I. David's Big Ambition

1. Not warrior
2. Not letting Fain a flock of sheep
3. Building the temple
4. But it was not to be. His dream
5. ... was unfulfilled.
6. It was the big disappointment of his life

II. His not alone. There are many
1. Moses after forty long years just free short
2. So have we. Here is one ambition to be a Hannah, to live in some outstanding fashion. But it was not to be. "We count the broken byers that rest it"

III. What is our consolation as families
1. Not from word-educated machine
2. It says nothing of effort or longing-only success - 07 rules.
2. From God.
4. He looks on heart. He re-
wards it is not for what we do, but for what we would do if we could. We lack not materially but the power to lead of our achievement best of the fine goal of our desires—Hence, the true Temple stood an memorial to catch first rays of the rising sun and held its last lingering cares at eventide, when David died. Stile there was one in his heat. Therefore when I looked over the threshold of Recording Angel I saw David credited with one Temple.

II. What are Results of this Principle
1. Many first come the last
2. Great gifts don’t count simply because they are gifts—Mr. T has no merit out Mr. T. You do not love one thou best be
cause he is bright
b. Sir Samful gave gold and
Jolstoy gave nothing—yet it was latter who blessed.
3.

2. Fast shall be first.

He wore the cap and shown all unwary to the Council
concerning the most solemn assembly
with Washington.

6. Preachers who never preached
like God's House and just any
or who failed like Glenday.

1. Missionaries who won no
laurels--too old--or fine and
Horace Pitkin.

6. Little girls who gave her
fall and sought nothing.

V. List of Our Hearts

1. Not wishes or idle complaining.

2. What we do with our own.

6. David--He might have let
the matter alone since he
could not build--But he
did what he could--The hidden.
work. He was writing he has the energy to spend a long time on the part he has,

The widow is not doing business on every street in the city because she gave millions. She is she because she went that she had so little to give and then gave nothing. She is heaven's money princess because she gave what she had plus her heart.

The lad is not remembered because he wished to give a billion pennies and the ship was off in the lake there and ate his lunch alone. He gave what he had.

There is a man we once saw. He was very rare and was connected with his that are bran-

...
But the man we love, good what did he? He did all that was in his power to save the man, we must blame him for his lack of equipment, we do we praise him because the patient, he would have been just as worthy of praise had the man lied on way to death. We praise him for what was in his heart. And we know
what was in his heart by
what he did.- Read and think.
So here you are sure to win.
If it is in your heart to win,
this man try it. If you win
you win. If you fail you
win. A sure investment. And
one day when your eyes grow
large with glad wonder at
the brightness of your crown.
God will say, "you did not win,
I knew, but it is well that it
was in thine heart to do this
bit of work in my name."
Laborers in vineyard—my ships
remembered by what I have done.
SUCCESSFUL FAILURE

"And the Lord said unto David my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart."
1 Kings 8:18

It is my opinion that the supreme ambition of David's life was to build a temple in honor of his Lord. Of course, he had other ambitions. These had been many realized. But in his mature years I am sure that his one passioned purpose was to build the temple. It was by this more than by anything else, I dare say, that he expected to have a place in the grateful memories of his people. But in this ambition he was disappointed. This big dream never came true. Therefore, in spite of the fact that he had walked victoriously, in spite of the fact that he had reigned so wisely as to make his era the golden age of his people, I have an idea he went to his grave feeling in large measure a failure.

When I read this story, I realized that his resulting disappointment was unique. The names of those who failed to obtain their ambitions are legion. We have not failed entirely, any of us, thank God. And very few of us have accomplished all we have dreamed of accomplishing. All of our hopes have not been realized. All of our dreams have not come true. Therefore, not a few of us are coming close to the end of our journey with a realization that we can never grasp that for which through the years we have longed. This has been true of those of mediocre ability. It has been equally true of some of the greatest and the best.

Moses of whom I spoke to you last Sunday belongs to this group. It was not hard to know what was the supreme purpose of his life. He lived but for one great end. That was the bringing of his people out of bondage in Egypt to freedom of the Land of Promise. To this end he lived, prayed and battled. But though he accomplished much, he fell short.
When his fingers were almost touching the prize, there came a stern command, "Get thee up into the mountain and die." Thus he went out disappointed. Thus he had to leave a great purpose unaccomplished. It had to be carried to completion by another and a lesser man.

But while David looked upon himself as having in large measure failed, it is encouraging to know that God had a different view. Though David failed to put through a purpose, God took the will with a deed. Though David fell asleep at last leaving no temple upon Mt. Moriah whose guilded dome was to catch the first kiss of the sunlight, he still counted David as a success. This he did because though the Shepherd King had builded no temple outwardly, he had builded one in his own heart. Therefore, he said, "Whereas it was in thine heart to build a temple in my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart."

- I -

This brings us face to face with the fact that God has a different way from ours of measuring success. One of the greatest of the prophets speaking for God declared, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." While man looketh on the outward parts, God looketh on the heart. What, therefore, looks like failure to us often does not look like failure to Him who sees things clearly and whole. Man reckons success by one standard; God by another.

1. Look at man's reckoning. When we set about to determine success, we look to the outward. We ask for results. We turn our eyes to the scoreboard. We want to know who one. We give our applause to those who really captured the prize. Some time ago I saw the picture of two men fighting. The more skillful slung a blow low at his weaker foe and laid him flat. But the weaker man was game and came back only to be
knocked down again. Until finally he lay still. Then a crowd came up and took one off the stage. Which one? The man who could not leave of his own power? No, they carried off the winner.

Some years ago I heard a lecture by the manager of a large chemical establishment. He emphasized the need of efficiency. Jobs were not plentiful then, so he said, "When I get back to my office, it will be full of men seeking employment. Most of them I will have to reject because they are not efficient. Some of these rejected men will be from the best universities of America? Then he added, "But it is useless to be educated on the unless you bring home the bacon." There you have it. We must bring home the bacon.

Here is another story to the same purpose. While holding a meeting in a certain city, I went into the office of the leading daily of that city. Confronting me on the wall was this announcement: "57 Rules for Making a Success" I stopped with interest. That adage about not being able to teach an old dog new tricks is false. I was there ready to learn some new tricks. Out of fifty-seven I should be able to find some new ones.

"1. Deliver the Goods.
2. It doesn't make any difference about the other 56."

In our prosaic world we must bring home the bacon. Alibies won't do.

2. Now over against man's measures, look at God's. God is eager that we get results. He sets no premium on failure. But He never majors on minors. He goes to the heart of what really matters. Therefore, when He estimates success, he does not test us simply by our achievements, but by our longings. He does not measure us simply for what may be in our hands, but by the gold that is in our hearts. Browning was right when he said, "It is not what man does, but what man would do that exalts him. Therefore He says to one who failed, "Thou didst well that it was in thine heart."
- II -

Now the fact that God had a different way of measuring success from what man has, that means that many of our human judgments are going to be reversed. Jesus emphasizes this fact in one of the most perplexing parables He ever spoke. "Many that are first shall be last, and many that are last shall be first."

This truth is illustrated by the story of a certain landlord who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. He hired a group who agreed to work for a penny a day. The emphasis is on agree before they would work. They wanted to know what they would get out of it. Later in the day he went out and sent others to the vineyard say simply what is right, "I will pay you." At last at the eleventh hour when there was only one working hour left, he went and found a group and said to them, "Go into the vineyard." And they went trusting simply to the landlord's fairness.

Then what? These laborers who went last and only worked one hour received a full day's wages. Naturally when those who had worked all day saw this they expected to receive much more, but they received that for which they had agreed to work. When they complained, the landlord said, "I am giving you what you agreed upon. I am paying these others as much as I paid you because their eager willingness to work when given a chance indicates they would have worked a full day had they had the chance. I am rewarding them therefore, not for their achievements, but for their rich willingness." These first became last.

When Sir Launfal set out in quest of the Holy Grail, a leprous beggar ask for arms. The generous knight did not refuse. He gave him genuine gold. That gold would have passed legal tender anywhere except where heart values are supreme. But though the gold was genuine, it was not generous. "The beggar left the coin in the dust, Better to me than the poor man's crust. Though he turned me empty from his door."
The knight's gift though of real gold was worth nothing either to the giver or to the receiver. Paul expressed the same conviction when he said, "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profit me nothing." Thus many that are first shall be last.

2. Then many who are last shall be first, I am thinking of some of the choice souls that I have known in my own ministry. Some of them are of real ability, most of them of mediocre ability. They were not conspicuously successful as men count success. Some of them were not known beyond the intimate circle of their friends. Yet I count some of these the most successful people I have known. Then I think too of those who died in youth. There is always something exceedingly pathetic in seeing a young lad full of promise with all those promises left unrealized.

I am thinking of a young candidate for the ministry who belonged to my church in Washington. He looked forward to the high vocation, to which he felt himself called, with eagerness. But a wasting sickness lay hold of him, and he moved slowly toward the cemetery. I visited him again and again. He was always cheerful. He still talked of his first church he would have and the thrill it was going to bring. But he went out at last without ever holding the church or preaching a sermon.

In that immortal passage, Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush, you will remember Gordon Howe, the schoolmaster, discovered that Gordy was a lad of arts. Gordy dedicated himself to the ministry. The schoolmaster and his mother felt he must go to school. So at the price of great sacrifice he went away to the university. Here he worked hard. He won every prize. At last he came home to enter upon his beloved task. But he did not enter the ministry. He entered the sick room, and from there he passed to the yet more narrow room, the cemetery.

Some of you will remember June Nichols who went out of our church to the foreign field. She remained just long enough to gather the germs of
death into her body. Then there was Horace Pitkins who went to China
to die in the Boxer Uprising. He was never allowed, as far as we know,
to preach a single sermon. There was another man named Bordon who went
as a missionary of the Moslem world, but he died of meningitis before
reaching his mission station.

Is the record of all these great souls to be barren of all gain?
By no means. God is not going to credit them simply for what they did,
but for what they had in their hearts to do. When he sums up their
results and their struggles, He does not claim for them complete success.
He rather says, "These all died in the faith, not having received the
promises. All of them have dreamed great dreams that have not come fully
ture.

There came a time in the life of the knight, to whom we referred,
when his gift though the smallest was unspeakably broken and battered.
He came at last to his own castle one night to have the door shut in his
face. As he blundered down the steps with the bitter cold torturing him,
a leprous beggar again ask for arms. This time he had no gold to give,
but shared with him his crust and drank with him from a common cup. It
was then that the soul of this beggar stood up in His eyes, and he stood
before Him glorified. And the last had begun to come first.

It is, I repeat, not what man does, but what man will do that
exalts him. There is a story in mythology to the same point. Phaethon
had been informed by his mother that his father was the Sun God Appolo.
He made his way to his father to have his mother's story confirmed. Appolo
proposed to grant any request that his sun would offer. In reply Phaethon
asked for the privilege of driving the chariot of the sun for one day.
As you remember, he made a failure of it and fell to his death. But the
nymph buried him, and wrote over him this epitaph: "Here lies Phaethon,
who though he failed, died in a great attempt."
3. What then is the test of what we have in our hearts? There is a danger in preaching a sermon of this kind because there are always those who content themselves of being well-wishers. There are always those ready to tell us how much they would give if they had beautiful voices. How well would they sing if they had the voices of another? Meanwhile, they are doing nothing with what they have. The test of what you have in your heart is what you do with what you have in your hand.

- III -

How could God give David credit for building a temple? David went as far as possible for making that achievement for another a success. That showed that he was interested in honoring God and not himself. David was willing to be like a grain of wheat that falls into the ground and dies that a harvest might be. He was willing to be the coal that burns up in a furnace that power might be produced.

Why was that poor widow credited with making the largest contribution that was made? Not because she bewailed her poverty and gave nothing. It was rather because in spite of her poverty, she gave all that she had.

Years ago a bright young chap was going away to study for the ministry. On his way to take the train, he was the victim of a wreck. He lingered on a bed of pain until the months wore into years. At last he was able to be up, a mere shadow of his former self. He had to give up his dream of being a minister. He became a ferry man on a mountain river. A man told me there were seventy men living in various parts of the mountain who had been converted by this ferry man as he had taken them across the river. He showed what was in his heart by what he did with these seemingly meager opportunities.

- IV -

The fact that God judges us by what is in our hearts is encouraging for two reasons.
1. It puts us all on the same footing. The man of genius has no advance over the man of small ability. Those who have one talent are on the same footing as those who have five.

2. This truth is heartening because it makes failure impossible. We are not called upon to achieve this goal or that. We are called upon to put our hearts best into the task. If we do that, failure is impossible. If you try to win that man, and win him, you won. If you try and fail, you did your best. God would say, "Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart."
SUCCESSFUL FAILURE

"Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart."

--I Kings 8:18

There is little doubt in my mind that the dearest ambition of David's heart was to build a house to the honor of his God. He had many other fine purposes but all were secondary to this. It was to this end that he dreamed and planned over a long space of years. It was by the building of this temple that he expected to live in the grateful memory of his people. But this ambition was never realized. Therefore, though he had ruled wisely, though he had warred victoriously, though he had written songs that will live as long as literature lives, I think he came to the sunset of life with the feeling that he had made a bit of a failure. His biggest ambition had never been realized.

When I read this story, I realize that it is not the story of one isolated individual simply, but of multitudes. These ancient records tell us not simply of events that happened in the long ago when the world was young. They tell us of events that are happening today and every day. Always men and women are dreaming and planning and coming to the end of the journey without having reached the castle of their dreams. Few of us accomplish all that we set out to accomplish. Life has not been utter failure for any of us, thank God! No more has it been as successful for many as we hoped. Though we have accomplished much, we have often failed in what we longed more than all else to accomplish.

I have an idea that Moses went to his final rest feeling that he had failed. At a great cost he had undertaken a great enterprise. In the strength of his youth with his foot on the steps of the throne of the greatest nation in the world, he
turned away from it all to give his fine capacities to bringing to birth a new nation.

At a cost to himself that no other could ever understand but his God he gave himself to this high task. He succeeded in leading a herd of slaves from Egypt. He rescued them from bondage but he was never able to bring them into the freedom of the Promised Land. When he seemed on the point of realizing the biggest ambition of his life, there came the stern command, "Get thee up to the mountain and die."

Thus he failed to win through and the big purpose of his life had to be carried out by another and a lesser man. This, I repeat, is the story of a great multitude.

But here is a heartening fact. While David failed to accomplish his supreme ambition, while he perhaps went to his grave feeling as if he had been in a large measure a failure, God had a different reckoning. While this brilliant king had left behind him no temple on Mount Moriah whose glittering dome should catch the first kiss of the sunrise and hold its last lingering caress at eventide, he had builded a temple elsewhere. That place was in his heart. Therefore, God took the will for the deed and said to the disappointed man, "Whereas it was in thine heart to build me a temple, thou didst well that it was in thine heart to build it."

I

This brings us face to face with a very obvious and heartening fact, and that is that God has a different way of reckoning success from our own. "My thoughts are not your thoughts," said the Lord through the lips of the prophet Isaiah, "Neither are your ways my ways. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

1. Another of the prophets called attention to the fact that while man "Looketh on the outward part God looketh on the heart." First, look at our way of reckoning success. In the very nature of things we must look to accomplishment. We ask, "Did he put it over?" The rich farmer that Jesus called a fool we would have called wise because we would have looked at his full barns instead of his empty heart. We applaud the man that gets on. We give our rewards, our badges of honor to those who need
them least. We are all for the man who wins outward success.

For instance, I attended a lecture sometime ago given by the head of a great chemical plant. He employed many well-trained technicians. Jobs were not so plentiful then as they are now. Therefore, he spoke somewhat as follows: "Tomorrow when I get to my office it will be fairly crowded with men asking for positions. Most of them will be highly trained, but inefficient. Some will have come from the best universities in America and some from the best universities of Germany, but I cannot use them because they cannot put over the task. It is useless to be educated on the Rhine unless you can bring home the bacon." There you have it!

Here is another story to the same purpose. While I was holding a meeting in Huntington, West Virginia, I stepped into the office of the leading daily of the city. As I entered the door, this greeted me in big box-car letters: Fifty-seven Rules for Making a Success. I stopped to read. Being interested in the way to success, I wanted to make use of this guide-post and this is what I read: "First, deliver the goods. Second, it doesn't make any difference about the other fifty-six." It is when I want to know whether you are successful or not I look at what you have accomplished—the things that you actually have in your head.

2. But God's reckoning is different. He is interested, of course, in our accomplishments, but that is secondary. It is not our actual achievements that receive His first attention but our longings. He looks not simply at what is in our hands but at what is in our hearts. Therefore, He credits us not simply for the good that we do but for the larger good that we so often long to do. He approves not simply according to the poor dross of our achievements but for the fine gold of our longings. Browning was right when he said, "It is not what man does but what man would do that exalts him."

II

Now since God judges by the longings of the heart rather than by the actual accomplishments of the end, that means that many of our human judgments are going
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to be reversed. The Master said as much himself when he declared that the first shall be last and many that are last shall be first.

1. The difference between what we really are and what we seem is often very wide. That is going to bring one of the revolutionary shocks that will meet some of us when we reach the land where we shall be seen for what we are. Many that have flashed like suns here will be only poor tallow-dips yonder. Many a roaring lion will be feeble than Mickey Mouse. Many a giant will be recognized for the utter pigmy that he is. "I would have you to know," said a money magnate, "that I am worth a million pounds." "Yes," came the answer, "and not a penny more." Because God looks on the heart many that are first shall be last.

2. Then this has a radiant side to it. Many that are last shall be first. Some that have been misfits, some that have bumbled, some that seem to have fumbled every time they carry the ball, some that had very low batting averages will be credited with being home-run kings and a batting average of a thousand, not because they actually did these fine things, but because they would have done them if they could. Whereas it was in thine heart to do the beautiful and great thing, our Lord will say, "Thou didst well that it was in thine heart."

I am thinking of some great souls that I have known that accomplished very little. In our community lived a man named Jim Riley. He was one of the saintliest men that I ever knew. Yet nature seemed to have decked him in the cap and bells of a clown. He was unconsciously funny. I imagine the angels laughed with a gentle and holy laughter when he got home. He was a bungler in the use of his hands but a genius in the use of his heart.

While I was pastor in Houston I had in my congregation a choice young man who was a candidate for the ministry, but a devastating disease laid its destroying hands upon him. The remaining months of his life became one long battle with death. But he never lost his cheerfulness. There was never a word of complaint. He always seemed girded with a high expectancy. Often as we talked together, he would speak...
of what he was going to do when he got his first appointment. The thought of preaching was a constant thrill. But at last he passed without ever having held an appointment, without ever having preached a single sermon.

Some of you will remember June Nichols who went out from our church as a missionary a few years ago. She stayed at her post just long enough to receive into her beautiful young body the germs of death. Then she passed seemingly without any fruit at all. Then there was Horace Pitkin of Yale, going out to China with his splendid abilities. Almost immediately upon his arrival he died in the Boxer uprising. He died it would seem without ever preaching a sermon, without ever winning a single soul. The same was true of Borden of Yale. Rich in things and rich in talent, he set out as a missionary to the Moslem world and died of spinal meningitis before he reached his field.

Such stories are endless. In the immortal classic by John McClaren we have the story of Gordy Howell. You remember how the teacher discovered that he was a lad of parts. At untold sacrifices to his parents and to himself Gordy went away to the big university. How hard he worked! He took every prize. When he graduated, it was with highest honors. He could not do otherwise for he was a candidate for the holy office of the ministry. But when he came home to enter his task his health was undermined. He did not enter the ministry but he entered the sick-room. From the narrow precincts of the sick-room he went to the still more narrow house in the cemetery. From there so far as our eyes could see he went to meet his Lord all but empty handed.

Years ago a man asked of his friend as a funeral procession went by, "Who is dead?" "The old maid of the village," he answered. That was all. Yet that was not all she meant to those who really knew. Once she had been beautiful. Once a lover had come and she was engaged to be married. But tragedy struck and she was left with an invalid father and an imbecile brother on her hands. She gave up all those dear dreams that to the normal woman are dearest and gave her life to those near and ugly and prosaic duties. How little she had accomplished, and yet I doubt
if few real mothers ever received a richer reward than this faded old lady who did not have treasure in her hand but such priceless worth in her heart. To all such God is going to say, "Whereas it was in thine heart to do so many beautiful things thou didst well that it was in thine heart."

III

But what is the measure of the treasure that is in our heart? A sermon like this has its dangers. There are those who will quickly conclude that all that is necessary is to be a well-wisher. There are too many like this already. They constantly remind us how much they would give if they were as rich as some wealthy friend, how much they would serve if they were as free or as skilled as another, how gladly they would give their voices if they could sing as well as another. But while they thus boast they do nothing with the possessions that are actually theirs. What, I repeat, is the test of what is in your heart? It is what you do with that which is really in your hand.

Look again at David. His supreme ambition was to build the Temple, but this he was not permitted to do. So what? Did he lose all interest in it? Did he say, "If it is not going to be David's temple, I will forget about it." No, though he saw he could never build it, though he realized it was not to be his Temple, it still held the same firm place in his heart. Forbidden to see it through, he went as far in that direction as he could. He did the obscure work. He raised the money. He sought to make it possible for another to build after he was gone. There are those who are interested in an enterprise just so long as they are leaders in it. As the pastor of this church, I am naturally deeply concerned for its success. But if I failed to make a go of it and had to be moved, could I really pray for my successor? If so, I have fine stuff in my heart. I was in a meeting sometime ago where a worthful crusade was being launched. A was nominated for president and B for secretary at the same time and by the same man. B at once rose from his place and said, "I will have nothing to do with it!" What was the matter? He thought he ought
to be chairman. If he could not be, he would quit. His interest was not in building any kind of temple to God, but only to himself.

Why is the poor widow rated as the largest contributor of the whole Christian Church? When Rockefeller died it was said of him that he had given away more than a half billion dollars. I honor him for it, but his record is as starlight to sunlight in comparison with this woman in her faded widow's weeds. Why does she rank so high? Not because she boasted of what she would give if she had the wealth of some Croesus. She ranked at the top because though she had only two mites she gave that. Christ was thrilled by her not because of the wealth that was in her hand but because of the immeasurable wealth that was in her heart.

There is a story of a soldier who was trying to fight with a broken sword. He grew discouraged and afraid. He looked at that piece of blade and said, "If I only had a good sword, I would fight the battle through to victory." If I had a sword such as my prince has I would be as brave as he is. But I can do nothing with this." So he threw down the broken blade and took to his heels. By and by his prince came that way, found that broken sword, rallied his faltering men and won the fight. It is what we have in our hearts that counts. But what we have in our hearts is indicated by what we do with that which is in our hands.

IV

"Whereas it was in thine heart to build me a house, thou didst well that it was in thine heart." Personally, it encourages me that God judges us not by our achievements but by our longings. I take courage from this for two reasons.

1. It puts us all on the same footing. The man of five talents has not a better chance than the man of one talent. The genius has not one whit better opportunity than the plodder. Our abilities are God's gifts to us anyway. We deserve no credit for receiving a gift any more than we do for the color of our hair. We do deserve credit for the loyalty with which we use these gifts. Since God looks on the heart we are all on the same footing.
2. Then this word is heartening because it puts the highest success within reach of every one of us whatever may be our gifts. God does not require outward success of any of us. It is not greatness of achievement but rightness of will that He is asking. When a physician recommended certain dainties for a sick mother some years ago that that mother was unable to buy her little daughter saw a way out. She possessed a china doll that she had received at the mission for Christmas. Because it was worth so much to her, she thought it would be worth the same to everybody. So she slipped out to pawn it. But on the way she fell and broke it to fragments. She came back with nothing for her mother except the shattered fragments of her doll and her own broken heart. But when she told her story, the mother found it more healing than medicine and more strengthening than food. Go then about your task. If you put it through you win. If you fail you still win if you give it your best. Then one day when you go home to meet your Lord with not a single badge of honor He will greet you with his "Well done!" saying, "Whereas it was in thine heart to build me a house, thou didst well that it was in thine heart."
"The Failure's Crown"

1 Kings 8:18

"Thou didst well that it was in thine heart."

Had you spoken to King David in the early years of his reign and asked him that by which he expected to be remembered, if you had induced him to tell you the one bit of service that he counted upon making his name immortal, his answer might have surprised you.

David was a great warrior but he would not have expected to have been remembered by that. He was a great poet. He let loose a flock of skylarks that will sing as long as there is a sky above us. But he would not have counted upon his poetry. What would he look upon, then, as his supreme contribution? Answer - the building of the temple. His big life dream was the building of the house of the Lord.

But this dream was never to be realized. David worked far toward it but when he was almost ready to begin the actual building the word of the Lord came to him, forbidding it. "Thou canst not build me a house." That was the command and David was disappointed. I think this constituted the supreme disappointment of his life.

Now this man David is not alone. There are many who suffer just what he suffered. There is an innumerable company that no man can number whose best hopes never came to fruition and whose finest dreams were never realized.

Moses was one who toiled toward one goal for almost half a century but when the prize was almost in reach of his fingers it was given to another and God said to him, "Get thee up into the mountains and die".

There are many of you like that today. You haven't done what you once wanted to do. Here is one ambitious to be a Hannah, but the cradle she rocks is a dream cradle and the child she mothers is the child that never was. You once dreamed of doing something worthy and wonderful but you never could quite arrive.

"We count the broken lyres that rest
Where the sweet wailing fingers slumber,
But o'er their silent sisters' breast
The wild flowers, who'll stoop to number?
But few can touch the magic string
And noisy fame is proud to win them.
Alas for those who never sing,
But die with all their music in them."

Now, what is our consolation as failures? In the first place let me say that it does not come from the world. This is a hard world on a failure. It takes off its hat to success but not to failure. You remember what the chemist said, "It's no use being educated on the Rhine unless you bring home the bacon". I was in a newspaper office down in Huntington last week. On the wall was this motto "57 reasons for success". "First, deliver the goods. Second, well you needn't to mind about the rest." That's the world's way. It has nothing to say about effort, about heart. It only values success.

But God has a different standard. He looks on the heart. He rewards us not simply for what we do but for what we would do if we could. He
looks not simply at the poor base lead of our achievements but at the fine bowl of our desires.

For this reason, though there was no temple when David died, though no magnificent pile stood upon Mt. Maria to catch the first kiss of the rising sun and to hold its last lingering caress at eventide, still there was a temple none the less, though it existed only in David's heart. Therefore, when I looked over the shoulder of the recording angel I saw David credited with one temple for God said "Thou didst well that it was in thine heart to build me a house".

What are the results of this principle? First, many that are first are going to be last. Great gifts do not count with God simply because they are gifts. Mr. Five Talents has no merit over Mr. One. You do not love one child in your home better than all the others because he is bright.

You remember in the "Vision of Sir Launfal" how he gave real gold to the beggar that appealed to him. But the story says that the beggar left the coin in the dust. "Better to me the poor man's crust, though he turn me empty from his door." Tolstoi, on the other hand, met a beggar and gave him nothing. As he fumbled in his empty pockets he said, "My brother, I am sorry but I haven't a cent". And the beggar went away glad because, while the man had added nothing to his pocket he had put treasure into his heart.

This means, also, that many that are last shall be first. I think of the ordinary bunglers I have known along the way. There was Jim Riley. He wore the cap and bell of the clown all his life. He didn't mean to. He didn't do so because he was foolish. He was a man of fine sense. Yet I never saw a crowd so solemn that he couldn't convulse it with laughter by telling how the second blessing struck him at the cross of the gallowses.

Then there are the preachers. Some of them are those who never preached. There was the young man who was made a physical wreck the day before he was to go away to college. Then there are those like Gordie Howe. He won every medal that was given at the university and when he was graduated he came home to die. He never preached a single sermon. He never held any church of any description and yet I dare to believe that God will not count him and his kind as failures.

Then there are the preachers who enter the ministry but who never seem to get anywhere. I think of one today, that you cannot hear without pain. He makes a wretched failure and you suffer with him because you love him. He never will be able to preach much, yet I think it will take me ten thousand years to get in speaking distance of him in Heaven. The sermon on his lips is a rather poor thing, but he has grand stuff in his heart.

Then there are the missionaries. Did you ever think of those who won no laurels? There are some who heard the call when it was too late in life for them to go. There are those like June Nichols whose life was only one short, beautiful day of effort and then home again to die. Or Horace Pitkin. He died, you know, in the Boxer Uprising and he died without ever winning a single soul of all China's millions to Christ. Will the record be blank after the names of these? No. God is going to credit them not simply with what they did, but with what was in their hearts.
Did you ever hear of the little girl whose mother was sick? The mother was poor, miserably poor. She needed medicine and the little girl made what was for her the supreme sacrifice. She decided to pawn her doll. To her it was a treasure. She thought it would be a treasure in the markets of the world. But it was broken on the way to the pawnshop and she brought home no medicine. She came back with nothing in her hand but her mother was helped none the less. She was helped by the love that was in the heart of her.

So we will be judged at last not simply by what is in our hands but by what is in our hearts. But what is the test of what we have in our hearts? The test is not what we are always wishing nor is it our idle complaining. The test of what is in our hearts is just this - what we actually do with what is really our own.

Take David for instance. He knew he could never build a temple. He knew it was to be called by the name of another. Most men under those circumstances would have had nothing to do with it at all but he went as far toward the building of it as he possibly could. He did the hidden and the obscure and the inconspicuous.

He was a bit like the railroad man. They were having a testimony meeting of the railroad men and they were comparing themselves with the different parts of the engine. One said he would like to be the driving wheels and another that he would like to be the whistle that would signal the progress of the train. But finally an humble man with beautiful life arose who said that he would be glad to be the old black coal that burns out of sight and yet gives the engine its power. David was like that, willing to do what he could.

The widow that Jesus complimented, -- she is not doing business on Wall Street in Heaven today because she gave millions, nor is she there because she wept that she had so little to give and then gave absolutely nothing. She is Heaven's supreme money princess today because she so had it in her heart to help that she gave what she had even though it was only a quarter of a cent.

There is a man we call the Good Samaritan. Two names are connected with his that are branded with abiding shame. How comes it? All three saw a wounded man one day. The first two did nothing. They were sorry for him, no doubt. Possibly they prayed for him. They even went so far as to say what they would have done if they had only been surgeons or if they had had an ambulance with them. But they were turned to disgrace. The record stands that they did nothing.

But the man we call good, - what did he? He had no ambulance either. He was not a surgeon but it was in his heart to help, so he rendered what service he could. And we do not praise him today simply because the patient that he helped lived. He would have been just as worthy of praise had the man died on the way to the hotel. We praise him for what was in his heart and we know what was in his heart by what he did. (Bud and the atheist)

So here you are sure to win. If it is in your heart to win this man try it. If you win him you win. If you fail to win him you still win. It is an absolutely sure investment.
And one day when your eyes grow large with glad wonder at the brightness of your crown, one day when you know that you are being rewarded infinitely beyond your achieving, God will say, "Thou didst well that it was in thine heart". Believe me, God looks on the heart. That is the reason some of earth's brightest crowns are going to the failures.
"Whereas it was in thine heart to build me a house, it is well that it was in thine heart to build it." This is a part of the life story of David. David was a highly successful man in many respects. And yet I dare say that he was disappointed in his supreme ambition of his life. He accomplished many great tasks, but I think he failed to accomplish his dearest dream. I am confident that the hope that lay closest to his heart was never realized. Successful in so many respects, in life's dearest dream he was a failure.

What was David's big ambition? To what single achievement did he look above all others to secure for him the gratitude of the people of his day? To what did he look to secure for him the loving memory and gratitude of future generations? He did not count mainly upon this gratitude because he had been a successful warrior. As a military man he had been a success. He had led his people from victory to victory. It is doubtful if the Jews ever had a more soldierly leader. But it was not upon his military success that he counted to win the grateful memory of his people.

David was a statesman of real ability. He had ruled his people with a great wisdom. His leadership had brought them to a place of power among the nations of the earth. But he did not look even to his success as a king as his great achievement. I do not think that his big ambition was realized by the success he made as a statesman.

David's great achievement was in the realm of poetry. The songs that he sang outlived his own nation by many centuries. Truly this painted singer let loose a flock of skylarks that will go on singing as long as men have a sky over their heads. The forgiven and bloodwashed of all generations will find their songfulness expressed in the gladsome songs of David. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." "Rejoice in the Lord ye righteous, and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart." The troubled and weary will sing the shepherd's song as the end of their pilgrimage. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want" is as fresh today as it was the day it was written. It is as fresh as the first rose of June. It is as new as the first flower of spring.

But strange to say to be a great singer was not David's supreme ambition. What he wanted to do, I dare say above all else, was to build a temple to the honor of his Lord. This was the big dream of his life. It was to that end he toiled and for that he yearned. There were other great tasks that he longed to accomplish, but it is my judgment that there was nothing for which he so intensely longed as to build a temple that should be a place where his people should come to worship, not simply during his own day, but for the long centuries after he himself had passed behind the vail.

But David did not build a temple. His failure to do so did not grow out of the fact that his desire for such an achievement was only a half-hearted desire. I have just said that it was the supreme ambition of his life. It is true that many of us fail of our ambitions because we content ourselves with mere wishing. We dream of splendid things, but unfortunately allow ourselves to be satisfied with the dream. But this is not the secret of David's failure. He not only yearned to build, but he stood ready to put all that he had into the task.

Nor did David fail because the task was an unworthy one. It would not seem strange if, oftentimes in the good providence of God we were held back
from doing the mean and ignoble thing. But this task that David yearned to accomplish was not mean and ignoble. To build a temple for the worship of God is a very worthy enterprise. It was so then. It is so still. I love to see a noble Church. I like to see one situated anywhere, in the city or in the country. Above all I like to see one in the downtown section of a great city. I love to see it as magnificent and as beautiful as any of the buildings that men have erected in the interest of commerce. I like to see it allowing these magnificent buildings, declaring to the world twenty-four hours out of every day by its very presence that "Man shall not live by bread alone."

It is a great privilege to have a part in the building of a temple where the Gospel is preached. Such a temple is not only an abiding sermon in stone preaching to every passerby of the all sufficiency of Jesus Christ. It also furnishes a place where the saints may gather and find refreshment in the days of their pilgrimage. It is a haven of rest to the weary. It is a living spring by the wayside where thirsty souls may come and drink of the Water of Life freely. I like to think of our own Church here as such an institution. You and I may come and go, but the Church will abide. And the little investment we make in it will be doing business for God when we are gone to other cities, or when we have passed into that eternal city not made with hands.

But regardless of the fact that David was eager, regardless of the fact that the task was altogether worthy, he failed in its accomplishment. His story is not at all unique. The same might be written of an "innumerable company that no man can number." The same might be written about many of us this morning. We have not lived all in vain. We have succeeded in some measure even as David did. But we feel that we have failed far more than we have succeeded. We have not done the thing that we longed to do. The dreams that we have dreamed have never been realized. And the hopes that we have hoped have been deferred till sometimes they have made us heart-sick.

Moses was a man of might. But he died without realizing the big purpose of his life. He set out to lead his people to the land of promise. To that end he struggled and to that end he toiled for almost half a century. The burdens that he carried, the sorrows and anxieties that he endured no one will ever know but himself and God. At last he brought them to the very border of that land of promise. But he never quite won. While he was within handclasp of the prize there came the voice of God, saying, "Get thee up into the mountain and die." And God smote him and kissed down his eyelids still, and he went home with his life's dream unrealized.

In our small ways many of us have failed. Years ago we dreamed of a place of service in the big world. But life has not been what you hoped it would be. Instead of a place out on the big world's stage you are shut in today to the hum-drum task of an office. You are a cog in the governmental machinery. Or you are a tired mother in a poor man's home, dusting cheap furniture, sweeping uncarpeted floors. And the castle that you built in the air is a very homely cottage on a very homely street.

Or possibly your dream was quite another. Maybe it was the dream of being a home builder. But the children that sit on your knee and caress you are like the children that came to brave hearted Charles Lamb, dream children, children that were never born. Maybe Hannah was your ideal, giving to the world the priceless gift of a prophet. But closer demands have made these hopes impossible. To-day you are working, you are filling
a place in society, doing it bravely and heroically, but it is not exactly the place that you thought you would fill one day and not the place that you longed to fill. You wanted to render a big service, but you feel that the one that you are rendering is exceedingly small and life for you is little more than a failure.

This, I repeat, is the story of a vast number. We desire to do so much and we have really done so little. We hope for so much and our realizations have been most meager. And because this is true the world does not pay us very much attention. It does not applaud us much. It has to give its applause to those who have won in a conspicuous way, and we are not of that number.

"We count the broken lyres that rest
Where the sweet wailing singers slumber,
But o'er their silent sister's breast
The wild-flowers who will stoop to number?
A few can touch the magic string,
And noisy Fame is proud to win them:-
Alas for those that never sing,
But die with all their music in them!"

What consolation is there, then, for those of us who are more or less failures? We do not find it in the direction of the world. This old world has no flowers to throw away on a man that fails. It has no crowns to give to the man who does nothing more than make a blundering effort. I heard a man who was the employer of a great many people say this the other day: "When I get to my office on Monday morning I will find a room full of people seeking employment. They will be men of finest training. They will have all sorts of degrees. Some of them will be from the best universities of Europe. But," he said, "I will have to turn down most of them because they are inefficient. There is no use in being educated on the Rhine unless you bring home the bacon."

That is the sentiment exactly. We have to "bring home the bacon" or the world has no rewards to offer and no commendation to give. I was in a newspaper office a few months ago and saw this motto on the wall. It was put where every worker in that office could see it: "57 Rules for Making a Success. First, deliver the goods. Second, you needn't mind about the other 56." Now the second might have been, "Put your heart into it. Show yourself willing." But down in an office these things count for little. It is delivering the goods that counts.

But God has a different standard of measuring. Man looks on the outward part, but God looks on the heart. He values not simply what we do, but what we would do if we could. He gives His rewards and His appreciation not simply on the basis of our achievements, but of what we long to achieve. He crowns us not simply for the base metal of our actual accomplishments, but for the fine gold of our desires. For Browning was right when he said, "It is not what man does, but what man would do that exalts him."

David wanted to build the temple. It was the big dream of his life. But he died without being able to accomplish his purpose. When he went to his grave there was no marvelous building standing upon Mt. Moriah with gilded dome catching the first kiss of the sunrise and holding its last lingering caress at eventide. Not a stone of its foundation was laid. And yet when I looked over the shoulder of the Recording Angel and read the achievements that were credited to David on the books of heaven I saw him
credited with one temple. It is known as "Solomon's Temple" here, but it is David's temple there. This is true, not because he actually built a temple in his capital city. But there was one place where he did build it. He built it in his heart. And the Lord took what was in his heart for the reality, and He said to him: "It is well that it was in thine heart to build me a house."

So the test that our Lord puts to us is the heart test. He is going to reward us not simply for what we do, but for what we long to do and what we earnestly seek to accomplish. That means that many of our human judgments are going to be reversed by and by. Many that are first are going to be last. For God is not going to reward you because of your great gifts. Talent that amounts to genius will weigh nothing in His sight, because your genius is a gift from Him. You did not make it for yourself. We are not going to be rewarded because we are clever. We are not going to be rewarded because of the brilliancy of our intellect or the skill of our hands, but for the bigness of our hearts.

You remember in "The Vision of Sir Launfal" how the knight set out in search of the Holy Grail. He had the best of chargers. He had the finest of armour. He had pockets well lined with gold. And when the leprous beggar by the gate asked him for help the proud knight did not refuse him. He reached into his abundant store and flung him a coin, and flung it to him in loveless loathing.

"And the beggar left the coin in the dust.
'Better to me, the poor man's crust,
Though he turn me empty from his door.'"

Tolstoy on the other hand met a beggar one day, searched his empty pockets in vain for a piece of money and said to the beggar sadly: "My brother, I am very sorry, but I haven't a cent." And the beggar went away with face alight, not because of what he had in his pocket, but because of what he had in his heart. The knight gave more of actual money, but he stands last in God's sight, because he gave money alone.

This means also that many who are last shall be first. Did you ever think how many who are classed as utter failures here are going to be seen as marvelous successes by and by? It is an arresting and also an encouraging thought. I remember an old miller down in Tennessee. He could barely read. Through the influence of my father he was led to Christ. He was a man of good sense, but he was a constitutional blunderer. All unwittingly and unwillingly nature had decked him out in the cap and bells of a clown. He was one of the most earnest saints I ever say, and yet I never saw a crowd so serious that he could not convulse them with laughter, not because he was trying to be funny. He was not. He could tell his experience, and he had an experience, in such a way as to change the most solemn services first into giggles and then into boisterous laughter. And people counted Jim Riley a failure religiously, but such was not his rating on the other side.

Then I think of those heroic and devoted young men who felt called to the ministry and yet who never preached a single sermon and never won a single soul. You remember the beautiful and pathetic story of Gordie Hows, in "Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush". Gordie was brilliant and saintly. At the price of great personal sacrifice to himself and those who loved him he went away to the big university. While there he won every prize that was offered. At last the great day came when he was to graduate. And beyond his graduation was the doorway into the Christian ministry. He had
given himself to this work and looked forward with eagerness to the day
when he should stand in the pulpit to speak the unsearchable riches of Christ.
But when school was over and he left its doors it was not to enter the min-
istry. It was to enter a hard conflict with disease and then an early
grave. And not a sermon was ever preached by him. But I do not think his
record is going to be blank on the other side. But God is going to say, as
He said to David, "It is well that it was in thine heart."

I think of some today who had the missionary spirit in their souls,
who had the willingness to go, but were never able to go. One such came to
me a few months ago, an earnest and consecrated woman. But she had been
awakened late in life. Her hair had already turned white. She was not in
life's May-day, but in its December. No Board could afford to send her
into the foreign field now. Too old to learn the language, too old to ever
stand the arduous toil that the missionary must stand, she was willing to
go, eager to go, but she could not go. And no Church credits her with any
achievements. No Church records bear the names of those who have been won
to its membership through her toil. In the eyes of man she is an utter
failure. But what has our Lord to say: "Whereas it was in thine heart to
serve me under distant skies, it is well that it was in thine heart."

You remember June Nichols going out to China for a few brief months
to accomplish almost naked nothing except the undermining of her own health.
Then she came home, the elasticity gone out of her step, the roses gone from
her cheeks, the sparkle from her eyes, and next to naked nothing accom-
plished. Or Horace Pitkin, the brilliant young missionary from Yale, going
to give himself to the saving of some of China's millions and he died in
the Boxer uprising, before he had won a single soul, or before he had preach-
ed even a single sermon. But God is going to reward these choice souls not
for their accomplishments, but for their willingness, not for what is ac-
tually in their hands, but for what is in their hearts.

And so it will be with ourselves. We are not all highly successful
workers. In fact we all blunder at times. Oh how utterly we seem to fail.
It is true of many Christian workers. It is true of many of us who try to
preach. With what a sense of utter failure I leave the pulpit sometimes.
But it is not our abilities or our actual successes that count. I knew a
preacher today that is a terrible failure as a sermonizer. He blunders and
faltsers and hesitates till you could almost weep for him. There is very
little in his sermon, but there is an abundance in his heart. And that is
what counts in your case and mine. It is what counts in the case of all of
us. "God looketh on the heart."

There is a story of a mother who was sick of a lingering disease. She
lived in a tenement and was very poor. So poor she was that she was even
unable to buy the medicine that she actually needed. And her little girl
found it out and she longed to help. This little girl had only one treasure,
It was worth exceedingly little in the markets of the world, though it was
very precious to herself. It was a little china doll that the mission had
given her at Christmas. So it came into her heart to take this doll and
pawm it and buy medicine for her mother. She thought it would bring a great
deal of money because it was so dear to herself. With this unselfish pur-
pase in her heart she set out down the street. But on the way she stumbled
and dropped her treasure and it was shattered into fragments. And she went
home without a single thing in her hands for her mother. But I have an
idea that the gentle deed of unselfishness brought great healing and help
to the mother's heart.
So the big test, I repeat, is the heart test. But what is the test of what is really in our hearts? I want to press this question home because some of us have a tendency to let ourselves off easy. There are a great many people who, because they can not do big things, do absolutely nothing and yet excuse themselves meantime by being well wishers. They take the sweet unction to their souls that they would give much if they were only rich, that they would serve much if they were only gifted. But while they congratulate themselves on their great willingness they shirk their known duty and refuse to do the things that they are amply able to do. The test of what is in your heart is what you do with what is actually yours. For instance the widow that is today a multimillionaire in heaven did not gain her wealth by wringing her hands and complaining that she had so little to give. She did not make herself immortal by boasting of how much she would do for the Lord if He would only put into her keeping millions of dollars. The reason she is remembered to-day and the reason Christ honored her was because, in spite of the fact that she had so little to give she did not let the smallness of it prevent her from giving anything. She gave what she had. She did the very best that she could under the circumstances. She was faithful in the use of what God had put into her possession.

It was in David's heart to build a temple. He was not able to accomplish it. He knew that the great temple that should one day be built would not be known by his name, but by that of another. What did he do when he saw himself thwarted in his purpose? He did not say as a man, dominated by selfishness would have said, "If I can't build a temple I'll have nothing to do with it." Shut out of the big task of being its real builder he went as far as possible toward the accomplishing of it. He did his best to make ample provision for its building at the hands of another.

That shows us what was really in David's heart. That shows that he was not simple after fame or glory or applause. He was seeking to build the temple to the glory of God. Some railroad men were telling their experiences in a meeting some years ago and they got to comparing themselves to the different parts of the engine. And one said he would like to be the drive wheels that should roll the train towards heaven. And another said that he would like to be the whistle that would announce its oncoming. And another humble man said that he would like to be the old black coal that went in and was burned up and gave it its power. David was like that. He was willing to do the hidden and obscure thing, even to fall into the ground and die.

Why do we condemn the priest and the Levite who passed the wounded man and left him by the road? We do not condemn them because they were not expert physicians. We do not condemn them because they did not have an ambulance. We do not condemn them because they were not equipped with a full set of surgical instruments. We condemn them because they did nothing at all. And the fact that they did nothing at all reveals the fact that there was no love in their hearts, no yearning, earnest, passionate desire to help.

Why, on the other hand, do we honor the Samaritan? We do not does so because of his great skill, though he had skill. We do not honor him because he was able to get this dying man to the hotel and to actually save his life. We would have honored him quite as much if the wounded man had died on the road. In other words we honor him not for his success but for his effort, not for his skill but for what was in his heart. And he showed us what was in his heart by what he did. (Bud and the atheist.)
This is a very blessed and encouraging truth, I think. It is full of consolation especially to those of us who feel that we have in large measure failed. But let us guard against allowing it to lull us to sleep. Its consolation is for the man that is doing the best he can with what he has. If just because you can not do the big thing you are doing nothing at all, then do not claim it for yourself. But if you are taking the one talent or the fraction of a talent that you possess and inventing it the best you know how for God's glory, then however little you may seem to be accomplishing, you are highly successful in the eyes of Him who sees us as we are.

I knew a man years ago who married a girl who was in good circumstances. And he himself gave every promise of being a highly successful lawyer. But everything he touched seemed to fail and to turn, not to gold, but to dust and ashes. He moved from one house into a cheaper till at last he got down to an actual log cabin in the heart of the hills. And passing that way one day I stopped in. I did so from a sense of duty, because I dreaded to hear the apologies of this woman who had been reduced from a place of more or less prominence to one of such utter and pinching poverty. But there was no apology. She met me at the door with the grace of a queen. And everything in the cabin showed the transforming touch of refinement. And I knew something of this woman's devotion to her husband. She did not show it by telling me how neat she could keep a palace if she had it. The revelation of the fact was what she could do toward making a bit of heaven out of a miserable old tumbledown log cabin.

To some of us God gives abilities that are palatial. But such gifts are rare. Most of our talents are far more humble. But if we make our best of them they can result in gold. A woman told me of her visit to home of direct poverty down in the backwoods of Tennessee. A motherless girl was dying of consumption there. Her bed was without sheets, the pillows without pillow cases. She helped her as best she could out of her own poverty. And she led her to Christ. And when she paid her the last visit this girl asked her sister tending to her the only treasure she had in the world, a little brass pin that wasn't worth five cents. But she said to the woman: "I wish I had something fine to give you. But this is all I have and I want you to keep it and when you look at it remember me and remember that I met Christ because of what you did for me."

And you know that worthless little trinket has become very priceless not for what it is worth in itself, but for the beautiful motive that gave it. And one of these days when we open our eyes wide with wonder and see the little seemingly worthless gifts of service that we rendered in the spirit of love and see them no longer as unsightly things, but washed in finest gold and set with richest jewels, we may wonder if we really ever gave such gifts to our Lord. And He will say to us: "This does not represent what was in your hand, but what was in your heart. It is well that it was in thine heart to do this service for me."

If, therefore, we have it in our hearts to serve we can not fail. If you have it in your heart to win that man for Christ you can not fail. If you win him you have actually saved a soul from death. But if you fail to win him you have still won so far as you personally are concerned in the sight of God. You have won because it was in your heart. And this is true of every other service. Therefore no life lived in devotion to Him can end in anything except absolute victory. For He gives His crowns not for our talents, but for our love. Is it in your heart this morning to serve Him, to honor Him, to bring in His kingdom? Then you will actually put your hand to the task and putting your hand to the task you can not fail, however small may be your talents and however consistent may be your blunderings.
A n Aged Prodigal - I Kings 11:4

His father David had ruled wisely and well, and had turned over to him an opportunity that was nothing short of superb. A position in itself is not necessarily a blessing, but it may become a vast blessing. Of course, it may also become a curse. If one is totally unfit, totally inadequate for the position, then it cannot help him or anyone else. Pygmies will be pygmies still, though perched on the Alps. But when a giant mounts upon the Alps, he is all the taller and is all the more capable of rendering the highest service to his people. Solomon inherited a great position.

David had many sons, but he chose Solomon as the most fit of them all. Not only was Solomon the choice of David, but I am sure he was the choice of God as well. This is the case in spite of the fact that this gifted king made a bad ending. When Jesus chose Judas to be one of his apostles, he did not choose him because he knew he was a scoundrel. He did choose him because he was in search of a traitor. He chose James just as he chose Peter, James and John. He chose him as a high adventurer of faith. He chose him for what he was at the time of his choice. He chose him regardless of his yesterday. He chose him regardless of his tomorrow. He was a man of great gifts. He had power to become. He took the wrong turn and became the worst. But he might have continued to take the right turn and become the best. Solomon was chosen because of his superb gifts, royal position, wisdom, and all the other advantages that he had not all the other advantages. Now I think that his wisdom has been exaggerated. Yet he was a man of splendid gifts, is beyond question. Here his position was matched by the capabilities of the man. That is always a fine opportunity both for the one who rules and for those who are the recipients of that rule. Solomon was fitted for his task. God had
endowed him with an understanding heart. He was certainly a man of superb and superior capacity. We have every reason to believe that he will make an excellent king. He had both position and the capacity to use that position wise and well. Third, he was greatly enriched by having a consecrated father. David was by this time a very dedicated man in spite of his shady yesterdays. He had come out into the bright sunshine of the shepherd's song. Though he had greatly sinned, he had greatly repented and had been greatly forgiven. When Solomon knew him he was one of the best of men. He was a God possessed man. He was a man of beautiful devotion and loyalty to his Lord. He represented the religion of that day at its beautiful best. "Listen to this consecrated father's charge to his son. It is full of holy urgency and beauty. "And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with whole heart and with a willing mind. If you seek him, he will be found by you. But if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever." Solomon, therefore, had the bracing uplift of a good father's life and a good father's instructions.

Fourth, finally, Solomon had a personal experience of God for himself. It is not to discredit this experience to say that God came to him the first time in a dream. God's message to him is in full character. It is true to the best we know in the Old Testament. He gave this young king the power of choice. "Ask what you will." At that place you and I stand at this moment. We stand there every day because always our Lord confronts us saying, "Ask and it shall be given you". And when this young king with his weighty responsibilities and his high possibilities confronted God and was asked this question, what choice did he make? He did not ask for things. He did not ask for glory and honor. He asked for an understanding heart. In beautiful humility he asked that he might have the undergirding of God for the great task that was set before him. And because
What did he do with his bag of money? He seems certain that for a time he used it freely. Once, when it seemed he was an able politician, a wise and good judge, not only wise but an able merchant, but he was a very cheerful and generous merchant as well. It was seen to the good. Evidently a sight nothing it in fact as religious to make money as to go as a missionary, then being a man of peace he did not squander his wealth in foolish wars. Thus delighting himself with the knowledge born of peace he became so prosperous that the Author tells us that he made Dublin his common in Jerusalem at home.

But by Solomon was wise in the use of money we cannot be sure that he was equally wise in the use of the money he himself received in the way he took it. He amassed a tremendous wealth, for the Temple he built. The most famous temple of all time bears his name, but little of his wealth became known public.

He probably found it useful. He constructed the great palace for the numerous courts. He gathered a great amount of wealth. The building vessels were all made of pure gold. So that he became a sort of a king and a great merchant. He lived in luxury, but he also spent a great deal of money.
taken away." That is, his death was a miscarriage of justice. His was a judicial murder. Though Pilate had more than once declared him not guilty, he sentenced him to die on a cross. Thus whenever we recite our creed, we remind ourselves of this judicial murder. "He suffered under Pontius Pilate."

Not only did he die unjustly, but his death had for the men of his day no adequate meaning. Some thought he was smitten of God, that he was suffering for his own sin. But nobody understood. "Who considered that he was . . . stricken for the transgression of my people." We may answer in melody:

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Part II

What is the meaning of this death? Why did God allow this suffering servant thus to die? The answer given by this prophet is shocking. "Yet it was the will of God to bruise him." That is, this judicial murder took place within the will of God. In saying this the prophet is in complete harmony with the New Testament. But we are not to understand by this that it was the will of God that men should hate and reject our Lord. He willed the exact opposite. But since did hate and reject him, but having hated them, it was his will that the Servant should die for their redemption. His only was this death the cross of God, but it was also the salvation that his death was the will of Jesus himself. But he did not pass it easily and without a struggle. As he prayed in the garden, he still hoped that there might be some other way. "My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me." But
Solomon was extravagant in the accumulation of money, and was even more extravagant in his accumulation of wives. He gave himself to a varietal or orgy of marriage. Some have suggested that these foreign marriages were matters of state. That he was seeking to avoid war by allying himself with the heads of the rulers of all the nations round about. That he preferred private war in the palace to one outside that was international. Of course this king had been warned over and over that such marriages were forbidden, that such marriages were against the will of God. But I think his great success, in those days, of Solomon did not end here. B and he certainly had to get away with anything that had gone to his head. He had to become a bit intoxicated upon himself. He had to believe that he was an exception to the rule. It is easy for us to do that. We often forget that we are human beings and watch one man temper with liquor and become an alcoholic. But of course such a thing would never happen to us. We all have an idea that we are exceptions, that what will ruin one man will make us. Or else what we pronounced a vice that he was a virtue to the law of sowing and reaping works for the average man of the mill, we are different. We are a little bit superior to the moral law. Other folks...
reap as they sow, but we can gather grapes of thorns and figs of
thistles. That was certainly the convictions of this much-married king.

Solomon used his great opportunities, great resources
his fine capacities. He used them mainly for self. He used them
to accumulate wealth for himself. He used them especially to put on a
show, to act extravagantly, to show that he had to build greater palaces
and could have more magnificent banquets and, more and more gaudily-dressed
wives than any other king of his day. He was a showman. A showman in
spite of his wisdom of a rather amatory and sordid type.

Now, how did it end? How did this gaudy and extravagant and
exciting show turn out? For years, Solomon thought he was getting away
with it. For years, Solomon thought he was making sin pay. That was
his great danger. Sin is always disasterous. But it is never so disasterous
as when it is successful. It is always deadly but it never so deadly
as when it seems to give life. It is always ghastly and hideous, but it
is never so ghastly and so hideous as when it presents a beautiful
surface or a lovely face. It looked to the outward observer as if Solomon
in spite of his moral disaster was having a very successful reign. But
in fact he was having a disasterous reign. He was digging the very foundati
from under his nation. Not only so, but he was undermining his own life.
He was not getting away with his breaking of the moral law. No man ever
does. He had been warned and his people had been warned that if they
made these promiscious foreign marriages they would worship the Gods of the
women they married. But Solomon said, "I'll never do that." But by and
by their idolatry ceased to be ugly and became a bit negative. Then it
took on a bit of beauty. It is a monster of such hideous means that to
be hated needs but to be seen. But often seen familiar with the face we
first endure, then fondle, then embrace. After Solomon was associated
across the years with these charming women who worshipped other Gods he
became very broad minded. He came to see that one God is as good as another, and whenever anybody says that he means that no good God is of any value at all. And so he became divided in his allegiance. He lost his whole-heartedness. He became, most despicable, of disciples, one who is luke-warm. He no longer worshipped as Moffat translates it "with an undivided heart". He was hesitating between the two, quickening, as Elijah put it on Mount Caramel, between two opinions. Then he took the final step. He left God and went over to the worship of the idols of the wives who robbed him of his faith. Robbed him, not because such a robbery was inevitable, but because he had come to trust in himself. Because he had become a moral and spiritual trifler, because he had come to assure himself that what would wreck others would certainly not wreck me—that I can get away with it! I can make sin pay! And so we read this hideous sentence. This sentence that soaked in light and tears "And when he was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods." Notice that sentence! When he was old. At the very time when his strength was failing. At a very time when he most needed the undergirding of the everlasting arm. At the very time when the good shepherd was needed most of all to guide him, to uphold him and to give him comfort, he turned away—just as his ship was almost in sight of the harbor lights, this loyalty, this forsaking of God became the hidden reef upon which it floundered, and the white haired, old man went down with empty hands and his night was all the blacker because he had once known the light. He let go of God at the very time he needed him most.

But what is sadder still his tragedy did not end with himself. David's father had been to him a help and an inspiration. But Solomon gave no such help to the son who was to take his place. Solomon had strutted his way across the stage, he had totally disregarded the needs of the poor. When at last he relieved them by dying, his people came when he was gone
and the best they could say for this wise and capable king, "Your father made our burden heavy, he was not wings to us. He was only a weight. He was not a part of the remedy, he was a part of the disease. He was not a part of the answer, he was just the big royal problem. He had made the yoke heavy and life was harder because of him and I daresay, they were glad he was gone. A young 12 year old boy whose father had been a drunkard and when in his a brutal man heard that his father had been killed in a row, and it was his duty to bring the news home to his mother and when he came in at the door, he ran and threw his arms around the woman what had suffered along with him. And as he clung to her he said "Mother, father has been killed and oh! aren't you glad? That father, as Solomon, had made the yoke of marriage and the yoke of fatherhood very heavy. Even so, Solomon had been a bad father and a bad example to his boy. What is more tragic still, this boy was not able to see behind the scenes and to discern the real tragedy of the situation. He thought his father was acting wisely and well. I heard a boy say of his father who was throwing himself away, my father can get along with less work than any man I ever saw. But he wasn't saying it in criticism. He was saying it in huge admiration. That was what made the case of Rehoboam, Solomon's son, so hopeless that when he came to the throne, he came believing that loose living, and tyranny, and infidelity were the way to get along. What was the result?

He found that he was setting his throne upon the crater of a volcano. He found that his father had left him only an empty shell. Siding with the juniors, under the influence of his father, he told his people bowed down with heavy burdens, "Father made your load heavy. I am going to make it heavier. He scourged you with whips, I am going to scourge you with scorpions." He wrecked his kingdom and also wrecked himself and plunged himself into one long civil war with the other ten tribes of Israel.
We cannot shut our eyes that Solomon reaped according to his sowing. He had a great chance. He had been faithfully warned. Over and over he had been told that if he would be loyal to God, God would honor him and help him. But God can't walk with you unless you are going in his direction. If you expect to have the sunlight in your face, you must face toward east. You cannot ask the sun to shine in your face if you are looking toward the west. Solomon came to presume that he could have the blessing of God and the undergirding of his everlasting arm and yet do utterly as he pleased. Therefore he wrecked his son and he wrecked his kingdom and the temple that he had built with such high hopes and in which he had prayed that beautiful gem of a prayer became exactly what God said it would become--utter ruin. Of all the wasters, that Israel knew, I think that Solomon the prodigal king was the greater of its wasters. May the Lord save us from a similar sin!
An Aged Prodigal

When Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods. I Kings 11:4

"When Solomon was old". There is a haunting sadness about this sentence that is more depressing than a sob. Here is a tragedy of the twilight. "When Solomon was old". When his step had lost its spring, when his eyes had lost their early sparkle, when the grasshopper had become a burden and he had grown afraid of that which is high—then it happened. At that late hour, made lonely by the fact that many whose hands had once grasped his had passed into the silence, at that time of supreme need this aged man madly let go the hand of God.

Solomon not only failed at his hour of great need, but also of his great opportunity. What a witness might have been his! He might have testified with another that of all God had promised in life's morning not one thing had failed. He might have said, "I know from my own experience that the eternal God is our refuge and underneath the everlasting arms," He might have comforted tempest-tossed souls by saying, "Here is the port into which I put when the storm was on and found it more than sufficient." But instead he gave the lie to all for which he had stood in his yesterdays.

But the supreme sadness of this ugly fall is its finality. It is tragic to see a young chap gather his all together and take his journey into a far country to waste his substance in loose living. But our grief may be softened by the hope that he is not playing for keeps. Some day he may recover his sanity, return to his waiting father and make it possible for the festivities to begin in the once shadowed home. But when an old body heads toward the
"I am the good shepherd". This high faith David had sought to pass on to his gifted and needy son.

Listen to this consecrated father's parting charge. It is full of holy urgency and beauty. "You, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him for the whole heart and with a willing mind. If you seek him he will be found of you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever." Solomon therefore had known the enriching power of a good father's life and of a good father's instruction.

Finally, Solomon had had a personal experience of God for himself. Two appearances of God are mentioned. Doubtless there were others. First, God came to him in a dream. This fact does not detract from the reality of Solomon's experience. God's message to him is in full character. It is true to the best we know in the Old Testament. He gave this young king the power of choice. He told him to ask any gift at his hands that he chose.

To that wise and wise invitation Solomon made a satisfying response. He did not ask for fame, he did not ask for glory and honor. He asked for an understanding heart. What a beautiful request! In lovely humility he asked that he might have the undergirding of God for the great task set before him. And because he put first things first, all these secondary values were to be added unto him. At least this was the case so long as he kept true to his first great choice.

The Lord appeared to him a second time after the building of the temple. He told him graciously that his prayer had been heard. He told him something of his acceptance with him. But he did not leave him without the warning that the dedication he had just voiced must be a continuous dedication. He made it plain that if he failed in this the great temple that he had builded and dedicated would be of no worth at all. It would become through his disloyalty, through his turning away from God an utter ruin.
Here then are the great assets with which this promising king began his reign. He had high position, vast abilities to fill that position, the undergirding of a good father's life, and above all he had the undergirding of the everlasting God.

Part II

What did Solomon do with his big chance? It seems certain that for a time he used his opportunities wisely and well. I am sure that he was an able statesman. I am sure that he was a sane and just judge. Not only was he an able ruler, a magnificent monarch, but he was a very shrewd and successful merchant as well. That was all to the good. There was nothing ugly or wicked in making money. Given a right motive it is just as religious to make money as it is to go as a missionary. Of course that is only true if the money is made by methods that are humanly helpful as at least a part of Solomon's wealth was made.

Then being a man of peace he did not squander his wealth in fruitless wars, though he did waste some of it in military provisions which had no higher purpose it seems to me other than mere display. Thus delighting himself in the abundance that was born of peace, he became so prosperous that the author tells us that he made silver as common in Jerusalem as stone.

But if Solomon was wise in the making of money we cannot be quite sure that he was always equally wise in the way he made it. Nor or we sure that he was wise in the use he made of it. Of course he used some of it constructively. He became a great builder. The most famous temple of all time bears his name. But little of his wealth seems to have been used for the common good. He was foolishly fond of display. He constructed gorgeous palaces for his numerous wives. He gathered about him a pampered court. His drinking vessels were all of pure gold. He both acquired money extravagantly and spent it in the same fashion.
that
took issue. She said it was not necessary for men of genius
to be born anew.

Of course I was not able to argue with her in a convincing fashion.

My only answer was this, "Maybe great artists and great genius do not
have to be born again but since they had to be born the first time and
since they had to pass through a physical birth, it is my firm opinion
that it will be just as necessary for them to pass through a second
birth." The law of gravity operates for a genius just as it does
for a moron and there are no exceptions to the rule. But Solomon had
become so very successful that he felt himself above the moral law
and therefore he went his gaudy way, feeling that he was seeking
the good of his nation as well as pleasing himself. And all of this
with impunity because of the highly gifted man that he was.

Part III

Now how did it all end? What came of this flouting of the will
of God? It happened to Solomon as it happens to the most stupid. This
great man gradually rotted down. As he led one blushing bride after
another to the altar he was getting up in years. Some of those brides
were very youthful and doubtless very charming and, along with it,
quite clever. They hadn't been in the palace long until they learned
that they could flatter this king and get their way. I can imagine
they told him he was just as good a man as he was forty years ago,
though his hands shook sometimes and though his face had a few ugly
furrows on it and though his brow sometimes sparkled like a billiard
ball. And this wise man was stupid enough to believe it. He
persuaded himself that he could deceive the almanac and spit in the
face of the calendar in the butt.

We usually face the problem of getting on in one of three ways.
Some simply ignore their birthdays. They shut their eyes. They are
like a little child that sometimes stands in front of you with eyes
"It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem." (I Kings 12:28)

This text has an interesting background. Solomon has just died. He was accounted the wisest of men. Of course, he was not wise in a superlative sense at all. But he was ahead of his day in this respect. He refused to burn up his resources of men and money by waging war. He was a man of peace. This is to his credit.

But while failing to squander his resources in war he squandered them none the less. He was a typical Oriental despot in many respects. His people were ground down by heavy taxation. They had little freedom. When he died this situation was deep and widespread. In fact the people were rotten right for rebellion. Therefore, when his big-headed son, Rehoboam, came to the throne this readiness for rebellion was not long in materializing.

No sooner had this son taken his place than the people waited upon him, asking that their burdens be lightened. The young king consulted the the elder statesman who advised him to comply with their requests. He then consulted with his boon companions who had had little experience except in folly. They advised a greater tyranny. Tell the people, they urged, that while your father scourged them with whips you will scourge them with scorpions, that your little finger shall be thicker than your father's loin. After hearing this reply ten tribes rebelled and set up a kingdom of their own under the leadership on one, Jeroboam.

Now Jeroboam was a man of some force and ability. But he was an unscrupulous politician. The difference between politician and statesman is
that the statesman is primarily interested in the state while the politician is primarily interested in himself. So this political king set about the task of making his position secure. He reasoned with himself after this fashion: While the Jewish people are divided politically they are still one religiously. If they continue to be one religiously they will end by being one politically. Therefore, I must destroy their religious unity.

How did he set about this? He did not tell them that their religion as practiced in former times was wrong. He did not tell them that the road they and their fathers had travelled had led to no worthy goal. He was far to shrewd for that. Had he made such a frontal attack he would have stirred up trouble at once. Many a man is ready to fight for a religion that he really does not possess. Instead he told them that their religion was all-right. "The only trouble is," he declared, "that it is costing you too much. You can be religious on far easier terms. It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Therefore, I will build you some nice idols down here and we can be religious at the lowest possible cost."

You can see what this shrewd king was doing. He was seeking in an indirect way to destroy the faith of his people. This he did by telling them to make ease the test of their faith rather than truth. He told them not to trouble themselves about the value of the article they were seeking to buy. But to be concerned only about the cheapness of it. Don't bother as to the goal of your road. Only see to it that whatever the goal the giving will be smooth and easy. Thus making ease the test of their choices they destroyed themselves. Whosoever makes ease the test is headed for tragedy. This is true for at least three reasons.

I

First, to make ease the test is to fail to become our best.
1. This is the case physically. It is a great advantage to have a
strong, sound body. This body is the house in which I live. It is that through which I make my impact upon the world. If it is a strong, healthy body I have a much better chance. Now I am not going to tell you that everybody could be well and strong if they would, but what I do say is this: That most of us could go far further in that direction than we actually go. I have no doubt that there are millions in America today who are far below par if not in positive bad health because they are not willing to pay the price of good health. How often have we seen men and women take strong bodies and reduce them to bits of wreckage through dissipation or self-indulgence. On the other hand there are those who take weak bodies and build them into strength. Theodore Roosevelt is an outstanding example. Beginning as a weakling he became a man of unusual physical strength.

I read a story some time ago that gave me a bit of a thrill. There was a girl in a certain city who weighed four hundred ninety pounds. That, I say, is quite a dainty morsal. But when this girl waked to the fact that she was shut in a prison house of fat she decided to make a break for liberty. Therefore she put herself under a physician's care and lost over three hundred pounds. That took nerve. Think how willowy some of you would be if you lost that much. Nobody knows the grip it took to lose that weight except those whose lives have been one long fight with fat.

2. To make ease the test is to fail to come to our best mentally. We cannot learn without some effort. As a teacher I divide my pupils roughly into four classes. First, there were those who did not know and who did not care to know. They had no intellectual curiosity. "Knowledge to their eyes her ample page rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll." But that fact did not worry them in the least. They were simply not interested in knowing. Then there was a second class that was made up of those who already knew. Those unfortunate souls to whom I could show nothing because they had already seen it, I could tell them nothing because they had already heard it. They were simply born educated. There was yet a larger class
made up of good natured youngsters who would like to have made a hundred on every recitation. They would like to have carried a perfect report to their parents. This they would have done if they could have achieved such a goal by simply rubbing a book on the side of their heads just before going to bed at night. But while the article was desirable the price was more than they were willing to pay. Then there was a fourth choice group who desired to know enough to work at it.

I shall never forget my first impulse to know more than I knew. I was the youngest of a large family. I was rated and rightly so the most backward of that large family. My nickname was Mutton-Head.' At the age of twelve-and-a-half I could not have read decently in any primer. But at this time a beautiful little girl near my own age came to spend the summer in our home. She came out of a world of culture and books into my world of farm life. She knew no more about my world than I knew about hers.

At once became my privilege and joy to instruct her in my world. I was good with the horses. I knew how to ride yearlings. I knew how to crank them too. Therefore I put on for her benefit one act after another. I can see the wonder looking out from her eyes across the far spaces of the years. "You are wonderful," she would say I would answer, "You ain't seen nothing yet." So I grew and grew until I became a Samson and a Hercules and a Goliath all in one.

But such a joyous state was too good to last. One morning she failed to come down to breakfast. When I went up to find what was the matter she had a stack of books by her bed. She said, "I'm not so well this morning. I want you to read me a story." I saw destruction and desolation coming to meet me. I made one final effort at escape. "I can't read that," I said. "I read in the fourth reader." Why I selected that particular volume I don't know. I think I had an idea that nobody would be quite glutton enough for punishment to want to hear a story out of said reader. But it was just what she wanted so she sent me for the volume and I actually found it.
This time I returned as an ox to the slaughter. She picked out the story of her choice and of course I couldn't make it go. At first she laughed. That left me unscathed. I had had that before. Then suddenly her laughter gave place to pity. That was what stuck. Think about getting sorry for Hercules and Samson and Goliath. Then she said, "You ought to be in the first reader."

What an insult! You know what I said to her? I didn't say anything. But I did say something to myself. It is the first conversation I ever remember having with myself. I said: "Old fellow, you busted, didn't you." I also said as I looked at this beautiful little girl, "Some day I am going to know as much as you." I said it to her and no one else. Therefore, nobody knew just why Mutton-Head made four grades the next year. Six years later I was passing through the city as I came home from school where she was then living as a beautiful young lady. I called to see her. About leaving time she picked up an old, soiled, thumbed Latin book and said, "My examination is tomorrow. I wish you would help me with this passage." I read it as if it had been English that I had memorized. Then when I gave the book back and got my hat and told her good-night and was out on the street once more, I almost broke my arm patting myself on the back. We don't even start to being our best.

Now a physical education is within reach of every young person today. By this I do not simply mean a college degree. I do not know that everybody ought to go to college. Emerson said that everybody ought to go to learn its inadequacies. But even those who do not go to college can read and it is far better never to go to college and keep up your reading than it is to go to college and quit reading. A first class practical education is within reach of every youngster today that wants it enough to pay the price.

3. Finally, to make ease the test is to fail to become your best morally and spiritually. It is certainly to fail to become a Christian. Christianity is the most rewarding of all religions but it is costly. Jesus
never disguised that fact. When a young chap came to him one day all enthusiasm and said, "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest," Jesus threw cold water on his hot enthusiasm. Why? Not because he did not care for his loyalty. He yearned for it with infinite yearning. He said this quenching word because he saw that the young man was not ready to pay the price. To be a Christian means the giving of self. It means saying to God, "Not my will but Thine be done." That is not easy for any of us. It doesn't cost much to be a church member. But it costs the very laying down of life to be a genuine Christian. Therefore, when we follow the example of these of the long ago and make ease the test we fail to become our best physically, intellectually, and spiritually. In thus seeking comfort we miss character.

II

Not only is Easy Street a peril because it prevents our becoming our best but because it prevents our doing our best. Of course, the first step in doing more is in being more. A strong man can do more than a small child, at least in a physical way, simply because he is larger and stronger.

Now it is well for us to face the fact at once that nobody ever accomplishes anything in this world that is really worth accomplishing except at the cost of hard work. Some have to work harder than others. Old Sonni Webb used to tell us, "If your axe is a bit dull you must hit harder and longer." But wherever there is any task well-done it is because somebody has been willing to pay the price.

Kipling lays it down with the assurance of a successful man that if we fail to find in life what we sought to find we did not really want it or at least we did not want it enough to pay the price. Of course, this is not altogether the case. It goes on the easy assumption that we can do anything that we make up our minds to do. This is not in reality the case.
We can certainly do well our own task. We can do well the work to which God has called us but that does not mean we can accomplish any task.

For instance, when John McCormick was at his best I thought he had the sweetest voice that I had ever heard. Suppose after listening to one of his concerts I had said, "I can do anything that anybody else can do. I would like to sing like John McCormick and that is not all, I am going to." But however firm my resolve and however hard I might have worked I could not have accomplished it, not had I lived a thousand years. I used to listen to lectures as a small boy where the speaker would say you can do anything you desire. Some of you may be president one day. I took such a declaration with a grain of salt even then. In fact, I had little notion even of being vice-president.

God has not called you to do just anything. He gives to every man his work. Some years ago I noticed a little chap about three or four years of age who was skilled at drawing. We were on the train together. We got on such good terms that he asked me to draw him a picture. Eager to accommodate I said, "What shall I draw." He said, "Draw a mule." Now that should have been right down my alley. I ought to have been the last word in drawing mules. I was raised with them. As a teacher I taught them. Later as a minister I preached to them and I had a number on my official board. Yet when I drew that mule it so offended his artistic soul that he actually burst into tears. The only way I could keep my self-respect was by telling myself, "Drawing is not your job. Your job is preaching."

Now blessed is the man who finds his place. That needs much thought and much prayer. But blessed even more is the man who having found his place is willing so to work at it as to render his best service through it. Remember that nothing that is cheap is worth much. The words to bless and to bleed come from the same anglo-saxon root and those of us who are afraid to do a bit of bleeding will have little capacity to bless.
To make ease the test is not only to fail in becoming and to fail in doing, it is to head inevitably toward disintegration. I was reading some time ago of a gentleman who had in his study the cocoon of an emperor moth. Toward springtime he heard a noise within that uncouth prison and realized that the prisoner was struggling to escape. The conflict kept up so long that at last the man decided to do the poor creature a favor. Therefore, he took his shears and just clipped off the end of the prison and thus made a wide open door. This time an ugly, bloated monster emerged with wings little larger than those of a house fly. All the miserable creature could do was to crawl away and die. Had he been left to take the hard way he would have ended not only by finding his freedom but he would have ended on wings more colorful than the rainbow.

In George Elliott's masterpiece, Romola, the central character is Tito Melema. When this character comes upon the stage as a youth he is brilliant and charming as sea music. Human hearts seem to open to him of their own accord. But he has one fatal defect. When he stands at the fork of the road he never asks about the destination. He only asks about the smoothness of the highway. His one purpose seems to dodge the difficulty. Therefore, he becomes conscious of daily disloyalties, daily deceptions, and insincerities. By and by he comes to a great crisis in which he sums up the daily disloyalties of the past into one damning disloyalty. His petty white lies reach a climax in one colossal lie. He proves traitor to the man who loves him best and to whom he owes more than to any other in all the world. He leaves him to languish in slavery while he goes on his easy way. At last this young man dies with the gripping fingers of the one whom he has betrayed at his throat. But his deepest tragedy is not in the fact that he merely ceased to live but that he had ceased to be fit to live. And this had come about not through any innate
viciousness but through a constant desire to take the easy way. Millions have rotted down in that fashion. Edgar Allan Poe, one of the brightest literary geniuses America has produced. But he was a victim of his own appetite. He took the easy way of dissipation. In that amazing poem, The Raven, I have half fancied that that period of ill omen represented to the poet the disappointing passion that cast its blight over his life.

"And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,
And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor
Shall be lifted—nevermore!"

When that black raven flew into his life, instead of resolutely wringing its neck he booted at it and shooed at it until it became his master.

There is only one way then to avoid this tragedy and to become our best and that is by asking not about the difficulties of the road but the worthwhileness of the goal. The weakest of us can arrive if we are only willing to pay the price. This fact is illustrated I think by the greatest Christian in all fiction. That man is Jean Valjean in Hugo's immortal story. Jean Valjean had a bad start. He was sent to be a gallow slave when quite young. He was a man of immense physical strength. He escaped again and again until by and by when he was at last set free he had been a convict slave for nineteen years.

His first night out he spent in the home of a kindly old bishop. The next morning before the bishop was awake the ex-convict stole his silver candlesticks and made his escape. Soon the policeman led him back to the house of the bishop with his loot still upon him but the bishop refused to acknowledge the theft. He claimed that he had given the convict the candlesticks. So the officers released him but that unaccustomed kindness broke Jean Valjean's heart. That same day near the midnight hour he kneeled
in front of the bishop's house to dedicate himself to God for a new life.

In the after days Jean Valjean prospered. He became a great industrialist. He was made mayor of his city and became a man greatly loved and honored. Then one day a detective came into his office named Javert. Jean Valjean had known the policeman for a long time. "I want you to dismiss me from the service," said Javert. "Dismiss you from the service? Why?" "Because I have falsely suspected you." "What have you suspected?" "I have suspected that you were Jean Valjean, the ex-convict who robbed the bishop." "You suspected that and have now changed." Why?" "Because they have found the real Jean Valjean. He is now in trial at a neighboring town and is going to be sent to the gallows for life."

Then the mayor dismissed the policeman saying: "You may go. I will give you my answer later." Left alone the mayor squared his broad shoulders and said: "At last. At last. That name that has dogged me like a nightmare is gone." Then a still small voice said: "Are you going to let an innocent man suffer in your place?" And the battle was on with the result that Jean Valjean stood up in court to declare that the man whom the judge was about to sentence to life was innocent, that he himself was the real Jean Valjean. It was the hard way but it was the way of freedom.

"It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem." That innocent sounding word destroyed a whole nation. It will destroy you if you listen to it.
the prophet. They grew angry at the physician instead of at the disease. Then as suddenly as Elijah had disappeared he returned. He met the prophet Obadiah and sent him to tell the king of his return. Obadiah's knees fairly buckled under him with fear. He said, "There is not a land where the king has not sought for you. Now while I am gone you may disappear again. If that should happen my life would be to forfeit." But Elijah assured him that he was certainly going to show himself to the king so Obadiah carried his message.

When Ahab heard of the prophet's return he planned to feed fat the ancient grudge that he bore against him. His effort to awe Elijah reminds me of a dog that I watched the other day. This vicious beast saw another dog passing along the street. With bristles raised and fangs exposed he rushed at him as if he would tear him into ribbons. There was a fence between them and the dog seemed safe but somebody happened to open the gate. Then the ferocious lion became a Micky Mouse. Even so, Ahab rushed upon the prophet saying: "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" But Elijah, towering above him as a mountain above a molehill, said: "I have not troubled Israel but you and your father's house are the troublemakers in that you have made Israel to sin." Always the heart of the trouble of every individual and of every nation is just that.

Then Elijah took charge. He gave the orders. He told the king to arrange for a great meeting on Mt. Carmel where there should be a test between the God of Elijah and the pagan gods. This is one of the dramatic scenes of the Bible. The pagan prophets prayed to no avail. But when Elijah prayed, God did answer by fire. Fire is a symbol of purity and of power. The people shouted, "The Lord, He is God." And Elijah put the pagan prophets to the sword. His was surely a dramatic and spectacular life. There is little in it to remind us of ourselves.

But just as you were preparing to close your Bible, and tell James that he was mistaken, you came upon this bit: "And Elijah came and sat down
under a juniper tree and requested for himself that he might die." Now you have been under the juniper tree. There are few of us who have not spent more than one dismal hour in that gloomy shade. When you looked down and saw beside your track the big track of this great prophet you decided that James was right after all. Elijah, in spite of the fact that he seemed so great, is yet close akin to everyone of us.

I

"I have had enough. Take away my life." What is the matter with Elijah?

Let me say at once that he is not at himself. He sounds as if he were a confirmed pessimist but he is not. He is a man of daring hopes. He is a man of vital faith. He believed tremendously in the dawn of a better tomorrow. Had he been a deliberate and reasoned pessimist his name would have rotted long ago. If you believe that there is nothing to be done about the evil in your own life or in your own world then you are one of those unfortunate souls that God cannot use.

Now I am not arguing for a shallow optimism. The chap that fell out of the twentieth story window of a skyscraper and shouted to a friend as he passed the tenth story: "I'm all right so far," is going to extremes. By this I say that God can do little with a pessimist. But in spite of this fact there are those that seem to cultivate such an attitude toward life. They cling to the darker side of things as vines cling to the old ruins. Whatever constructive suggestion is offered by their fellows they always have abundant reasons why it cannot be done. While they would never think of stealing our money, they steal the courage and the sunny outlook of everyone that will listen. Such a man is a menace. Such a professing Christian gives the lie to his faith. Elijah was not deliberately pessimistic.
No more was Elijah a weakling and a coward. There are some that haven’t enough stamina to stand up to life. They go blythely forward until they come up against difficulties. Then they fail or they fall flat and whine. They are not willing to endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. They must live on Easy Street or they refuse with a degree of cheerfulness to live at all.

But Elijah was a strong man. He is one of the most majestic figures that we meet on the pages of the Old Testament. He had the courage to stand alone. He threw himself across the path of a nation as it seemed greedy for its own destruction and he went far toward saving it. He lived so magnificently and so sacrificially that centuries later when Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration wanted men of understanding heart with whom to discuss his coming death on the cross, Elijah was one of the men that was chosen.

What then I repeat was the matter with Elijah? He was suffering from a fit of depression. He was momentarily discouraged. He was fighting what we moderns call a bad case of blues. No man is always at his best. We ought to reduce such weakness of the soul to its lowest terms but all earnest people I take it have brief periods when the light at least grows dim and victory a bit uncertain. Some very excellent people pass through desperate days and months when they feel that they must go on living in spite of the fact that they have nothing much left for which to live.

II

How did Elijah get that way?

There are times when we are depressed and blue for no reason. The Merchant of Venice tells our story. "In sooth, I know not why I am so sad:
It wearies me; you say it wearies you;
But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,
What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born,
I am to learn."
But there are other times when we can tell something of the causes that lie back of our depression. We can in the case of Elijah. What then was wrong?

1. He was dead tired. He had allowed himself to become nervously and physically exhausted. The days of preparation for that contest on Calvary were doubtless strenuous days and the nights were largely sleepless. Then came the terrific strain of the contest that lasted all day. Then when victory was won, Elijah was so elated, he was so filled with wild joy that he forgot all the needs of his body and ran before the chariot of Ahab all the way from Carmel to Jezreel, a distance of seventeen miles. Arrived at Jezreel he heard Jezebel's threat to take his life. Again he went on foot another whole day's journey into the wilderness.

No wonder then when he reached this juniper tree he was utterly spent. Now when we are exhausted we are not at ourselves. We ought never to make decisions at such times. We cannot do anything well. I heard one of the best known and ablest ministers in America make a flat failure of a great case not long ago just because he was dead tired. If we are tired we are an easy prey not only to the diseases of the body but of the mind and soul as well.

2. Elijah was deeply disappointed in his victory. When God answered by fire the crowd shouted and Elijah with his own hand helped to put the pagan prophets to the sword. He was sure that he had won the nation back to its loyalty to God. He believed that at least one way to have a good world was to kill off all the sinners. Then when he got down to Jezreel and the whole crowd grew silent because Jezebel was near by he was not so sure of his victory. Then when this seemingly defeated queen threatened to take the prophet's life in utter discouragement he took to his hills.

Here Elijah has something in common with millions. During the first world war vast multitudes believed that our victory would bring a new world. Personally I could never preach such a faith. Those who preached
it were vastly disappointed. Now we have a second victory on our hands but it is a victory of force. We are learning too that we cannot make the world good by merely killing off the disturbers of the peace. All victories of violence are doomed to disappointment.

3. A third reason for Elijah's depression was that he had cut himself off from human fellowship. He was absolutely alone. Nobody came forward at his hour of need to give him a word of encouragement. Possibly they failed to do so because they had no chance. More likely it is because knowing his strength they did not think he needed it. A wise gentleman said some time ago that he had a friend that was greatly discouraged. He decided that he was going to send him an onion. He said he was going to wrap this onion in the most dainty fashion possible and post it to him.

Why an onion? Because though the onion is one of the most valuable of vegetables nobody ever grows enthusiastic about it. Poets have written songs about violets and daffodils and forget-me-nots, but nobody ever wrote a poem about an onion. We do not grow sentimental over onions though tears have been shed over them as every housewife knows. But we fail to encourage not because they are weak but because they are strong. Maybe Elijah's friends failed him at this time because they thought him too strong to need their encouragement.

4. The final reason for Elijah's depression was his bookkeeper. He decided to keep books on himself and to set down just what he had accomplished through his ministry. Already being depressed when he had counted up all his accomplishments they amount to naked nothing. "They have forsaken thy covenant, taken down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." "I am no better than my fathers." They allowed Israel to drift into paganism. I have been unable to call it back.

Now any man who goes into the bookkeeping business is likely to get
Years ago an excellent minister came to preach in the town where I was then teaching. The congregation that met him was disgracefully small. In spite of his ability and earnestness, less than a score were at the service. He preached as if he had a house full. He never referred to the size of his congregation. But as he finished he said this: "Now I don't know what I have accomplished by coming to your town. I am not keeping books. That is God's business. All I know is that I came with God in my heart and did my best. That is all that is asked of God's greatest prophet. It is all that is asked of you and me. Thus tired, depressed in his victory, without encouragement, keeping books on himself, he was driven almost to despair.

How did God cure him? Even if he was thus mentally sick, he did not have to remain that way.

1. He rested. An angel of the Lord is represented as waking him from a long sleep, feeding him, and putting him to sleep again. An angel simply means a messenger. Elijah took a rest, ate a few good square meals and thus recovered his physical strength. The most religious thing that any man can do is to rest.

2. God enabled him to face the facts. First the facts about himself. He put a question to him that was very personal. "What doest thou here, Elijah?" That was a bit embarrassing. Elijah had confessed that he was complaining about his uselessness and wishing to die. But God led him to
see that he had not been useless. There were many who were still loyal to
God and Elijah had helped to win some and to steady others.

No more did Elijah wish to die. Had he really desired to die he would
not have had to ask the Lord to kill him. Jezebel was eager to do the job
without any praying at all. The reason that the prophet is so exhausted
is because he has been running for his life. We often lie to ourselves
when we get in the dumps.

2. God helped him to face in some measure the fact about others.
Elijah had made up his mind that there was not a good man on the earth ex-
cept himself. It is said that in a country church the congregation
was singing: "Sweet prospects, sweet birds and sweet flowers have all lost
their sweetness to me." But one brother was singing out above the rest in
this fashion: "...have all lost their sweetness but me." There are seven
thousand as God reminded him, which simply means an indefinite number, who
have not bowed their knee to Baal. There are bad people certainly but al-
ways there are good people. Some of the seed have choked by thirst. That
is true. But others spring up and bring forth thirty, sixty, and a hundred
fold.

3. Finally, God showed him that violence was not his favorite method
of working. As Elijah stood at the mouth of the cave a great storm swept
by. The scene was in harmony with Elijah's spirit. "That is the way I
would act," he said, "if I were God. I would sweep evil off the face of
the earth." But God was not in the storm. Then followed an earthquake
during which the very mountains were shaking but God was not in the earth-
quake. Then there was an electrical storm. But again God was not in the
fire. At last there came a voice of gentle stillness and God was there.

What did it all mean? God was telling his prophet as he tells us
that the mighty things are the silent things. The law of gravity never
shrieks but it holds the planets in its grip. Forced thunder leaves the
heart unchanged. Love whispers and a new age is born. Jesus was saying the same thing when he said the kingdom of God cometh not with observation.

Thus rested and encouraged Elijah went on his way continuing his ministry of teaching and choosing a man to be his successor. Then comes the final scene. There is hardly anything more beautiful in the Old or the New Testament. "As they still went on, and talked, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." And the richest legacy that he left behind was this: The one essential is God. When he had gone those who had not witnessed his translation said: "Where is Elijah?" There is no getting on without him. But Elisha asked the saner question: "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?"

What is our need for today? Not this individual or that. Our supreme need is God. Beside my favorite spring on our old farm there used to hang a gourd. But when I go back there this summer and go to that spring for water the gourd will be gone. What shall I do? Go away thirsty saying: "Alas, the gourd is gone. I cannot drink any more." No I will not be so foolish. I will say, "Though the gourd is gone, thank God the spring is here." It is not the gourd that counts but the spring. When courage fails, when great leaders die, or disappoint us, remember always God still lives, infinitely adequate and able to do exceedingly above all that we ask or think.
BLUE DAYS

And he came and sat down under a juniper-tree, and he requested for himself that he might die; and he said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.

1. Kings 19: 4

One day, perhaps, you were reading the Book of James. James was an exceedingly matter of fact and prosaic man. He wrote with his feet on the ground. He wrote in the plainest prose. Now as you read this man who is so sober in his statements, you came on this surprising word, "Elijah was a man of like passions." If you were reading thoughtfully, I daresay that word gave you pause. "I do not care to dispute James," you say, "that reminds me of myself."

Then you survey yourself and your convictions, and you turn back to this Book of Kings and re-read Elijah's story. You watch him as he came down from the hills to visit the corrupt court of Ahab. You heard him as he told the king and queen to their faces that their corrupt lives were a curse upon the nation. Then, having rebuked them, with the key to heaven swinging to his girdle, he disappears into the wilderness leaving the royal pair to their slowly withering country and to their constantly growing rage. For months they sought for the prophet everywhere, eager to even that grudge they had against him.

Then one day, as suddenly as he had disappeared, he reappeared. "Go tell King Ahab," he said to the prophet Obadiah, "that I am here." The great prophet was frightened half out of his wits. "That will never do," he said, "while I am gone, you will vanish and the king will kill me." "No," said Elijah, "I am certainly going to face him this day." So the message was carried and the king came in hot anger to see Elijah. "Art thou then the trouble of Israel?" he asked in what he desired to pass for righteous indignation. "No," said the prophet, "You and your queen with your sinful lives are the trouble." It was merely pointing out what is wrong. I am a physician and have diagnosed your disease with reference to bringing about a cure. The real disease is sin."
Having thus spoken his mind, the prophet challenges the forces of evil to a test. The hundreds of prophets of Baal were to stand on one side and he, the lone prophet of Jehovah, was to stand on the other. Each side was to ask its God to answer by fire. And you remember the outcome. The prophets of Baal cried into an empty heaven, but Elijah received an answer and proceeded at once to spoil his victory by putting the false prophets to the sword. And the reading of this story only confirms you in the opinion that James over-stated the case when he declared that you were like Elijah.

But as you continue to read, you come upon this text: "And he came and sat down under a juniper-tree: and he requested for himself that he might die." "I have had enough," he sobs, "I am clean fed up." "Take away my life, I am no good, I am not any better than my fathers. They allowed Israel to drift into idolatry, I have been able to do nothing to bring it back to the faith. Therefore, the best thing for me to do is not to go back into a world that needs me so desperately and try to make it better, it is to quit, to give it up and get out of it altogether." Then when you thus saw the prophet's big tracks beside your own under the juniper-tree, you realize that James was right after all.

I.

Now what was the matter with Elijah? Why is he here whining and indulging in the enervating luxury of self-pity?

It is heartening to face the fact that Elijah is not under the juniper-tree truly from habit. The prophet is not at his best today. He is not a deliberate and persistent and unreasoned pessimist. Had he been so, his name would have rotted long ago. The man who sees only a mirage where others see a fountain; the man who believes that things are going from bad to worse and that the final outcome is not going to be victory but utter defeat, is a man that God simply cannot use. The persistent pessimist is never a real asset, he is always a liability.

Yet there are some people who seem to rejoice in their pessimism. They take a
positive pride in the fact that their ears are attuned to the discords of life rather than to the music. They have a keen eye for what is wrong and are as blind as bats to what is right. They are never quite so happy as when they are sad and never quite so sad as when they feel they ought to be happy. They are the self-appointed inspectors of warts and carbuncles, of sewers and street gutters.

A certain preacher out visiting some time ago came upon one of these pessimistic souls who enjoyed poor health. She expected to live sick and die sick and go to heaven sick. "How are you today?" asked the minister when he called. She forgot herself for the moment and said, "I haven't an ache or a pain." Then she thought better of her statement, puckered her brows, and drew down the corners of her mouth, and she said, "You know, I always feel the worst when I feel the best because I know how badly I am going to feel when I get to feeling badly again."

One day two buckets went to the well. One bucket suddenly burst into tears and said, "You know, it breaks my heart to think that however full I am when I leave the well, I always come back empty." The other bucket laughed aloud and said, "You know it tickles me to death to think that however empty I am when I come to the well, I always go away full." Two girls went into a garden that was brimming over with spring. One girl came back with her brows puckered saying, "The roses are blooming, but there is a thorn for every rose." The other girl came back singing, "The roses are blooming and there is a rose for every thorn." It is just a different way of looking at it, you know.

Since Elijah was not a consistent pessimist, what then, I repeat, was the matter? He just had a good case of blues. He was passing through what corresponds to the present-day minister's "blue Monday." Therefore, he was not at his best. His judgments were warped. What he said and did did not indicate the true character of the man. He was no more himself than one who is intoxicated or one who is desperately ill. He was having an experience that is common to many of ourselves, he was indulging in a good case of blues.
II.

How how did he get that way?

1. Part of the cause was physical. Our fathers used to look with considerable contempt upon the body. It was only the soul that counted. I remember an uncle of mine meeting a very pious friend who looked so utterly run down at the heels physically that he was ghastly. "What in the world is the matter?" asked my uncle. "I am crucifying the flesh," came the doleful answer. "Well, it looks to me," was the reply, "like you have it almost crucified." Now this pioused brother was only showing to the world what a horrible thing it is to be religious. This he did by despising his body.

But we are learning that we have no more right to mistreat our bodies than to mistreat our souls. In fact, to sin against the one is to sin against the other. I am so closely related to the house in which I live that if it is about to topple into ruins, it is not easy to have a sunny outlook. There are sick folks who are beautifully sunny but this is a great triumph of grace. Other things being equal, it is certainly far easier to have a hopeful attitude toward life when one is well than when one is sick.

Now, while Elijah was not ill, he was desperately weary. You may count on it that the days preceding this test on Carmel were strenuous, the nights were rather restless nights. Then when the victory was won, Elijah was so thrilled that he forgot all sense of bodily weariness. He went on foot before the chariot of Ahab all the way from Mount Carmel to Jezreel, a distance of seventeen miles. When he got to Jezreel and heard Jezebel's threat against his life, he ran another day's journey into the wilderness. When he reached this juniper-tree, therefore, he was utterly exhausted. Now it is always hard for us to be at our best when our nerves are frayed and our physical energies are spent. It is in this time of utter weariness that Elijah gives way to the blues.

2. Elijah was made blue by a sense of failure. He thought when he heard the loud shouts of the multitude, "The Lord, He is God," that paganism had been destroyed. He thought that when he had seen the false prophets beheaded that evil among his people had been all but exterminated. He made the mistake of thinking that by pulling up the tares
he could insure a splendid crop of wheat. Thus intoxicated by a sense of victory, he came to Jezreel.

What happened then? Arriving in the neighborhood of Jezebel, the shouts of the people lapsed into utter silence. Nobody said, "The Lord, He is God," any more. Not only so, but there came from the lips of this disturbing word, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them slain prophets by tomorrow at this time." At once Elijah is gripped by fear and a sense of utter failure. All his efforts seem to have gone for nothing.

How one reason he was so sure he had failed was because his eye was only on the visible. He had gone into the bookkeeping business, a job we are to leave to God. He set about to count up the exact amount of the good he had done and when he added it all up, he got naked nothing. He decided then and there that he had made an utter failure.

There are a few of us, I daresay, who have not had that experience. Sometimes when we are not at our best, we sit down and try to count up all the real and lasting good that we have done. How poor a showing we make. So poor it is that we tell ourselves that we are no good. "After all that the Lord has done for me," we say sadly, "I am a failure and always will be." Then we proceed to pity ourselves and moan mournfully under the juniper-tree. Elijah was blue because he felt that he had failed.

3. Finally, he was blue because feeling that he had failed, he lost his faith. He no longer had any faith in himself. He had no faith in his fellows. He had very little faith in God. Did you ever consider how much your faith in God is dependent upon your faith in men? I have never known a man of firm faith in God who was without an equally firm faith in his brother. Allow yourself to be convinced today that all men are liars, that there is not a truly good man in the world and as certainly as night follows the day, you will reach the conclusion that there is not a good God either and that conclusion will be right. We believe in God pretty largely because we believe in men.
Elijah had lost his faith as he sat there under the juniper-tree. He said, "They have slain thy prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left." "Lord," he said, "I am the only good man in the world. Everybody else has gone to the bad. There were a few good people yesterday, but they are dead now. I am the only one alive that is really worth his salt." But instead of being willing to salt the earth, he wanted to get out of it. Having no faith in man, and no real faith in God, he was naturally desperately blue. "Have you lost your furniture but me."

III.

But it is heartening to realize that Elijah did not live the remainder of his life and at last die under this juniper-tree. He had a temporary fit of blues, but he came out of it. And God was able to use him once more. Had Elijah always remained as we find him here, he would have been utterly useless. Not only so, he would have been a liability rather than an asset. During the Great War, England put one man in jail and kept him there for the duration of the war. His one crime was this that he was continuously prophesying failure. Therefore, he was a hindrance rather than a help. Elijah came out of the blues. How? What did the Lord do for his discouraged servant?

1. He gave him a rest. The most religious thing that a tired body can do is to rest. Some folks pride themselves in driving themselves to utter nervous exhaustion. It is all wrong. I entered the ministry with the mistaken notion that I was to work a revolution in one year. What happened? I came in on four flat tires. For months I went about my work feeling just like a cholera chicken looks. Now, I have learned that to rest when I am tired is just as pious as prayer.

2. After Elijah had rested enough to be normal, God enabled him to face the facts. Elijah told himself that he was facing the facts while he was under the juniper-tree, but such was not the case at all. He was facing certain distorted fancies, grim half-truths, that were really worse than lies. Elijah was normally an honest man, but every-
thing he said here under the juniper-tree was dead wrong.

First, he was wrong about himself. He told himself that he desired death rather than life. There was nothing he wished so much as to fling out of the world. But that was not the truth at all. Elijah was just lying to himself. If he were eager to die, why did he run so desperately? No prayers were necessary to bring about his death; the only necessity would have been for him to have stayed around Jezreel a day or two, and Jezabel would have made a corpse out of him in short order.

This type of lying to ourselves when we are blue is quite common. I read of a chap some time ago who was constantly threatening to kill himself. One day a fine old saint paid him a visit. He opened the conversation by laying an angry looking revolver on the table and saying to his young friend, "Go over there to the table and write your will, I have come to kill you this morning. You see, if you kill yourself, you will have no chance to repent. If I kill you, I will have a chance. Therefore, in order to save your soul, I thought I would make it possible for you to shuffle off." But the man who was so greedy for suicide asked his friend to wait till "tomorrow." When, therefore, you tell yourself that you wish you were dead, when you want to smash up the furniture and go out in the garden and eat worms, just tell yourself that you are lying.

Second, not only was Elijah not telling the truth about himself, he was equally wrong about his fellows. How many good folks were there in Israel? Elijah had added up the figures and gotten 300. God had added them up and got 7,000. Some of these 7,000 had become saints no doubt under the ministry of this able prophet. Therefore, his ministry had not gone for nothing and folks were not half so bad as he thought.

This is a heartening lesson that we all need at times. There are days when everything seems dead wrong. Those outside the church are going to the dogs and those inside are little better. But, of course, things are never so bad as that. There are vicious and godless people enough, there are many who are thoroughly wrong, we are not shutting our eyes to that fact, but there is always a remedy. There is always some good soil where
the wheat is growing green and where the harvest is growing gold.

There are loyal hearts, there are spirits brave,
There are souls that are good and true.
Then give to the world the best that you have,
And the best will come back to you!

Give love, and love to your heart will flow,
And strength for your uttermost need.
Give faith, and a thousand hearts will show
Their faith in your word and deed.

For life is a mirror of king and slave;
It is just what we are and do.
Then give to the world the best that you have,
And the best will come back to you!

Third, and finally, God showed this prophet that the judge solely of the visible is never the judge of right. He showed that the strong things are not the noisy things. The truth of what Jesus said, "The Kingdom cometh not by observation," was a truth. That is a wonderful interview the Lord has with Elijah at the mouth of the cave. What a grippingly true story it is.

"What doest thou here, Elijah?" God says to his blue and defeated prophet. Almost every word is emphatic, but I think the chief emphasis is upon the words "doest thou."

"What doest thou here, Elijah?" "What do you, as a prophet of the Lord, mean by whimpering and whining and wanting to throw down your Lord and quit when you are so greatly needed, when your ministry has already been blessed, when there are 7,000 that have not bowed beneath Baal, when that number is capable of being increased if you only will be and do what you ought to be and do. What doest thou here, Elijah?"

Then, after Elijah had given his answer, he went and stood in the mouth of the cave and the story says that a great strong wind rent the mountains, a tornado swept by. It is a picture of power. It fitted Elijah's mood. "That," he said, "is what I like. If I were God, I would lash this wicked nation like a fierce hurricane." But it came home to him sickeningly that God was not in the wind. Then there was an earthquake and the great hills trembled and the mighty boulders were tossed about as a juggler might
toss a ball. Again Elijah felt his soul responsive. "So I would shake the age-old iniquities that are rotting the nation down." But God was not in the earthquake. And then the lightning leaped from crag to crag and from cliff to cliff and played along the ground and here again Elijah thought he saw the mighty power of God. "So I would smite iniquity with a thunder-bolt," he says. But God was not in the fire.

Then what? Then,"there came a voice of gentle stillness and when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entrance of the cave," and at last he had heard the voice of God. Thus he came to learn that our God is not a God of force. He is not a God who sings his victory by the roar of cannon, by the dropping of bombs or of poison gas. Physical power thunders and leaves the heart unchanged. Love whispers and old things pass away and all things become new. How was this winter-stripped world changed into the verdant world of springtime? There was no noise about it, it was the silent incoming of the new life. So, if you are blue today, remember that God is silently working in your own heart and in other hearts in this church and in other churches. Remember that the great forces are the silent forces. Then with a Voice small and still, speaking to your own soul, you will have courage to begin your fight anew.
"While thy servant was busy here and there he was gone." This is a parable. Israel is at war. The conflict has gone in their favor and they have succeeded in the capture of their opposing king. This capture gives them their advantage. They now have every hope of final conquest and victory. The forces of the enemy have little chance without their leader.

Of course it is of supreme importance that this captured king be kept safe. His escape might be disastrous. Therefore a special man is chosen whose one task is to stand guard over this important captive. He is relieved of all other duties and all other responsibilities that he may perform this one tremendously important task.

I can well imagine that the man so chosen felt very keenly the honor that had been done him. I am sure he must have been much rejoiced by the large confidence that his king had placed in him. I can see him as he is called into his lord's presence to receive the commission. He comes with step a bit doubtful, but as he goes away he walks with the stride of a victor. He is trusted. He is honored by the confidence of a definite task. He has been set as the one man who is to defend Israel in the keeping in custody of their dangerous prisoner.

I watch his soldier-like tread as he paces back and forth in front of the cell. The man within is in chains. His face is black with despair. He feels that the hour of his doom has come. He will be close guarded. There will be no chance of escape. The man on guard will be alert. The words of his commission still ring in his ears like the music of wedding bells.

But the next day all is changed. The prisoner is gone. In his stead there is another prisoner. His chains are heavier than those of the escaped captive. His face is full of the pain and despair. His shoulders droop. His eyes are cast down and his commission no longer rings like wedding bells, but wails like the dirge of his own funeral.

I can not but ask the man a few questions. I feel I must know how the change has come about: "Old fellow, yesterday you were guarding an important prisoner. Today I find you a prisoner yourself. How did it come about? Yesterday you were honored and trusted. Yesterday you held in your hand the safety of the state, the safety of our homes and of our wives and children. Today I find you bound in shame and dishonor. What is the matter?" And the man tells me how it happened. He said, "Yes, my king trusted me. He gave me a definite and important task. He told me that in fulfilling it I would be able to serve the state and to serve society. He told me that I would also be able to save myself, but that if I failed and the prisoner escaped my life would be the forfeit. I let him escape and so the service I might have rendered I can not render. I let him escape and so I have endangered every home in Israel. I let him escape and have thrown away my own life."

I am amazed and filled with pity. "Poor fellow", I am ready to say, "of course you could not help it. Tell me about it. How did he overpower you? Who crept up behind you in the dark and struck you to the ground?" "It did not happen that way", he answered. "I let him escape because I was busy. I was doing something else." And I am amazed more than ever and I say, "What in the world were you doing?" "Oh, nothing in particular..."
Why I am a Failure.

Just busy here and there - just knocking about - just drifting around. But while I drifted I stumped my toe on my own coffin. While I drifted I bumped into hand-cuffs and chains. While I drifted I felt the noose slip around my neck and tighten there. I was busy here and there. I thought I could do something else besides stick to this one job. I thought I could carry out many purposes. I thought I could have my fling and sow my wild oats and do as I pleased in general and come back and find my prisoner still here, but while I was busy here and there he was gone. You see why this fellow failed. He failed for lack of a definite, gripping, presiding purpose. And that is the secret of possibly more failures than any other one cause. We never commit ourselves heart and soul to one great definite dominating purpose.

The man had no excuse for his failure except that he was busy here and there. He could not say that the reason he failed was because he did not know what he was to do. He knew exactly what his task was. He had his work definitely marked out for him. He knew perfectly that his one business was to obey the command of his king and not his own inclination to go here and there. So his failure was not born in any sense of his ignorance.

Nor is that the reason that many of you are failing. Just as this man, you know what you ought to do. At least you know what is your one supreme duty. You know it because God has made it very plain to you. He says, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." Your first task, your supreme task, your one life purpose is to be the dedication of your life to Him. That is the supreme secret of success, for the man who so commits himself to Christ stands the best chance of finding the particular task that he is to perform in the world. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy path."

Notice I say the particular task, for I believe that God has a definite plan for every life. I believe it because He plans everything else in this world. I believe it also because He definitely tells us that such is the case. And what is more important than that you should find the sphere of service that He intended for you? Here you are as a young man or a young woman, - you know you can do something, but do not know exactly what that something is. You know that you ought to serve somewhere, but you do not know exactly where that place is. God says that if you will take Him into your confidence, that if you will commit your life to Him, - that He will let you know.

Now, I do not mean by this that God will fix you in a certain groove without any effort or thought on your own part. I believe that God guides us by His spirit and also by our own common sense. He expects you to be sufficiently interested in this matter to take stock of yourself to consider your own aptitudes and your own abilities. He is not calling you to a task that you can not perform. He is not calling you to a vocation in which you will not fit. You must take your own measure. And this is not easy. I decided when I was a youth to stop patronizing the hand-me-down stores about me. I resolved to get me a real tailor-made suit. I took my own measure and when that suit came I pledge you that you might have tried it on every form of man and beast in the whole Roman Empire and it would not have fit any of them. I could have kept house in one of the legs of the trousers. I had measured myself too large. God is not calling you to be a misfit. He is not calling you to the doing of a task that will be an eternal treadmill to you. Many men are serving in such places, but it is
Why I am a Failure.

because, as a rule, they failed to form any life purpose. They drifted
till stern necessity forced them into a groove for which they were never
intended.

There may be much that you do not know about your future, but
you know the first step. You know your one supreme duty. You know what
is to be your supreme purpose. It is the same as that of the man that
threw his chance away. It is to obey the order of your King. Put your
life in His hands. Do the duty that lies nearest to you and in the act-
ing or doing it you will find yourself.

You remember Kipling's story of the ship that found itself. It
did not do so by lying in the harbor. It found itself in the stress and
strain of the sea. It found itself as it undertook to do the known task.
And if you set yourself to the one big purpose of seeking to know and do
the will of God for you, I promise you on His own authority that you shall
know what your life task is and that as you toil you shall toil with the
consciousness of His approval, being able to say, "To this end was I born
and for this cause came I into the world." And if you fail you will fail,
as did this man, not from ignorance but from lack of purpose.

Neither did this man fail because of his inability to carry out
his king's command. Had he so failed we might have sympathized with him.
Had he so failed he would not have been to blame. But he might have kept
his captive; he might have held his prisoner if he had only given himself
to the task. He might have fully attained success if he had not have
scattered his energies. But having no purpose, he squandered his resources.
He scattered his powers. How many a man has so failed! There was plenty
of ability but no concentration, plenty of ability but no unifying purpose.
In the "Sportsman's Magazine" there appeared an advertisement saying, "Send
one dollar and we will tell you how to keep any gun from scattering shot."
A man who had a shot gun that could place shot all over the side of a
barn send in his dollar and received this answer: "Put one shot in your
gun." The man may have felt himself cheated, but he was not.

The price of success is one centralizing purpose. I used to hunt
quail. At first I would shoot into the covey, but I never got anywhere.
I then learned to pick out one bird. This man lost sight of his own job in
a multitude of jobs. He saw business here and business there and business
all around. And he shot into the covey and lost his prisoner and also lost
his head.

Purpose is the driving power of life. It is that that guides us
going in one direction. It is that that focalizes our energy upon one
definite object. There is a mill wheel in the Shenandoah valley that has
one-half its buckets. The water strikes that wheel and it turns half
around and then goes back again and it never gets anywhere. And there is
many a life like that,— a life that turns back on itself and squanders its
energy. There is enough heat in fifty acres of sunshine to melt the rocks
and burn up the very hills if it were centralized. If scattered it takes
hours to blister the cheek of a baby.

The world is full of failures: failures in business, failures in
professional life, failures in church life. How numerous there are in this
department! Men and women who might succeed, men and women who might be
powers for God, men and women who might work moral revolutions if they would,
but they fail not because of their ignorance or because of their inability but because of their purposelessness. I do not think that every man has ability to make a great success in the eyes of the world, but I do say that every man has ability to make a success in God’s sight, which is the highest success. It may be that you can not make a very great living, but you can make a great life. (Adventure of Phaethon).

In the third place, this man failed not from any set purpose to fail. When the king had turned his back he did not say to himself, “I am not going to do what the king said.” He did not come to a definite conclusion to turn his prisoner loose. He did not clench his teeth and say, “I am going to play into the hands of the enemy and endanger my own nation and my own home.” He did not say, “I am tired of life and I am going to destroy myself and this is a good way to commit suicide.” He did not fail because of a wrong decision, because of wrong purpose. He failed because he had no purpose at all.

In a little Texas town I saw a dray driver going down the street and as he went he sang this song, “I don’t know where I’m going, but I’m on my way.”—That was the condition of this man. When he first set out to be busy here and there, if you had asked him where he was going he would not have said to you, “I am going to release my prisoner. I am going to betray my trust. I am going to dig my own grave. I am going to climb into my own coffin.” He was on his way, but he did not know where he was going.

No, he did not fail, I say, because he determined to fail. He was not wrecked by a bad purpose. Of course a bad purpose is a colossal mistake but it is better than no purpose at all. The most powerless man I know is a purposeless man. The man with an evil purpose is like a mountain torrent. It may cause wrecks; it may uproot trees and overthrow houses and devastate farms, but rightly directed it becomes a power for good. But to what use can you put a stagnant pond? You may change the purpose of one going with determination in the wrong direction, but what can you do for the man who is not going at all?

This man threw away his chance not, I repeat, because he did not know what he ought to do, not because he did not have sufficient ability to succeed, not because that in some evil moment he definitely committed himself heart and soul to the wrong. He failed for the lack of a worthy controlling purpose. Is that the secret of your failure? Have you ever reached a definite conclusion and final decision with regard to the supreme issues of life? Have you ever come to definite terms with your own conscience? Have you ever with purpose of heart selected your goal and set your face toward it? This is the great secret of success. It wins temporal success when everything else fails. It wins moral success and victory when all else fails. I was reading only this week of a young girl, crippled in body, unable to use hands or feet, who has just painted a picture of the President and painted it by holding the brush in her teeth. I read of another artist who had painted a creditable picture and he painted it with his foot. It is hard to turn back the soul that is driven on to its task by a strong and definite purpose.

And I read, too, of a young fellow carried from his native city into the sin-stained atmosphere of a great heathen city. All odds were against him, but he purposed in his heart that he would stay clean and be true to the God of his fathers, and slave though he was he was the dominating personality in that city for more than half a century. The city is dead
today. For centuries it has been a heap of ruins. The jackal howls in its once gay and popular streets and only one thing survives. That is the window out of which Daniel looked and under the casement of which his enemies heard his voice uplifted in prayer. Daniel's life was a thing of blessedness and victory. It was so only because Daniel himself was undergirded by a high and holy purpose.

What is your life purpose? Today you stand face to face with your opportunity, with your privileges, with your responsibilities. God has trusted you with capacities, with education, with powers to help or hinder. One day you are going to stand in His presence and He is going to ask you what you did. If you fail, if you pull down when you might lift up, if you drift when you might breast the current, if you prove indifferent and inactive when you should be alert and active, He is going to ask you why. Let me ask you now.

Understand, I am not asking you why you did not definitely commit yourself to Jesus Christ as the highest that you know on yesterday or last year, but I am asking you why will you not do it tonight. I am asking you as a member of the church why will you seek to be a Christian with only a fraction of yourself. Why will you give yourself to the great task purposelessly and half-heartedly? That way failure lies. Today the opportunity is yours. The big chance is yours. God forbid that you will have to one day say, "While I was busy here and there it was gone. Christ was passed by. My chance to serve was thrown away." I tossed myself upon the cinders of burnt-out and wasted things not because of any deliberate decision to do wrong, but for lack of a positive decision to do right. While I was busy here and there, Christ was gone. Opportunity was gone. Life was gone. And all that laid was the damning memory of an aimless life.
"While thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone."

(I Kings 20:40)

This is a part of an Old Testament parable. Israel is engaged in the insanity of war. A notable prisoner, a leader of the enemy, has been captured. It is of the highest importance for the safety of the nation that this prisoner be held in security. He must not be allowed to escape. Should he be allowed to do so such an escape might endanger hundreds or thousands or the nation itself.

Now because the security of this prisoner was so important one soldier was set free from all other duties and assigned to the task of guarding this important prisoner. That one man should have this weighty responsibility indicates that he was trusted. He was a man of courage. He was a man whose patriotism was beyond question. But that he might know the importance of his task he is warned that his right performance of this duty is a matter of life and death. If for any reason he allows his prisoner to escape he will have to face what would be today the firing squad.

One would naturally think that the soldier who was thus trusted and who was thus loaded with such heavy responsibilities with such a dire penalty attached would have made the keeping of his prisoner his one purpose. But this was not the case. As is evidenced by the fact that when his prisoner was demanded a little later the soldier could not produce him. He had been allowed to escape. This was the case not because the task was beyond the soldiers power. It was not the case because thought he had fought desperately he had been overcome. The one thing he has to
say for himself is this: "While thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone." Now this ancient story is very modern. It has something to say to everyone of us. It has something of especial worth to say to those of us who are in life's green spring. There are three facts about this man to which I wish to call your attention.

I

The first fact is this: he was assigned a definite task. His commanding officer had set him free from all other duties for the doing of this one thing, the guarding of this prisoner. But this ancient commander no more had a plan for this particular soldier than God our Father has a plan for your life and mine. A good many years ago Horace Bushnell preached on the subject: "Every Man's Life a Plan of God." It would have been better stated I think in these words: "God Plans Every Life."

This I realize is not easy for the modern man to believe. In a peculiar sense today we are dwarfed by the very bigness of the universe in which we live. Once our little world was the center of everything, but today it has become only a speck. Mark Twain in ridicule of its smallness tells of a chap who went up to heaven from California. He informed St. Peter proudly of the state that he was from but nobody had ever heard of California. "Why," he said, "it is in the United States." But nobody had ever heard of the United States. "Why, it is a part of North America," but nobody had ever heard of North America. "It is a part of the planet earth," he said in amazed indignation. But nobody had ever heard of such a planet. At last after long searching, the scientist discovered that a mere fleck of dust had been flung off into space a few centuries ago and lost sight of. It was then called 'the wart.'

But worth is not a matter of bulk. Jesus declared that the one something of worth in this universe is personality. He said if you put man in
one scale of balance and the world in the other, the world would go up like a bit of thistledown. Man as small as he is can do what all the planets that swing into space cannot do. He can know and love and choose. The smallest man is greater in God's sight than all the stars and the dust that litter up the roadways of the eternities.

Now it is evident that God has planned this universe. It is no accident that a scientist can predict an eclipse of the sun a hundred or a thousand years ahead of time. From the least thing that the microscope can see to the most tremendous that the telescope can discover there are indications of the planning God. An ancient Psalmist felt it as he looked upward in the long ago and sang: "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork." The poet Addison spoke to the same purpose when looking at those same distant stars he sang:

"In reason's ear they all rejoice,  
And utter forth a glorious voice,  
Forever singing as they shine,  
'The hand that made us is divine'."

Who tells the bird of passage when the winter is coming? Who makes for him his geography? Who maps the road to the land where summer spends the winter? God does it. Bryant felt it as he sang:

"He who, from zone to zone,  
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,  
In the long way that I must tread alone,  
Will lead my steps aright."

It is reasonable to believe that the God who plans the suns and stars, that the God who guides the birds and also plans and guides us who infinitely greater than all these.

2. Not only do we believe that God plans our lives because he plans all else, but we believe it because it is the clear teaching of his order. As we turn the pages of his book we meet men who are God guided. We meet men whose lives rise to victory or sink in defeat in accordance to their loyalty to the plan of God.

Here for instance is one of the great prophets of the Old Testament
"I'd Mind My Own Business"

"The word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah saying: 'Arise and go down to the potter's house and there I will cause thee to hear my words.'" As this poet prophet entered that ancient manufacturing establishment three objects at once caught and held his attention. There was the potter, a man who was working. There was a wheel, that with which he worked. There was the clay, that upon which he worked. This bit of clay in the hands of the potter was a crude and unfinished something but there was a place where there was a finished product that was in the mind of the potter. Any potter who would set out to make a vessel without any plan as to what the vessel is to be would be careless and stupid. Surely we cannot bring this charge against the Heavenly Potter. God plans our lives. "As the clay in the potter's hands, so are you in my hands."

When we turn to the New Testament the teaching is even more clear. Jesus affirms that God gives to every man his work. I cannot read his brief story without the realization that his life was a plan of God. He himself affirms this over and over. When he reaches the end of the journey he declares: "I have glorified Thee on the earth. I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." That is, he had been assigned a definite task. He is affirming that he has carried that task to completion. He has not simply reached the end of his earthly journey. Any of us can do that. But he has fully carried out God's plan. As he looks back over the way along which he has come, no wrong has been done, no right has been left undone. It is a finished life—the one finished life that our world has seen.

Now Jesus tells us that God no more planned his life than he plans yours and mine. "As the Father hath sent me into the world even so send I you." We may believe therefore that God has a definite plan for everyone of us. As this ancient soldier had his task, as he had a definite business assigned to him, so you and I are here on a business trip for our Lord. We have a mission that nobody can discharge but ourselves. God plans every
every life. This does not mean of course that he fixes a groove in which we must run whether we will or not. We do not have to accept his plan but we may accept it.

II

Not only did this ancient soldier have a business but he knew what that business was. That also I take it we may know. Since God loves us and desires that we may make the best of our lives he would naturally be eager to show us what he has planned for us and enable us to discharge our mission.

Here then is one of life's most important questions. What is the will of God for me? How can I find the particular task for which I have been created? Where will I fit in? More depends on finding the right answer to this question than almost any other that you have to face.

In seeking an answer suppose we start with one part of God's plan that is common to everyone of us. There is one something that God asks at the hands of every man and that is the gift of himself. The all-inclusive plan is this: Yield yourselves unto God. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show himself strong in behalf of them whose hearts are perfect toward him." What is a perfect heart according to the Scriptures? It is a dedicated heart that is surrendered.

Now this comes first because it is only to those who are willing to know that God can make known his will. Here is his promise: "In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy path." That does not mean that he will give us a blueprint of all the journey. That does not mean that the guidance will always be as clear as we should like. Yet it will be very real. I have found few Christians who regretted any major decisions in their lives. Most of us as we look back realize that there is a kindly light that has led. We can at least go as far as Shakespeare and say, "There
is a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we may."

How does God guide? He does so in many ways. Sometimes he speaks to us through the voice of a faithful and consecrated friend. Sometimes he calls through the consciousness of another's need. We are called to do what we see needs to be done. I think he speaks also through our aptitudes. Generally speaking we have some capacity for the task to which we have been called. God does not call any woman to be a prima donna who cannot carry tune. He does not call a man to be a carpenter who cannot saw two pieces of timber of the same length.

Not only does God speak to us through our aptitudes but through our tastes also. Generally speaking you will go further doing the thing that you like to do. The work of a physician is a great and holy task but not all men are fitted for it. The father of the great poet, Francis Thompson, was a physician and undertook to force his son to follow in his steps but the boy rebelled, fled to London, and went into the depths. He was kept from starving by an outcast woman. By and by he sent an article to a magazine. The editor called for the author to have wreck slip into his office wearing worn shoes without socks, wearing a ragged coat with no shirt under it. But when this bit of human wreckage found his place he found both happiness and usefulness.

Then we can know something of our business through sanctified common sense. For instance we know that we were sent here to work and not to idle. We are debtors, everyone of us. The first mark of any moral and spiritual growth is indicated by this sense of obligation. Little babies have no sense of oughtness. They constantly take without giving. Sad to say some of them never grow up, but the first mark, I repeat, of growth is their learning to say "I owe, and I ought, and I must." Every man knows that he ought to be one of the world's workers.

Not only do we know that all of us must work but we must work constructively. God has not planned that any of us should sit on the side
line and criticize the players. We are not here to ask the other fellow why he did not do something in a better way. Judas and Mary attended the same feast. Mary made a positive contribution that has helped to sweeten the world for nineteen hundred years. Judas only asked the critical question that has helped to break down his name. Everybody ought to work and work constructively and also cooperatively. "I'd mind my own business" may sound at first quite a bit selfish and narrow. But in reality it is as broad as humanity. I cannot be intelligently minding my business without helping every other man to mind his. Years ago I asked a well-to-do merchant who had just one boy to assist some children who had been left without either father or mother. He made a mean and shameful reply. He said, "I have an orphan of my own." What he meant was this: "My boy is my business. He and he alone." But nobody can be intelligently interested in the smallest child without an interest that is worldwide. If I am interested in my child I must be interested in yours because they might play together. If I am intelligently interested in my child I must be interested in the schools of my community. He will have to attend one. If I am intelligently interested in my child I must be interested in the church to which he goes. I must also be interested in other churches. Because if he is the only Christian he will have a hard time. I must be interested in the city, the cleanness of its streets, the kind of amusements it furnishes and its theatres and all its playgrounds. If I am interested in my child intelligently I must be interested in working conditions. He is going to have to be one of the world's workers. If I am intelligently interested in my child I must be interested in world conditions. If we build today on a foundation of injustice there will be another Pearl Harbor and whatever his convictions may be, his life will be changed. He may go to the prison or to the battlefield. To mind my own business therefore is to be interested in the wide world. As old Scrooge put it in the Christmas Carol, "Humanity is my business." This does not mean that we are to spread our activities all
over the earth. The best way to help the world is by doing your particular task in the best possible way.

III

The final fact about this man is that though he had a business and though he knew what his business was, he didn't mind his business. His failure therefore was not the fault of his circumstances; it was the fault of his weakness; it was not the fault of his leaders; it was not the fault of his fellow soldiers; it was his own fault. He got so busy with the secondary that he forgot the primary. Now we ought to go right where he went wrong.

1. If I were young I'd mind my own business because that is the one big thing I can do. There are thousands of fine tasks that are beyond my reach. The other day a chap said, "I can do anything that anybody else can do." How profoundly false and how utterly silly. He could do nothing of the kind. There are hundreds of fine and otherwise tasks that are beyond the reach of my hand and yours, but there is one big something that I can do and that is mind my own business. There is one big something that you can do, you can mind your own business.

2. If I were young I'd mind my own business because that is the one big secret of successful living. If you mind your own business it will save you from meddling with the other fellow's business. If you will mind your own business it will keep you out of trouble--I mean the wrong kind of trouble. When Nehemiah came back to the ruined city of Jerusalem to rebuild it he was beset on every hand by enemies. Yet he weathered the gale and won through. This he did because he minded his own business. To all the voices that called him to turn aside he answered: "I am doing a great work up here and cannot come down." That is what the poet meant when he said: "Man's work is his life's preserver."
3. If I were young I'd mind my own business because it is the biggest thing that any man can do in time or in eternity. The best that Jesus could say for himself was this: "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." To have fully carried out God's plan in your life is perfection. That is what you are here to do. That is all you are here to do. That is all you are here to do.

When Simon Peter with others of the disciples came in one morning from a night of fruitless fishing, Jesus met them on the shore and served them breakfast. Then said the Master to Simon, "Follow me." Simon began well, but he hesitated. He looked back to his friend, John, with whom he had been associated for years. "What shall this man do," he asked. Seeming to imply, "I will follow if he will." But if he wont, I wont." To this Jesus gave a stern answer: "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." By which he meant to say, "Simon, mind your own business."

That, I repeat is something that anybody can do. It is something that enriches life. It is the best possible. In fact, it is all that is asked.

At the close of the first world war a young lieutenant with gold chevrons on his sleeve, I am told, was walking down the street in front of my church in Washington. With him was a young lady. They met another lieutenant who was known to the companion of the young lady. He therefore presented the officer with the silver chevrons. She asked her companion, "Why is yours of gold and his of silver?" "His is silver because he showed the white feather," was the ungenerous answer.

Now as you possibly know, gold indicated that a soldier had been across. Silver indicated that he had served at home. But the man who wore the gold deserved no more credit than the man who wore the silver. They had both obeyed orders. It is the business of a soldier of Jesus Christ to obey orders. To do that is perfect. If we do all else and fail in that we have failed. Every man has a business. Every man ought to know his business.
Every man ought to mind his business. The best way to begin it is here and now, to put your life into the hands of one who has planned for you, who knows where you will fit in, who is eager to guide and who loves you with everlasting love.
"Ramoth-gilead is ours, and we sit still and take it not." 1 Kings 22:3

These are the words of Ahab, the King of Israel. Ahab was never much of a man. Whatever force and initiative he originally possessed seemed to have been hemmed into him by his vigorous and aggressive wife, Jezebel. She was the power behind the throne and on it. She was strong and wicked. Under her influence Ahab readily became weak and wicked. So that the life of this king falls upon the pages of history as little more than a blot.

But here, for once, he is on the point of saying something really worthwhile. His rather flimsy soul is on the point of being fired with a really wholesome indignation. It is always a good sign when a man can be stirred to the right kind of anger. There is no surer sign that our moral nature is honeycombed to the point of utter rottenness than the lost capacity for righteous indignation. When we get to the place where we can see ourselves cheated of our spiritual birthright, when we become so calloused that we can see right trodden under foot of mine, and splendor riding on the bony shoulders of squalor without any resentment, then we are getting in a bad way. Even Ahab, small as he is, is here taking a forward step toward being a man. This is indicated by his indignation.

I.

What was the matter with Ahab? He is daring to face the fact that he and his people are allowing themselves to be frightened and bullied out of their rights. Here is a possession that is really theirs. "Ramoth-gilead is ours," he says. "We should be possessing it. We should be using it. We should be enjoying it. But we are not. The reason we are not is our own fault. It might be ours if we had the grit and the gallantry to claim it." "Ramoth-gilead is ours, and we sit still and take it not."

What then does Ahab advise? What does he want to do about it? He wants to start
a rebellion. He wants to throw off the gripping hand that is holding him back from claiming what is really his own. He wants to make war against the thing that is cheating him and robbing him of his rights. He is all hot and enthusiastic to start a rebellion. And we cannot but sympathize with him.

Now the world owes an unpayable debt to those who have refused to accept conditions as they found them. All our progress has come to us at the hands of those who have refused to worship the god of things as they are. We owe an unpayable debt to the rebels. In every generation, there come those who cannot accept conditions as they are. They rebel. They stage a revolt in an effort to change the situation that is, into the situation that ought to be.

Now rebellion has been one of the outstanding characteristics of this day. Every generation, as I have hinted above, has its rebels, but our generation has produced the most abundant crop of any generation for centuries. The changes that have taken place in America during the last quarter of a century are abundant enough to have been spread over almost half a dozen centuries. There is nothing we have not questioned. There is no tradition, no creed, no institution against which we have not been in rebellion. Standards that we felt were permanent and abiding as the everlasting hills, we have thrown into the ash can. Few generations, if any, in all history have been more rebellious than ours.

Nor is this rebellion simply characteristic of our youth. The idea that the youth of today is radically different from the youth of other days is emphatically wrong. The youth of this generation responds to the leadership of its elders pretty much as the youth of other generations. They are influenced by good and bad atmosphere just as others. Whatever of rebellion, either in the right or the wrong direction, that we find in modern youth, we find in an equal or greater degree in the generation that is just ahead. Certainly there is no evil that we criticize in the present generation that we cannot criticize with equal or greater truth in the generation ahead of it. This spirit
of rebellion belongs not to youth simply, but it belongs in some measure to all of us.

II.

The fact that ours is an age of rebellion does not mean of necessity that it is
the most spiritually progressive age that the world has yet known. While all progress
comes at the hands of the rebels, yet every rebellion does not make for progress.
Merely to rebel is not necessarily helpful. Some seem to believe that a rebellion is
a good in itself, but that is not the case. Whether to rebel is a curse or a blessing,
depends on the nature of the rebellion. There are times when rebellion is not only
futile, but it is a positive curse.

When is this the case? It works only harm to rebel when we rebel against what is
humanly helpful. There is operative in our universe what is known as the law of gravi-
tation. It is this law that holds the planets in their places, that keeps our world in
its orbit as it flies through space at an unbelievable rate of speed. It is this law
that holds us upon the planet instead of allowing us to be flung out into the infinite.
It is a good law, but some may object to it. But it is useless to rebel against it. To
take such a course is to lose. The law of gravitation will not argue with you, it will
 crush you.

Take the laws of the state. Since these laws are administered by imperfect human
beings, every criminal is not brought to justice. But as a rule, the man who is a rebel
in the state pays a terrible price. Our jails, our penitentiaries, our electric chairs,
tell us that the way of the transgressor is hard. It is the verdict of those who have
tried crime out that it does not pay. To rebel against a good law does not bring the
larger freedom, it brings slavery.

This same holds true in regard to the laws of health. It is a great thing to have
a healthy body. It is hard to work when one is ill. It is even hard to be religious
when one feels physically wretched. When Carlyle sought to excuse himself for being
disagreeable and hard to live with, he says, "What better could you expect from one who for fifty years had dyspepsia gnawing like a rat at the pit of his stomach." Of course, this is in reality not an excuse, but it does call for a more lenient judgment.

Now there are those who are born with delicate bodies. These are the folks that often live longest. To quote from Carlyle again, he declared that the way to live to be old was to be afflicted with some incurable disease when young. There is some sense in this. Those with delicate bodies learn the laws by which they must live and keep them, while often times the strong rebel against the laws of health.

But to rebel against the laws that govern healthy bodies is not only wicked, it is silly. It is down-right stupid. You would recognize that at once were I to tell you that I was going to quit eating and depend on the Lord to keep me alive. But we often think we can have our fling, cast off restraint, and be none the worse. I had a schoolmate strong of body and of mind who took this course. For a few wild years, he was a dissipated rake. But he quit. When he explained the reason for changing, he said, "Don't misunderstand me, I have not become a Christian. The reason I reformed, I just got tired of hurting." If one is to have a healthy body, he must be obedient to the laws of health.

Now this is emphatically true in the realm of the spiritual. What is it to be a Christian? It is in the finest sense to be healthy minded. It is to have a wholesome, sound, spiritual life. A life free from moral disease. How do we live such a life? Only in conformity to law. If you rebel against the laws of your physical health, you would become first an invalid then a corpse. If you rebel against the laws of your spiritual health, you would become an invalid till at last you would be utterly dead and—by trespass... This is not theory, this is plain fact. If all who have found it to be true would say "Amen," it would shake like an earthquake and boom like a cannonade.

Take, for instance, certain laws that we find in the Bible. Why were they written? Not to safeguard God, as we sometimes seem to fancy. God was not seeking his own protection. They were all written to safeguard you and me. Take the Ten Commandments. They are not popular, I know. If they were put to a majority vote, they would lose, just as
Did the Eighteenth Amendment. But to rebel against them is not only futile, but it is to cheat ourselves. This is true of all the Commandments.

Take the law of Sabbath observance, for instance. Why remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy? Of course, I am talking now of our Christian Sunday. It is not for God's benefit. "The Sabbath; Jesus tells us, "was made for man." That is, it fits into man's need. He cannot reach his best physically, morally, nor spiritually, without it. To rebel, therefore, against the Sabbath is foolish because we thereby cheat ourselves.

There is a widespread rebellion against the Seventh Commandment. Certain psychologists have warned us of the perils of its strength. They fear inhibitions more than they fear moral rottenness. Whatever is natural is right, they tell us. But when we read, "Thou shalt not" - what is God seeking? Not the protection of Himself, but the protection of your life and mine, and your home and mine. Human experience through the centuries has demonstrated that the man who disregards this commandment hangs the walls of his imagination with filthy pictures and sows his own pathway with thorns and nettles.

Today there is a widespread rebellion against marriage. How horrible to be tied to one man or one woman for life! Yet Jesus stood emphatically on monogamous marriage, "They twain shall be one flesh." The modern man says it is slavery. We must be free to marry when and whom we please. Therefore, we flit from man to man and woman to woman as a bird from branch to branch in a tree. But what are the results? Last week, a beautiful and charming young woman died in California. She was highly successful. She was worth more than a million dollars at her death. But in her short career, she had been married three times and as brilliant as was her success, she was even more conspicuous for her failure.

Now, face this question. Who gets the more out of a marriage relationship, those who marry from two to seven times, or those prosaic souls who tough it out to their golden wedding? If you prove to me that those who marry promiscuously find a larger happiness and make a larger contribution to their generation, than those who cling to each other for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, till death, then I would say
that Jesus has made a mistake. The rebel, therefore, in the marriage relationship is only cheating himself and in cheating himself is cheating society.

There is another rule. It runs something like this, "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." To me, that seems a beautiful dream totally impossible of realization in a world like ours. Suppose one should keep it? Why he would go the wall surely. I doubt it! But this I do know, that those who refuse to keep it cheat themselves and others. This is true individually, socially, nationally, and internationally. There is not a spot in the universe where a rebellion against this law does not cheat the rebel and his fellows as well. Therefore, to rebel against what is humanly helpful is at once futile, silly, and deadly.

III.

There are times when to rebel is a virtue. There are times when to refuse to do so is to rob ourselves and others. The tragedy of our generation is not that it is too rebellious, it is rather that so often we have rebelled against the wrong things. We have rebelled against our friends instead of our foes. Now, there are enough foes to take up all our time and we do well to rebel against them.

1. Our generation has had to assume a new attitude toward war. We have come to recognize this as not only a silly and senseless waste, but the most deadly foe of our civilization. This does not mean, of course, that we are necessarily better or wiser than our fathers. It does mean that by our actual experiences, we have been compelled to think. We have tested the value of war on a larger scale than was ever tried by any other generation. It has been weighed in the balances and found wanting.

For this reason, many of our wisest and best men and women everywhere are in rebellion against it. They are vowing that never again will they engage in or encourage others to engage in the business of mass murder. In almost every nation today, there are determined groups of pacifists. These are not folks that merely refuse to fight, they are actively engaged in making peace. It is heartening too that they are making them-
selves felt. This is evidenced by the fact that the nations have passed up more good opportunities to fight in the last six years than probably in the last six thousand.

2. If we have a bit of rebellion in our souls, let us turn it not only against war, but against all those conditions that make for war. At present, there is most costly strife among our own people. Capital and labor are at each others throats. It is impossible always to say who is right and who is wrong. The chances are they both are somewhat wrong. Each is trying to get the better of the other. I am not an economist enough to know how these questions ought to be settled but of this I am sure, peace within the nations and peace between the nations is not going to be permanent while one has almost everything and the other has nothing. Peace is a rare flower that only grows in the rich soil of social justice.

3. If we have rebellion in our blood, we ought to rebel against the foes that keep our church and the church as a whole from being as effective as it should be in the bringing in of the Kingdom of God. Now and then, I find those who have lost patience with the church, they say sadly, "The church is doing nothing, therefore, I am going to get out and quit it till it becomes as effective as it ought to become. I am going to have nothing to do with it."

But that is not the way to make the church victorious, it is the way to defeat it. If your business is not getting along as well as you would like, what do you do? You do not get out on the street and talk it down to everyone that you meet. You do not throw bricks through the windows and try to wreck it. You rather give yourself with greater diligence to it. Now the church is the one organization today whose purpose it is to bring in the Kingdom of God. It is not doing it as rapidly and as effectively as we should like. The way to help is to rebel against its lack of power and lack of concern by giving yourself with a greater enthusiasm to its high purpose.

4. Then, it would be wise for us to rebel against those foes that are robbing many of us individually. How many treasures are ours that we do not claim? How many fine
possessions belong to us that we fail to utilize. Many ramoth-gilead is ours, but we sit still and take it not. Glance at a few of them.

(1.) The privilege of prayer is ours. Prayer is a means of the enrichment of our own personal lives. Prayer opens the windows and doorways of our souls toward God. Prayer makes us channels through which the blessings of God may flow out to enrich other lives and no wonder Tennyson said, "Let your prayers rise like a fountain day and night, for more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." With-held prayer is a sin, according to the old prophet. "God forbid," he said, "that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you." But though this rich possession is ours, how few of us really claim it.

(2.) The church is ours. It is the best and oldest institution. It is of such worth that Jesus Christ gave His life for the building up of it, but multitudes today throw it away. They will not rebel against the indifference and laziness and spiritual blindness that keep them from claiming its privileges and facing up to its responsibilities.

(3.) Usefulness is ours. Whoever we are, whatever our circumstances, it is our privilege to be helpful. At our best, we all want to be helpful.

"Make use of me, my God,  
Let me not be forgot
A broken vessel cast aside
One whom Thou needest not.  
All things do serve Thee here,
All creatures great and small,
Make use of me, my God,
The meanest of them all!"

"Is there a man or woman in all the world," I asked a young chap the other day, "that can thank God for you?" He shook his head sadly and said, "No one." That is a confession that is literally soaked in tears. What is sadder than to have come and grown and gone and never to have known the majesty and the mirth of being helpful to somebody.

IV.

Now, if these treasures are really to become ours, we must claim them. That means
that we must surrender ourselves to possess our possessions. Ahab had sense enough to know that all that was necessary for them to miss Samoth-gilead was simply to do nothing. I was in a lovely home some time ago where there was an unusually well furnished library. As a lover of books, I looked about me with interest. I decided to see what the fortunate owner was reading. But though I took down book after book, not one of them had the leaves unfurled. The library was his, but he sat still and took it not.

"I passed by the field of the Sluggard," said the Wise Man, "and it was all grown over with weeds, and nettles covered the face thereof and the stone wall was broken down." This man owned a farm. It had the possibilities of waving corn and billowing wheat. It might have been a lovely garden, but instead it was a near wilderness. The farm was his, but he refused to possess it. He refused to make it his own. He sat still and took it not.

Every value that life holds must be claimed. God Himself cannot give us what we refuse to take. However, well-filled your table may be, unless you eat, you will starve. However great your opportunities, their usefulness for mental and spiritual growth, unless you utilize them, they will bring you naked nothing. It was the heartbreak of Jesus when He was here that men passed up the wares that He had to offer. He said then what He says still, "You will not come to Me, that you will have life."

But if we will stage a rebellion against our laziness, against our indifference, against our selfishness, against our sin, and claim our own, we can find the best for ourselves. We can also bring the best to our needy world and that is something that is worth fighting for. Sometimes, we give everything we have to get back so little in return. But the man who invests his all in order to enter into the Kingdom of God and to help bring that Kingdom throughout the world, no price is too great for that.

A few years ago, a farmer drove his wagon and team in front of the door of a little country store. He dropped the lines for just a minute to speak to the keeper of the store who was his friend. But that instant, his spirited team took fright and began to
run. By an almost super-human effort, he was able to seize the bridle of one of the horses and cling to it in spite of the fact that he was being pounded by the horses' hoofs and the tongue of the wagon. At last, he brought the team to a standstill down the road, but he himself was bleeding at mouth, eyes, and ears, and he was dying. When his friend came and held his head in his lip, he asked, "What did you do that for? The team and wagon weren't worth it." "Look in the wagon," the man gasped with his last breath. When they looked, they found the boy asleep on the bed of straw and nobody said that the price was too great. We are asked to possess our possessions not simply for the good of ourselves, but for the good of those of our fellows, for the good of our children, and for that, no price is too great to pay!
"TRAGIC FOLLY"
1 King 28:3.

"Know ye that Ramoth in Gilead is our's, and we be still, and take it not---".

The spokesman is evidently amazed. He cannot understand why either he or those associated with him should be guilty of such consumate folly. Here is a valuable piece of property that is all their own. They need it, it would supply real want, and yet with an imbecility it seems, entirely without explanation, they simply sit still and refuse to take it.

Not only is this man amazed, but he seems downright impatient. Ahab was never much of a man, but even he cannot look upon such utter fully without growing somewhat indignant. "Why in the world do you not do something?" It is enough to make one burn with real anger. "This piece of property is ours, it belongs to us and to no one else." "Ramoth in Gilead is our's, and we be still, and take it not." Suppose somebody should give me a lovely car, then I drive/in the garage and let sit there. When my wife and children want to go driving I refuse. When friends come and they want to show them over the city, I still do nothing. Would they not say to me in amazement and impatience and anger, "this car is ours, it was given to us, but we sit still and never use it! We allow the tires to rot and the machinery to waste away." Meantime it does us no good, nor is it any value to any one else.

I was in a home some time ago where there was a lovely library, but the books were not read, the leaves were not even cut. There was an excellent piano, but nobody played on it. There was a fine Victrola, but it stood idle. All these treasures belonged to
the inmates of that home, but they sat still and took them not.

Last fall I passed along a road, on either side of which were fields white with cotton, but in one of these fields there was not a single cotton picker. The cotton was mildewing and falling to the ground to rot. Now the owner of that field might have looked over it and said "all this wealth is mine, but I sit still and take it not."

PART I.

When Ahab made this statement, he realized that what we own amounts to little, it is what we possess that counts. It is what we appropriate. It is what we really claim.

1. This is true in the material world. The sluggard owned a farm, but he never really appropriated it. Therefore while other fields grew green with corn, while other gardens grew colorful with flowers, while other fields were golden with wheat, his grew up with thorns and briars and weeds.

Suppose I were able to corner the food market of the world, what good would it do me if I were not able to eat anything. Amidst all of my abundance I would starve. You remember that old miser who got locked up with his gold. He had treasures enough about him to last centuries, but he starved to death because he could not use any of it.

Years ago I met a charming young girl. She was vivacious and time did not stale her infinite variety. There came a time when I believed she might be mine for the asking, but suppose I had never asked. She would have been heart-broken, that is all. The best gift in the world goes for nothing if you do not possess it.
2. The same is true in the realm of the intellectual. We speak of giving our children an education. That is impossible. We may give them an opportunity. We may expose them to an education, but they must do the taking. If they allow their chances to slip by them, they will miss being educated, regardless of the merit of the schools to which they are sent.

Twenty years ago Ford might have swaggered about and said I have made a car that will outsell all other cars. So boasting he might have gone to the poor house. It was actually developing his possibilities that made him a man of wealth. It was claiming his own that made him such a blessing -- and such a curse to the world.

3. The same is true in the realm of the spiritual. It was the heartache of Jesus when He was here, that man did not want His wares. Not wanting them he could not give them anything. The agony of his cry of amazement rings across the centuries. "Ye will not come to me that ye may have life."

He told a story once of two boys. One of them was a reckless rake. The other stayed at home and worked, but the outcome of his toil was very meager and very disappointing. In fact it amounted to naked nothing. When he told his experience he said, "Lo these many years do I serve thee, and thou never gavest me a kid with which to make merry with my friends."

PART II.

What are some of the treasures that belong to us?

1. The bible is yours. You own it. You have paid your money for it. It lies upon your center table every day. It is within easy reach of your hand, yet you seldom reach for it. You own a bible but
you do not possess one. It is not really a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your pathway. This great Ramoth is yours, but you sit still and take it not.

2. The privilege of prayer is yours. There is not one single one of us but that has access to the Throne of Grace, if we so desire. God is within speaking distance of every man and every woman in the wide world, but comparatively few of us ever speak to Him. Yet, prayer is the supreme privilege of the human soul. Christ regarded it as His greatest treasure, but we be still and take it not.

3. Pardon is yours. When Jesus said on the Cross, "It is finished" he meant that a way of reconciliation had been opened between man and God. Every man can stand in the bright sunlight of the realization that his sin is forgiven if he so desires. Every man may shout with the joy of Paul, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Are you doing it? Pardon is ours, yet we be still and take it not.

4. Usefulness is yours. Is there a man in the world that can look you in the face and say "you have been a blessing to me."I have been brought closer to God by you." Jesus said that if we believed on Him, the works that He did we should do also. Are you doing them? He said that out of our inner life should flow living waters. Is such the case? Usefulness is ours. Power to bless the world and enrich the world is ours, yet to a large extent we be still and take it not.

PART III.

How are we to really possess our possessions. It is certain that we shall not do so by merely sitting still. Some of us have tried that out thoroughly. Nor are we going to do so by merely wishing, nor
with our criticism, nor with our whining and whims of fancy. If we possess our Ramoth we must take it. That is going to require at least three things.

1. We must think grandly of God. We must believe that He is able to give us power to fling away difficulties before which we now lie and whine.

2. We must think grandly of His Church and of ours, as His sons and daughters.

3. We must be willing to pay the price. We must make a business of our religion. We must actually put God first in our thought, in our time, in our giving. Doing this, we will enable both ourselves and our church to possess its possessions.

Is it worth the trouble. Why did that father give his life to hold a runaway team. They thought he had sold out too cheaply until they found his son was asleep on the straw in the wagon bed. The idea of the worth of the church and the worth of Christ that your children and mine carry into the world depend upon what we do here. It is worth while that we do our best.
THE HATED PROPHET—MICAH.

"But I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."—I Kings 22:18.

These are the words of Ahaz, King of Judah. He is talking about one of the leading prophets of that day—Micah by name. If it is true that a man is known by the company he keeps, it is no less true that he is known by the enemies he makes. Ahaz is not the worst king that Israel ever had, but he is bad enough for his hostility to be a recommendation rather than a condemnation. We know little about this hated prophet who was a contemporary of Elijah, but the little we do know makes us long to know him better. The man who stirred such enmity in the heart of that must have been a good and strong man.

In calling Micah the Hated Prophet, I am using a word that fails sufficiently to distinguish him from the other real prophets of the Old Testament. All of these men were more or less unpopular. All of them were hated with greater or lesser intensity. Some of the professional prophets managed to be quite popular. These were generally speaking subservient creatures who sought to say what was expected of them rather than what was true. They exercised a function akin to that of the modern fortune-teller, Santaclaus and gipsy-like people, therefore, generally held them in contempt. When, for instance, Amos was accused of being a prophet, he made an indignant denial: "I am no prophet," he declared, "neither a member of a prophetic order." But while all the real prophets stirred up enmity, it is of Micah alone that anyone says, "I hate him."

No Ahaz's hatred for the prophet expressed itself so evident from the scene before us. This is a high day in Samaria. Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, is
paying Ahab, King of Israel, a visit. Ahab makes up his mind that the great opportunity that this visit offers must not be lost. He therefore reminds his brother king that it has been three years since they have had a war with Syria. He seems to imply that they have been very foolish in remaining at peace so long. They must go to war at once.

Having thus made up his mind to fight, he is not lacking for an excuse. Given the will to war, a satisfactory pretext can always be found. There was nothing new in Hitler's ability to discover some kind of paper that entitled him to attack every weak nation that he desired to conquer. War-makers have been thus skillful through the centuries. Ahab gave his excuse in these words: "Ramoth in Gilead is our's, and we be still, and take it not."

It would seem that Jehoshaphat is just as eager to go to war as Ahab, but being a religious man he desires to know the mind of God about the matter. He is wise enough to know that to enter upon any undertaking that is contrary to the will of God would be at once foolish and futile. Therefore, after having expressed his willingness to go he adds: "Inquire I pray thee of the word of the Lord." With this suggestion Ahab is in hearty agreement. In fact, I am sure that he was expecting just such a request and had prepared for it. At once he calls in his professional prophets, some four hundred in number, and puts the question to them: "Shall I go up against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear?"

The prophets have a ready answer: "Go up", they advise, "for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king." The verdict is unanimous. There is not a single dissenting voice. Such emphatic agreement it would seem should have satisfied the most doubtful. But Jehoshaphat is not satisfied. There
but that someone else is doing their thinking for them. Therefore, he asks
Ahab a question that should have been at once a shock and an insult. "Is there
not here a prophet of the Lord besides", he questions, "that we might enquire of
him?" What an unreasonable question! I wonder that Ahab does not turn upon him
indignantly and ask: "If we cannot believe 400 prophets, how can we believe
401?"

But Ahab makes no such reply. Instead he gives this frank and honest
answer: "There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire
of the Lord; but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but
evil." Thus the King of Israel confesses that he does not really believe his
own prophets. He knows that they are saying simply what they have been told to
say. He confesses also that he does believe that Micaiah is a true prophet.
But in spite of his confidence, he makes this revealing confession: "I hate him,
when I have a great function like this I never embarrass myself by putting him
on the program." Thus Ahab showed his dislike for Micaiah by refusing him an
appointment.

II.

Why does Ahab hate this prophet?

You will notice that the King brings against him only one accusation.
He does not accuse him of being a man of bad character. He does not accuse him
of being disloyal. He accuses him of refusing to prophesy good concerning him.
You can see that Ahab wants Micaiah to be his own prophet rather than a prophet
of the Lord. He desires that he say what is expected of him rather than what
is true. In other words, Ahab desires a prophet that will agree with him even
if he has to lie in order to agree. Had he put an advertisement for a prophet
in the paper, it would have read like this: "Wanted - A Liar."

"How foolish!" we exclaim. Yet let us not be too quick to throw stones
at Ahab. Almost all of us are akin to him. I know there is a side of us that
loves the truth. If that were not the case, preaching would be in vain. There would be nothing in any of us to which the gospel could appeal. Even in the most false, there is some love of truth. But it is equally certain that there is a love of the opposite. In short, all of us like to be lied to.

This is the case for very obvious reasons. The man who says the complimentary thing whether it is true or not is, generally speaking, pleasing because he caters to our vanity. Years ago, I knew an excellent minister who had superlative skill in dealing out compliments. Sometimes I thought he went to extremes. His words would be as sweet as bonbons soaked in honey. Often he would take up from five to ten minutes before he began his sermon by telling his congregation how and why they were the greatest people that ever lived. When, therefore, a new pastor came who was not so skilled in the art of complimenting, one member made this indignant criticism: "He begins to preach as soon as he stands up in the pulpit." What a blunder!

So great is our love of being flattered that it is very hard for us to keep from being hostile to those who criticize us adversely however richly we may deserve it. And this, let me say, is true, not simply of the pew. It is, if possible, even more true of the pulpit. Sometime ago I heard a man say: "I don't care what anyone says about me just so he says it to my face." But I do, so do you and so did he. Nobody likes to be told unpleasant things. We may profit by such a trying experience. We may remind ourselves that faithful are the wounds of a friend. We may even forgive the one who tells us unpleasant truths but such criticism is always hard to take. It was doubly hard for Ahab because he was accustomed to being flattered all the time and by everybody.

Then Ahab desires to be lied to because such lying tends to confirm him in the decision that he has already taken. Of course, he has already made up his mind to go to war regardless of whether it is right or wrong. But he is human enough to want all the prophets to agree with him, especially this
rugged Micaiah in whom he has a grudging confidence. One sure road to popularity is to find out from those seeking advice just what advice is desired, then give it to them. That is one method that "How to Win Friends and Influence People" does not mention, but it is a good one nevertheless.

Finally Ahab is eager for Micaiah to lie to him, not only to build up his ego and to confirm him in his self-chosen way, but also to make him comfortable as he takes what is probably a wrong course. The King is not absolutely sure that he is making a wise decision. It would, therefore, be a real comfort for him to be able to tell himself, "Maybe this isn't right, but Micaiah, the prophet of the Lord, says it is." But Micaiah, in spite of the King's fondness for lies, insisted on speaking what he believed to be the truth. Therefore, he got himself hated.

We realize, of course, that Ahab's hatred for the prophet is unreasonable. Why should the King hate Micaiah for telling him the truth? By so doing he is assuming that the prophet makes the truth that he speaks instead of merely declaring what is true in the nature of things. If what the prophet says is false, his saying it will not make it true. But if what he says is true, no silence nor shutting of the eyes will change that truth into a lie.

Now since the prophet does not make his truth but only declares it, it is foolish to get angry with him for telling it. When the weather was very hot this summer and the thermometer stood at one hundred two, you did not try to find relief by breaking the thermometer. You realised that the thermometer did not make the heat, it only indicated its intensity. Years ago while driving along the highway, I heard a terrific pounding inside my engine. The car came to a dead stop. I discovered that I had burned out a cylinder. I discovered further the cause for this, my oil gauge registered empty. Upon this discovery, I did not take a monkey wrench and smash the gauge. I knew it did not empty my motor, it only told me the facts about it.
A few centuries ago, a certain astronomer made the daring declaration that our earth is not the center of the solar system. He affirmed that instead of the sun revolving about the earth, the earth is revolving about the sun. Such a declaration was an outrage. It was an insult to the scientists and a plain contradiction of the Bible. Therefore this reckless astronomer was forced to retract. But since his declaration did not start the earth on its course round the sun, his retraction certainly did not stop it. It is the height of folly, therefore, to resent the man who tells us the truth. If what he says is true, it would still be true had he never said it. But in spite of this fact, Micaiah had gotten himself heartily hated by his King.

III.

Now, due to the good offices of Jehoshaphat, Micaiah is to have another chance. Even yet he may win the King's favor. Ahab sends an officer to bring him to the meeting. This officer is evidently a friend to the prophet. He wishes him well. He regrets the fact that this good man has earned the King's ill will. Therefore, he urges him to say what the King desires to have said. He has some very sane and strong reasons to give for such a course.

"You ought to tell the King to go ahead with his adventure", he advises, "because that is what everybody else is doing. Why not go with the crowd? Why be a pitiful minority? If your position is called in question, you will have an answer. Simply say 'Everybody else did as I did'."

"But", he continued, "that is not all. You ought to agree with the King not only because everybody else agrees, but because to disagree will certainly get you into trouble. You are already in bad, but up to now the King has expressed his displeasure by merely leaving you out of things. He has not given you any calls or good appointments, but if you continue to speak your mind you will certainly get yourself into trouble."
Then he gave his final and most telling argument. "You ought to tell
the King to carry out his plans because to tell him anything else will do no
good. You know quite well that he has made up his mind to begin this war. You
know he is going through with it regardless of what you or any other prophet says.
Therefore, why speak your mind? Is it not sensible to be silent, when to speak
out will do no good?"

In reply to this appeal Micaiah makes an answer that reveals at once
his fine insight and the rugged stuff of which he is made. He states what is
the business of the true prophet and in a very real sense of every good man in
every age. "As the Lord liveth", he declares, "what the Lord saith unto me,
that will I speak." There we have it. It is not our business to agree with the
crowd. It is not our business to count noses before we take a stand. It is
our business to do the right as we are given to see the right, whether we stand
with the multitudes or whether we stand alone.

No more is it our business to stay out of trouble. Jesus had a very solid
conviction that those who followed Him wholeheartedly would get into trouble.
So sure was he of this that He said, "Woe unto you when all men speak well of
you." Those who insist on the easy way never find the right way either for
themselves or others. It is only as we are willing to bleed that we are able
in any superlative degree to bless.

Finally, we are not to excuse ourselves from speaking by telling our-
selves or allowing others to tell us that to speak will do no good. Here for
instance is a friend, to whom we should make an appeal for surrender to Christ.
But we refuse and ease our conscience by telling ourselves that it would do no
good. Or there is a popular evil against which we know we should make open
fight, but again we allow ourselves to play the coward by telling ourselves
that the evil would continue however bravely we might fight. But it is not
required of us that we win our friend to Christ. All that is required of us is an
honest and earnest effort. It is not required of us that we destroy any certain evil. What is required is an honest battle against it. In other words, we are not to be judged by our accomplishments but by our faithfulness. There it was not Micaiah's business to save Ahab. It was only his business to obey God. Undergirded by this conviction, the prophet was led before the King.

IV.

Look at the picture. It is an impressive scene. In an open space before the gate of the city, the two kings dressed in their robes of state are seated each on his throne, the one on the right and the other on the left. In the open space between are the four hundred prophets. By this time, they have worked themselves into an ecstasy. One of them, Zedekiah by name, has made himself a pair of horns by which he claims the King will press the Syrians until they are destroyed. Micaiah, I am sure, in spite of his goodness looks the group over, both the King and his prophets, with quiet contempt. Then he says, with biting sarcasm, "Go up to Ramoth-gilead and prosper."

Even Ahab is not satisfied with this answer. He knows that the prophet is not speaking sincerely. Therefore, he urges him to speak the truth. Then the prophet delivers his message: "I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd." Then he tells the King a story. The scene is laid in Heaven. God is asking who will volunteer to deceive Ahab. One proposes one plan, another another. At last, one proposes to be a lying spirit in the mouth of the King's prophets. At this the Lord answers, "Go, you will win." Of course, we are not to take this story literally. God never puts a lying spirit into any man's mouth. It is Micaiah's way of telling the King that his false prophets are lying to him and that his adventure will end in disaster.
"I told you so," said Ahab to Jehoshaphat, "that is the way he always does." Therefore, the King orders Micaiah to be locked up and fed with bread of affliction and water of affliction until he returns. Then he sets out on his adventure. But right how he will, he is possessed by misgivings. While Jehoshaphat goes to battle wearing his royal robes, Ahab disguises himself. But his disguise fails to work. "A certain man drew a bow at a venture," says the story. Perhaps this man had only one arrow left. He put it on the string and shot at no target at all. But the arrow reached its mark in the side of Ahab. Yonder are some wild dogs lapping up blood by the Pool of Samaria. It is rich royal blood. It is the blood of Ahab. He defied the will of God and met disaster. That is the story of every man who takes his course. Naturally we do not always meet disaster in the same dramatic fashion, but we meet it none the less.

How about the prophet? He spoke his mind. By so doing, he did not save the King. He only succeeded in getting himself locked up. But while Ahab could imprison the messenger, he could not imprison his message. While he could put the prophet in jail, he could not put in jail the truth he spoke. No more could he imprison Micaiah's character. The prison in which he languished has been dust for so many centuries that nobody knows where it stood. But there is one something in the ancient and ruined city of Samaria that the years have not destroyed and that is Micaiah himself. He still stands out above the ruins saying with bracing courage, "As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak."

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