city was overcrowded. It may be he
was paying a special visit to a friend. It may be he was staying in the country
because of his race. Be that as it may, in the country he had spent the night and
in the morning with all eagerness he set out for the city.

About the same hour at which he was bidding his host goodbye for the day, a
procession was leaving the Roman Praetorium and making its way down one of the narrow
streets of the city. This procession is led by a company of Roman soldiers who have
three prisoners in charge. In their wake walks a vast multitude hideously eager for
the show. Rome has chosen this day for the execution of these prisoners because the
city is thronged with multitudes. Rome believed in the power of public executions
to put the fear of death into her subjects. Therefore she wanted as many
spectators as possible. Thus she sought to make crime and treason hide their heads
in the most distant parts of her empire.

The crowd of spectators today is large, not only because they are eager to see
executions but because all three of these prisoners are well known. Two of them are
revolutionaries. They are earnest and ardent patriots who unable to organize armies
and fight in the open had resorted to guerilla warfare. They were a part of the under-
ground forces with which Rome constantly had to reckon. The other prisoner is better known
even than the revolutionaries. He has preached from one end of the country to the other.
Multitudes have hung upon his words. Some have loved Him with passionate devotion and
some have hated Him with a hatred that is eager to march Him to the cross. Therefore the procession that crowds down the narrow street of Jerusalem is very large.

Now at some spot on the road to Calvary, Simon coming in from the country met this procession. Perhaps they met near the city gate. Simon's curiosity becomes alert and alive. He inquires as to what is going on and is told that three prisoners are about to be executed. Perhaps he is morbid enough to want to witness the execution. At least he has a normal desire to see the men who are soon to die. Therefore, being a husky chap, perhaps in his early thirties, he elbows his way through the crowd until he wins to what amounts to a ringside seat. He is so near the prisoners that he could almost touch them with his hand.

He spots the revolutionaries at once. They walked jauntily forward under the weight of their wooden crosses. They are lithe and as hard as nails. They exchange jibe for jibe and oath for oath with their tormentors. Like men they have fought and like men they will die. Simon who loved strength cannot withhold a grudging admiration.

The other prisoner is vastly different. He too is a magnificent figure of a man. But there is no haughtiness in his step, no look of stern hatred upon His face. He rather looks out upon the multitude as if they were the doomed instead of Himself. His seamless robe is wet, partly with sweat far more with blood. Simon is a bit sorry for Him. He is half angry too at His weakness. "If He couldn't take it", he said to himself, "He ought not to have set his feet upon a road that would lead to a goal like this." Then even while Simon was looking, this man staggered and fell to His knees under the weight of His burden. This Jesus did not because He was physically weak, as a certain modern novelist indicates. Jesus had passed through enough in the last score of days to have killed an ordinary man. He had undergone that conflict in the garden where He found it hard to believe that the cross was, under the circumstances, God's will for Him. He had to undergo the shame and heartache of having one friend betray Him, another to deny Him, and all to forsake Him and flee. He had undergone
four separate trials, everyone of which was a mockery. He had been tried before the council of Annas. He had been tried in the house of Caiaphas. He had been dragged before foxy Herod who had treated him as a montebank and in mockery had bedecked Him in a purple horse blanket to send Him back to Pilate. Last of all He had been tried before Pilate, who had neither the courage to convict nor to let Him go. Instead he compromised by having Him scourged. That was an ordeal so painful as to often result in death.

As Jesus dropped to His knees, the Roman officer swore furiously, pledged Him a bit and then glared about him for somebody to take His place. He knew that these cruel Jews looked upon the cross as a curse. Most of them had rather have died that to touch it. It would have made them ceremonially unclean so they could not engage in the feast tomorrow. But the eyes of this soldier lighted upon Simon. "He is not a Jew", he said to himself. Out flashed his short sword, "Here, you take this up and get going".

At that word Simon goes hot and cold. Being at least a Jew in feeling, he too hates the cross. At first he seeks to turn aside as if he had not heard but with an oath the officer pricked him with his sword and Simon with a deep curse upon his lips lifts the horrid cross upon his shoulders with inward rage. He falls in step with the prisoner whom he has relieved and goes toward Calvary. He is angry with himself for his curiosity. He is bitter at these Roman tyrants. He is even resentful of the man who couldn't carry his own cross.

It is interesting how this bit of wood that brought a curse has come in the mind of the superstitious to bring blessing. After Jesus was crucified there were those who went about carrying splinters of what they thought at least was the real cross. In times of difficulty they touched this piece of wood to steady them and give them strength. To this day certain of us knock on wood to keep our luck in tact. This custom is not new. It dates back to the wood of the cross.

No sooner had Simon begun his hated march to Calvary than he found himself rubbing elbows with the most attractive, the most fascinating personality that ever touched our
world. What did Jesus say to him and what did he say to Jesus? We do not know. It is possible that no word was said on either side. It is far more probable that Jesus spoke to him and he to Jesus. I love to think that the Master, relieved of his load, looked into the hot and angry face of the man at His side and said, "Thank you, you are very strong. I am sorry to have to involve you in my difficulties but I am not quite fit today." And that there was something in the presence of Him and in the richness of His voice and in the tenderness that looked out from His eyes that melted Simon's hard and angered heart. He was astonished at what this condemned man was and what he said. He was even more amazed, if possible, at His response. His anger was forgotten. His shame had vanished as darkness in the dawn. "That is all right", he heard himself saying with a voice that he hardly recognized, "I am feeling very fit. If it will be any help to you I will be glad to carry it for you all the way." "It will be a help", the Master answered with a smile. Thus they walked until they came to the foot of that skull shaped hill.

Then I can imagine the Master saying, "You have rested me. You have been a great help. I can take it the remainder of the way. I wouldn't advise you to go to the top of the hill." What comes next will be rather ugly and Simon should hear of it. "I will take it all the way and gladly", he answers, and while the two revolutionaries fling their crosses down angrily, having reached the hilltop, Simon lays his down with reverence and nods to the man at his side, "I will stand by until the very end". And so he did - to the end of that bloody ordeal and to the end of his courageous and beautiful life. Thus it was that Simon became a Christian.

III

What does this story have to say to you and me?

1. First it tells us what cross bearing really means. "If any man", said Jesus, "will come after me, let him take up his cross". The cross is not something that Jesus alone had to bear. It must be borne by you and me if we are to be His disciples. It is up to us to decide whether we will follow Him or not, but having
decided to follow Him we cannot decide the conditions. We must bear the cross or there is no discipleship.

But what is it to bear the cross. Often we speak as if the cross were just any load that we have to share. But such is not the case. The cross is a load that we bear voluntarily. It is being brave beyond the point of duty. That is what the cross meant for Jesus. He makes it very plain that He did not have to bear it, "No man", He says, "taketh my life from me, but I lay it down myself".

When that Roman officer gripped Simon by the arm and forced him to shoulder the cross of Jesus, it was not at that moment a cross for Simon. It was only a shameful and-grotesquely burden. But during that brief walk at the side of Jesus something happened that changed this burden of shame into a cross that became for its bearer a badge of honor. There is no Christianity without the cross. We are cross bearers when of our own choice we accept the yoke of Christ, we put ourselves under the burden of human need not because we must but because that is our heroic choice.

2. A second truth that Simon's story teaches is that by our voluntary carrying of the cross, we help and gladden our Lord. Jesus was intensely human. He is still. How much it must have meant to Him, therefore, as He saw the angry resentment of his companion give way to an eager desire to help. I remember a great rugged man it was my privilege to lead to Christ. Soon thereafter I had one of the most severe illnesses I have ever had. Now and then I would come out of my delirium to see this rugged man standing by. He would never say a word but I was braced by his presence. So Simon must have steadied Jesus.

"But", you say, "I would be glad to stand by in the same fashion that Simon did, but that happened so long ago." Yes, but Jesus is till being crucified. He is still suffering in the woes and sorrows and losses of men and women all about us and in the uttermost parts of the earth. Therefore, we can still help Jesus just as really as Simon did, for our Lord makes it plain that what we do to our fellows we do to Him. Not even a cup of cold water shall lose its reward. "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, you have done it unto me".
What Simon is telling us with a face radiant with sheer joy is, "It was my privilege in the dark and desperate hour to be a friend and helper of my Lord". Such may be yours and mine.

3. Simon's story tells us that in thus bearing the cross, we not only help our fellows by helping Jesus, but that this cross bearing does something for us. In the after years Simon looked back to that distant day when he shouldered this cross as the day life for him took on a new departure. As he renounced himself to bear this cross, he found that he had really begun to live.

This is the load that lifts. There are some burdens that grow more and more heavy with the passing of the years. That is the burden of self-will. There is another burden that is not a weight. It does not hold down. It gives wings to the soul. A young woman who had married a French nobleman escaped from France in the early days of the present war. In escaping she had to travel on foot for four days through the rugged Pyrenees Mountains. She had a little girl about three or four years of age. Her other companions were several elderly people. As they proceeded on this seemingly hopeless and impossible journey now and then one or another of these old bodies would fall by the way, saying, "I am too old and tired to go another step". This wise young mother would answer, "But it is your time to carry the baby. You couldn't fall out now and let little Helen die." Then that half dead old man would pull himself together. For a while he and the baby would fall behind then their step would quicken and soon they would be leading the procession. At last they won their way to freedom in life, not in spite of the fact they were hampered by the burden of a little child but because they were nervèd and made strong by this burden. Caring for this child had become their cross and that cross had given them new strength for victory.

4. The final truth that Simon teaches is that this Christ of ours is for all men. He hungered for all men. He needs every man's help. He needs those of us who are sons and daughters of privilege. He needs also the poor people who are handicapped and disinherited. Here He found a friend and helper in a loyal black man. So He has done since then times without number.
A missionary from the interior of Africa told me some years ago of a Negro chief that after years of patient effort he had succeeded in leading to Christ. Soon thereafter this man was caught by some white hunters and beaten so cruelly that when he came back to the camp the blood was still running down his heels. His people gathered about him and demanded revenge. But said the missionary around the camp fire that night, he heard this once foul chieftain until yesterday a savage pray for the far uglier savages who had beaten him. Our gospel is a gospel not for the few but for the many. It is the gospel not for one race but for all races. To deny that is to be less than Christian.

Here then is Christ's appeal to us, "If any man will come after me let him take up his cross". Let him of his own choice shoulder the burden of human need. "By so doing", said Jesus, "you will help me. By so doing you will help others. By so doing you will find life and find it in abundance". Not only so but you can find it in no other way. For it is forever true that he that seeketh to save his life shall lose it and he that leses his life shall keep it unto life eternal.