Slander is an Art

Does Job serve God for naught? Job 1:9

The slanderer is a man who slaughters reputations. He is a killer of good names. Sometimes he does it brutally. He uses meat-axe methods or he resorts to that blunt instrument of which we hear so much. But there are other times when he does his wicked work with finesse and superb skill. That is the case with the Satan of this great drama. So adroit is he that he makes slander into what amounts almost to a fine art. Thus he is able to puncture every tire that Job has by the simple expedient of asking a question.

The scene is laid in heaven. It is not thought inconsistent by the author to introduce among the sons of God this personality, Satan. Of course Satan has been putting himself among the sons of God through the ages. Very few church officials attend services with the regularity of Satan. Therefore he is present here, not only so, but God singles him out to put to him this question—"Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil?" In reply Satan makes no denial. Instead, with a wink at those standing by, and with a touch of pity for God that he is so easily taken in, he asks, "Does Job serve God for naught?" Surely the one who perpetrated that shrewd bit of slander was no less than an artist at the job.

Part I

In his own opinion Satan is especially qualified for his task.

1. He is qualified in the first place because he is a much-traveled man. When questioned as to what he has been doing he answers that he has been going to and fro upon the earth. He is not a man of the cloister, but one who has been out in the big world. He has mixed with people. Having been
"where cross the crowded ways of life", he knows exactly what is going on. He can speak with authority on what everybody is doing.

2. Not only has he been everywhere, but he has seen everything. He has looked with keen eyes. In fact his eyes are so keen that he saw not only what was outward and visible, but what was inward and invisible. He has not only seen the deeds of men, but the motives back of those deeds. He is sure that he can see more through a stone wall than his fellows can see through a wide open door. Therefore he can speak with authority both as to what men are doing and as to why they are doing those things.

3. He is qualified by character. He is introduced to us as the Satan, the Adversary. That is, he is a part of the opposition. He is one who is in quest of the worst. Now it is true that whoever seeks the worst will find it. Of course it is equally true that whoever seeks the best will find that. Thus Satan seeking for the worst finds the worst, even in Job. He is therefore well equipped both by his travels, by his insight and by his character to be skilled in slander. Hence this shrewd questioning, "Does Job serve God for naught?"

Part II

Why is this question so shrewd?

1. It is shrewd because it attains all the weight of an assertion without incurring any of its risks. It is shrewd in that it is so safe. A slanderer who makes a positive assertion runs at least a two-fold risk. First, he is in danger of being detected. He runs the risk of being embarrassed by being caught in a lie. "Therefore," advises Satan, "If you are out to slander somebody, put your lie in the form of a question. Then you will be safe. Nobody can prove you are lying if you merely ask a question."

Not only is this safe because it does not run a risk of detection, but because it runs no risk of punishment. Sometimes the teller of a positive lie gets punished physically. Some years ago in my state a penniless young
chap was paying court to the daughter of a wealthy farmer. This farmer had other ambitions for his daughter, therefore he keenly resented the young man's attentions. He was all the more incensed because his daughter was responsive to this rather choice young beggar. In his desperation the father was accused of giving eager ear and even a bribe to a worthless chap who was spreading a slanderous story regarding this young man.

When the victim learned this he went to see the one who had lied for a price. The results were not very pleasant to said slanderer. Indeed, had he not had his picture taken before this encounter, his friends would never have remembered how he once looked. Thus when one tells a positive lie he often runs the risk of corporal punishment.

Even when he does not run the risk of physical violence, there still remains the threat of punishment by a court of law. I recall a very prominent citizen of our nation who a few years ago was accused of public drunkeness. The slandered man brought his accuser into court and proved his accusations false, with the result that the slanderer was not only embarrassed by being detected in a lie, but was further embarrassed by being forced to pay damages. But a question attains the same end as an assertion, but it is at the same time quite safe.

When I was a school boy I remember my old headmaster, Sawney Webb, came before the boys one morning holding for display what was then called a spring backed knife. It was a long bladed and rather savage looking affair. As he showed us this weapon, he commented on its merits. "Here", he said, "is a knife that one can wield without the slightest danger of cutting his own hand, but while it protects the hand of the wielder, it will cut the other fellow's heart out." It is even so with this question. It is shrewd in that while being as deadly as an assertion to his victim, it is quite safe for the slanderer.

2. It is shrewd in that it puts its finger on the acid test of the worth of any deed. No deed is either good or bad in and of itself. Its goodness or its badness depends upon the motive that is back of it. One
do about it. I might even be able to prove that your accusation was false.
But were you to question, then I would have no defense. This would be the
case because nobody but God can fully know my motives. Nobody but God can
fully know yours. Of course we can often make a fairly reliable guess. But
nobody can prove that my motives were either right or wrong.

Now since Job's motive cannot be proved to be right Satan could acknowledge every high claim that was made for Job, yet leave him guilty. "Oh, yes," he said, "I know Job belongs to the church. I know he contributes to the church. I know he helps the poor. I know he is on the right side of every question that comes up. I know that he is a pillar of faith and power in his community. I know that his words have kept men on their feet. I confess that everything you say about him is true. He does all that, but he does it from a wrong motive. He is doing it simply because he lives in a house on the avenue, he has managed to escape the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. If you stop paying him a big salary and stop serving him bon-bons, and furnishing him with Cadillacs, he will curse you to your face. He is a good man as far as the eye can see, but since his motives are wrong or highly questionable, then his goodness is highly questionable also." Thus Satan's question was shrewd in that it left Job without recourse.

Part III

Now just what was Satan after?

Since he majors on knowing the motives of others, perhaps he will not object to our examining his own. While, I repeat, nobody can fully know the motives of another, yet we can often make a shrewd guess. Circumstantial evidence can be as strong as that of an eye witness. For instance, some years ago the body of a man was found on a lonely road near my home. That body was fully dressed except the coat was missing. Upon investigation it was found that the victim had left a river landing in company with another man. That man was then wearing no coat. But when officers found him, he was wearing a coat. When they arrested him, they brought him before the sister
of the murdered man. She declared that the coat the suspected man was wearing was that of her brother.

Of course the next question was to prove it. How did she know and how could others know that she was not mistaken or deliberately falsifying? She replied, "I made the coat and in order to stiffen the lapels and the collar, I sewed into it a yarn hose of a certain color." And when they tore open the collar of the coat, they found the yarn hose just as the woman had described it. Upon that evidence the man was found guilty and was later executed.

What then is Satan after? It seems clear that he is seeking to disprove any goodness on the part of Job. While confessing every good deed that he has done, he implies that all is viciated by a false motive. Further, since Job, the best that God has to offer is not a good man, there is really no good man at all. Since no man is good, there really is no such thing as goodness. Further still, this bad man, since he pretends to be good, is an outrageous hypocrite. Therefore the very best that God and his saints have to offer is not only not good, he is the very worst of men.

Now, since there is no such thing as goodness, Satan is under no obligations to be good. That fact relieves him of all embarrassment. It ships him "somewhere east of Suez where the best is like the worst." He can now relax in his wickedness without the slightest compunction. Nobody can blame him for not being good when there is no such thing as goodness.

Of course in questioning the reality of goodness, Satan shows himself to be thoroughly bad. Whenever you find an individual who claims that every man has his price, you may know that that individual has his price. If you find one that claims that there is no such thing as honesty, you may know that the man making such claims is himself dishonest. If you find one who thinks that all men are bad, you can count on it beyond a doubt that the man making such a claim is bad. Satan is out to prove that there is no goodness and that such a thing as a good man is impossible.
THE DEVIL'S QUESTION

Job 1:9

In this marvelous drama the devil is present when a certain man named Job is highly complimented. "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" And the devil listens and there is a cynical smile on his face. It is a knowing, sagacious look that says as plainly as words: "How blind you are. How stupid of you to say such a thing. Job a good man! Ha! Ha! It's really too funny."

It is evident that the devil does not believe in Job. He does not believe in anybody. It is his firm conviction that every soul of us is wholly wrong. Every man has his price. That is his doctrine. He even believes that that is the case with the Divine Man. "And he took him up to an exceeding high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. And said, All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

But though the devil does not believe in Job he does not say right out that he is a plain unadulterated hypocrite. He resorts to the most cunning, and the most insidious form of slander that is known. Possibly you know, if that is.

The worst way to slander your neighbor is not to make an assertion about him. That might prove dangerous. In the first place if what you say is untrue you may be detected in your lying. In the second place, having been detected you may be called to account for your lie. So slander in the declarative form, while devilish enough, is not the most dangerous type of devilishness.

The devil made no assertion. He simply asked a question. That was subtle. That was keen. That was worthy of his satanic majesty himself. "Doth Job fear God for nought?" That is his question. And you may search the literature of the world and you will not find any question that is more marked with the spirit of evil than that. "Doth Job fear God for nought?" You see he does not make any assertion about Job. He dares do so later, but not here. He does not say Job is a hypocrite and a liar. He does not point to any specific case where Job has been untrue. He does not say, "I detected Job recently in the grossest of sin." No, had he so said, the falsity of his assertion might have been proven. He merely asked a question.

Not only does he show himself keen in the use of slander by asking this question, but he shows his keenness further by the nature of his question. "Doth Job fear God for nought?" The question is an admission of the fact that outwardly the life of Job is above reproach. Job is a member of the Church, all right. Oh, yes. He is liberal in his gifts. Quite true. He teaches a Sunday school class and serves on the official board. I admit it. He even has family prayer. That also I admit. "But here", says the devil with a knowing look, "is what you have not considered.- the motive of Job for doing this. What is his motive? 'Doth Job serve God for nought?''

Now the wisdom of questioning the motive of Job is just this. You can never prove that Job's motives are right. True you can not prove that they are wrong, but such questions can raise doubts in the mind of the man who hears them. Having heard you go your way saying: "Yes, outwardly he seems all right, a thoroughly upright, honest Christian. But doubtless he is acting from motives of pure selfishness. No doubt he is dominated by the same motives that dominate the pick-pocket and the gambler and the boot-legger. He is simply seeking his own ends."
You can see then the creed of the man who asks this question. He does not believe in the reality of goodness. He believes that all men and women have their price. And what effect does this creed have upon his life? What effect does it have upon your life and mine in proportion as we are gripped by it? To cease to believe in the reality of goodness is to excuse yourself for your sins, however vicious and loathsome those sins might be. Whatever you do it is what others are doing or would do if they were not afraid and you are no worse than the rest.

Do you neglect Christ and the Church? Do you allow others to carry all the burdens of Christ's kingdom? Do you refuse to enter into the kingdom yourself and forbid those who are entering in to enter? Well, that is all right. You are no worse than those who are in the Church, even the best of them. What you do you are doing from motives of pure selfishness. What they are doing they are also doing from motives of pure selfishness. Therefore your conduct is as good as theirs and very easily excused. Did you...
drive a sharp bargain with that widow and rob her of her small estate? Did you by a shrewd and rascally deal steal the patrimony of an orphan? That was all right. They were easy marks. They were suckers. If you hadn’t taken their money away from them somebody else would, so you might as well have had it as anybody else.

Did you win a girl’s confidence and her affections and play her false? When you had stolen her treasure did you fling her away? Nothing wrong in that. She was weak. She was a mere softling. She didn’t have a ghost of a chance in a world like ours. If you had not played her false somebody else would have. If you had not transformed your devilish self into her destroying angel somebody else would have done so. So it might as well have been you. What is the difference anyway? Are you in the boot-leg business? Why not? Men are going to have liquor some way, aren’t they? If I do not sell it to them somebody else will. Why shouldn’t I get the profits? And so we hear men speak today. And so many possessed with the devilish spirit lay back of this question talk again and again. For in proportion as you come to doubt the reality of goodness, in that proportion do you come to excuse yourself for your own sin, however base and inexcusable that sin may be.

Then just in proportion as we do not believe in the reality of goodness do we cease to struggle for it. Is there a bag of gold at the end of the rainbow? You heard so when you were a child. You half believed it. But though you love gold, when the rainbow comes you never go in search. I never find you struggling through the brambles and the brush, over hill and in vale after this famous not of gold. You would not go an inch out of your way to search for it. Why? You do not believe that it exists.

Years ago you had your ideals, you dreamed your dreams. God pity you if you did not. Do you have them still? Are you still a bit of a dreamer, or have you grown worldly wise and thrown them all away? Are you still struggling up the hill? Is the banner “Excelsior” in your hand? In spite of doubts, in spite of discouragements, in spite of defeats are you still struggling upward? If so there is infinite hope for you, because you still believe in the possibility of attainment. For if you do not believe in the reality of goodness you no longer climb, you drift.

Not only does this false faith kill our struggling toward the highest, it also kills our resisting power to what is evil. Things that were once wrong cease to be wrong to us. Things that once disgusted us lose their loathsomeness. Things that one made our very souls “leap to their feet, fire-eyed and defiant” now arouse no resistance at all. Do you hate sin as you once hated it? Do you resist evil as you once resisted it? If you do not you are in great danger. Beware of ceasing to resist the wrong and of ceasing to strive for the right, for your doing so means the decay of faith and the very rotting down of your own moral life.

Not only does this devil’s creed lead us to excuse our sin and to give over the struggle of the resisting of sin and the attaining of righteousness. It also tends to pamper our pride even while we stretch forth our hands to that which is most shameful and base. For if we do so are we worse than others? No, no worse. In fact we are better. We are at least candid about our wrongdoing. We parade our cancers and ulcers in the eyes of the world. We do not cloak our sins under a garment of hypocrisy. We are open and above board, and therefore better than our brethren, especially those who claim to be pious.
And as we grow in pride and self-conceit we grow in contempt for others, a contempt that tends to harden into hate. We become cynics. You know what a cynic is. It is derived from the Greek word that means dog. The cynic is an individual that snaps and growls and snarls. The cynic is a misanthrope. He is a man hater. He degenerates into a beast of prey.

In fact I know of no worse calamity that can be inflicted upon a home, or upon a community or upon a Church than to have to do with a cynic. He is the worst of highwaymen, the most dangerous of robbers. He robs you of the priceless coin of faith, faith in God, faith in man, faith in self, faith in goodness. And to be robbed here is to be robbed indeed. "He who steals my purse steals trash. But he who filcheth from me my faith takes that which not enricheth him, but makes me poor indeed."

Not only does the cynic rob of faith, but in so doing he tends to rob of all that is good. He takes fiendish delight in the moral failures of others. Such failures prove of value to his contention that there is no such thing as goodness. He would be glad to lead a victim into the paths of wrong if for no other reason than to beast up his argument that every man has his price. He is the worst of men, the bitterest enemy of God and humanity and the dearest ally of the devil.

"Dost Job serve God for nought?" Who is this that asks this question? It was not God. It was not one of the angels. It was not one of the saints. It was the devil. He is called here "the slanderer." Sometimes he is called "the tempter," the one that opens the door and invites to evil. He is "the serpent." He lies in wait. He stings. He poisons. Again he is called "Esaalshub," the god of flies, or the god of that which draws flies, which is filth. He revels in every form of moral filth.

And this we must recognize, that just in proportion as we delight in slander, in proportion as we make it easy to sin and hard to do right, in proportion as we delight in wrong and in the unholy, just in that proportion do we show ourselves the children of the devil. And the devil has many children. Jesus Christ recognized that fact. To certain Jews He spoke very plainly and said: "Ye are of your father, the devil."

How did the devil come to be? Here we are in the land of the unknown. But so far as the Scripture enlightens us upon the question he seems to have once been an angel. He rebelled and was cast out of heaven. And embittered by his disappointment he turned devil. Whether this is true or not, this much we know, that many people are made cynical through disappointment.

I used to know a woman down in Tennessee whose shame was known who paraded in the open street. Yet she had once been a respectable woman. She was engaged to be married. The guests were gathered. She had on a wedding dress. And a moment before the ceremony was to have been said a note came telling her of the unfaithfulness of the man to whom she had given herself. It broke her heart. She was half maddened by it. In her madness and in her bitterness she threw herself away.

A friend of mine said that he was sitting one day during the war in the office of a notable physician in San Antonio, Texas. A young woman still remarkably beautiful came to consult that physician. "After she was gone", said my friend, "I asked about her. And the doctor replied that she was suffering at the hands of one who had deceived her, and that maddened by her own suffering she had deliberately set herself to make others suffer. And she was sowing the seeds of damnation as fast and as far as it was in her
power to do so; cynical and devilish through disappointment, through being sore wounded.

What a tragedy when our disappointments turn us sour and bitter instead of driving us closer to God, who could kiss our tears into jewels and make us even the stronger and better and the more useful because we had suffered. Oh, if you are disappointed do not lose faith. Do not let it change the angel that is within your nature into a devil. That way is the way of disappointment and that way is the way to hell.

Then there are some who turn cynical through getting into wrong company. They run with a cynical crowd. They have a fancy that to doubt everybody is to show themselves worldly wise. By asking this devil's question they fancy to prove themselves to have been behind the scenes and to know what life is. They are no longer duped. They are men of the world, broad browed, and not to be taken in by any showing of virtue or goodness.

Poor deluded idiots. As if there could be a worse hell than the hell in which the cynic lives. He does not have to die to get there. He is there now. Just in proportion as you have lost faith in the reality of goodness, just in proportion as you have lost faith in God and faith in man, just in that proportion have you pushed your own feet into the flames of hell. Do you mind the greatest cynic in English literature? His name is Swift, Dean Swift. Children read his "Gulliver's Travels" with never a dream of the warm that gnawed the heart of him who wrote it.

Take the story of the Yahoos for instance. It is a charmingly written story of the visit of a certain man to the land where the people were so stupid that they had become the slaves of the horses. He was privileged to visit the king, who was a lovely dapple gray horse. He rode in a chariot drawn by Yahoos, the men of the island. And when he went to leave the king, he said that a great honor was shown him, an honor so great that he mentioned it with genuine reluctance. When he kneeled to kiss the horse's hoof in parting he lifted it halfway to his lips. That was what Swift thought of folks. And what sort of man did it make him? His laugh jars harshly upon us after all these scores of years. And those who knew him said that he was the most wretched man in the world. And when Thackeray, who admired him much, summed up his life he could only say: "An immense genius, an awful downfall and ruin. So great a man he seems to me that thinking of him is like thinking of an empire fallen."

Is there a cure for cynicism? Is there any remedy for this devil's leprosy? There is. Thank God there is, and that remedy we find in Jesus Christ our Lord. Well has it been said that the world's supreme anti-cynic is Jesus Christ. Other men have believed in God and have believed in men, but none have believed with the full-orbed faith of Jesus. He did not deny a man's sin, but he believed in him in spite of his sin. He believed that there were in him possibilities of perfectability. To this faith He clung and for this faith He died. And mark you, it was not a faith born of ignorance. He knew men to the uttermost. And utter knowledge with Him was utter and absolute confidence.

Come to Him, then, and He will transform this devil's spirit into a spirit of love and of confidence. That spirit of love and of confidence will increase ever more and more as you go forth to serve as He served. And as you trust people and believe in people you will find that they will measure up oftentimes beyond your dreams. You will find that love begets love and faith begets faith. Your wretchedness will give place to joy and
you will cease to look on humanity as a corpse that you are to dissect. You will rather look upon it, as another has said, as a wounded man by the wayside whose wounds you are to bind up and heal.
Does Job serve God for nought?

What a sane and seemingly harmless question. It fairly oozes innocence. Yet it was asked by the adversary. It came from the lips of the original cynic. A very clever chap is this cynic. He has been up and down the world along the roadways that men travel. He knows human nature. To him it is an open book. He is possessed of a keen eye. In fact he can see more through a stone wall than others through a picture window. Therefore he delights in showing up sham. He is even possessed of a keener eye than God. Therefore when God compliments a man by the name of Job, the cynic answers with a bit of a chuckle as he looks knowingly at his companions, "Does Job serve God for nought?"

Now I submit to you that, as a piece of shrewd slander, this stands at the very top. It is shrewd in that it is so safe. If I make a false assertion about my neighbor, it might involve me in serious trouble. Years ago when I was a boy, a great fellow of the baser sort accused a fine old farmer in our community of stealing a pig. It so happened that this farmer, while a very devout Christian, was not a complete pacifist. Therefore he went over to see this slanderer, asked him about his statement, and when he had convinced he drew from him the truth. He forced him to confess it, and also forced him to confess that he lied. Having done this, he asked him to name the men in the community to whom he had told his story. When he had named some, he concluded, "All right, get your horse. We will go to see them." So they went to see them man by man, and he forced the liar to tell each man that he had lied. It was quite a humiliating experience, and I am sure that he did not repeat the slander. Now this slanderer accused others after this. The farmer, however, had him hauled before the court where he was wrong was in making an assertion instead of asking a question. If he had only said, "Is this old gentleman honest? Is that the pig of some neighbor that he has in his pen?", perhaps nothing would have been done about it. But he made an assertion therefore it got him into trouble. Sometimes such assertions bring us into court. Sometimes we have to pay a fine for slander or for libel. But nobody was ever fined and few have been beaten up for simply asking a question or innocently seeking information. Therefore this type of slander is very shrewd in that it is safe. It may have the ferocity of the tiger, but it has the cowardly spirit of a jackal.

Second, this question is shrewd in that it is so sane. It puts its finger on the acid test of our conduct. What we do is not positive proof of what our character is. The final test is the motive back of our conduct. The scribes and the pharisees whom Jesus
rebuked so sharply had many good deeds to their credit. That which made their otherwise beautiful deeds ugly was that so often they were actuated by a wrong motive. It was this bad motive that made them like whitened sepulchres. The most seemingly beautiful deed becomes ugly if it has behind it a vicious motive.

Take, for instance, the kiss of Judas. Now the kiss is the tenderest caress that love knows. Suppose Judas had come in sincerity to kiss his Lord in the hour of his danger. Suppose when all others were fleeing, he had asserted his love and his courage by declaring, "I am standing by him even to the death, and I seal my loyalty with this kiss." Then Judas would have been one of the saints of sacred story. It was the fact that he took the most beautiful caress of love and used it for a false and vicious motive that has condemned him to an everlasting infamy.

Just as the most beautiful deed becomes ugly if actuated by a wrong motive, the most trivial deed takes on beauty if it is brought about through a beautiful motive. The petty gift of the widow would have been a shabby thing indeed but for the fine motive that prompted it. Years ago one summer day I sat talking to a country mother. The conversation was broken into by a little chap who came in and announced that he had bought his mother a bouquet. When he opened his dirty little fist, I saw in the palm of his hand a withered dog fennel blossom. Not much of a gift, but the mother saw the lovely motive that was back of it, and she took him in her arms and kissed his soiled face, and as she kissed him that little withered blossom became a rare orchid. This man is wise in that he puts his finger on the acid test of a good deed—the motive, and he questions the motive of Job.

Third, his slander is shrewd in that it is unanswerable. We cannot prove or disprove one's motives. If he had made an assertion,Job might have answered. But the shrewdness of the question consists in the fact that the questioner can confess every good thing that is claimed for Job and yet condemn him. "Truly," he said, "Job is outwardly decent; truly he belongs to the church; I confess that he is an official member in his church; I confess that he is liberal; I confess that his words have really kept men on their feet; all you claim for him is true, but I do question his motives. He is doing all this because he is getting a good salary for it. If I get that good salary, I would do the same myself." And nobody can prove just what Job's motives are, whether they are good or bad. Such a question is especially shrewd and devilish because it is unanswerable.
Fourth, then this question is a shrewd method of slander because it is so effective. Oftentimes it is quite as effective as an assertion. It was not necessary that Iago prove that Desdemona was unfaithful to her husband. All he had to do to wreck that home and to change a doting husband into a murderer was just to raise a question in the husband's mind. So often that is especially true of a Christian minister. In order for my influence and my usefulness to be wrecked, it is not necessary that my adversary prove that I am a hypocrite and a crook. All that is necessary is that he raise a question-mark in the minds of those whom I might seek to serve. It is to blast and to blight my usefulness. Here then is a way of slander that is especially shrewd and diabolical in that it is safe, it is sane, it is unanswerable, and it is effective.

II

Now, since this cynic is an authority in the realm of motives, suppose we consider his own. Of course, we cannot fully explain his motives, but we can make a very shrewd guess. Why does he come forward with this question? It is certainly not to help Job. It is certainly not to help Job's fellows. No more is it to help God. Why then does he ask this question, "Does Job serve God for nought?" He is evidently seeking to discredit Job. He is attacking the very best of men. He is rated by his Lord as perfect, that is wholehearted. Therefore, if this seemingly perfect man is not a good man, then there is not any good man at all. The truth of the matter is that there is no such thing as goodness.

Not only is Job, who claims to be the best of men, not really good, but he is worse than Satan himself. Satan does not pretend to be good. He is at least, he tells us, a hypocrite. When he wants a drink, he takes it openly. In fact, when he wants to get drunk, he gets drunk in the eyes of the world. He makes no effort to cover up his ulcers and sores and carbuncles. He is perfectly frank about his roughness. Therefore, as bad he is, he is far ahead of Job who claims to be the best of men and yet is only good because he is more selfish than Satan himself.

This brings us to the first real motive of this cynic. He believes that by tearing Job down he can build himself up. He does not look very well. He knows that he is a bit black, but if he puts a blacker man to stand beside him, his blackness will not be so imposing. Now Satan is quite shrewd, but he is stupid enough to believe that by blackening no man can break his own house by tearing down his kingdom.
the name of another, he can whiten his own. What a tragedy it is that we have not
learned better. And yet, some of us have not. We still have a queer conviction that
for another to be complimented highly in our presence is a bit of a slap in the face.
And some of us still feel that to have one of our fellows torn to bits seems to enhance
him. There is no such thing as goodness, and yet it is a stupidity from which recovery
seems very hard.

A second motive of this cynic is to relieve himself of all moral responsibility.

Since the best of man is not good at all, since there is no such thing as goodness, then
the cynic is without any moral obligation. There is nothing in his soiled and ugly yester-
day for which he needs to repent. There are no weighty obligations driving him to help
serve either today or tomorrow. Since there is no such thing as goodness, why try to
help to be good? Let us join that other cynic in Ecclesiastes in saying that the
crooked can never be made straight. Therefore, let us all get drunk and forget about it.
Satan is seeking to build himself up by tearing another down. He is seeking also to
relieve himself of all moral obligation.

III

Now we misread our own hearts if we do not recognize the possibilities of the cynic
in all of us. We all have the capacity to act in some fashion as Satan did in our story.
How shall we conquer this evil and ugly thing? Because it is evil and ugly in anybody
else, it only becomes shrewd and clever in ourselves.

The first step, I think, is to question our own motives sometimes. Not when we are
seeking to do a good thing. I think it is quite easy to become too introspective. And, in analyzing your motives, if you feel moved to help somebody, if you suddenly shout "Fire",
I am not going to stop to analyze my motives before I make an effort to escape. And if you
feel moved to do a kindness or to speak a helpful word, do not go too much into your motives
before you do so.

But there is a time when asking yourself for your motive might be very wise. For
instance, there is a hurtful piece of gossip that has just come to your ears. The telling
of it could not help anybody in the world. It could only hurt. It could only bring shame
and tears. Then, before you pass it on, it would be well for you to ask, "Why tell this?
Why is there any desire in my heart to tell it?" And the chances are, if you will ask
that question, you will discover that your motives are not angelic, they are inclined to be satanic.

How then, I repeat, shall we conquer this devilish something? We need to take God's view of our fellows. We need to take the view that God took as revealed in Jesus Christ. How did Jesus look upon men? He cherished no illusions about it. He knew what was in man. He declared that he had come to seek and to save that which was lost. But though he recognized the grim cancer that gnawed at the heart of humanity more fully than any other has ever done, yet there was nothing of the cynic about him. He believed in man with a faith that nothing could kill, not even a denial, betrayal, or crucifixion.

Knowing man to be a sinner, he believed with a faith unshakable that he might be remade, that he might become a saint. He believed what John put into words, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." It was just this unconquerable faith in men that enabled him to do for men what no other man has ever done.

Generally speaking, the measure of a man's power to help his brother is the measure of the love in the heart of him and of the faith that he has that at last the good will win. And many times, the greatest service we can render any fellow being is to believe in him. Some of you who are listening to me recognize that out of your own experience. How many times I have been strengthened, how many times I have been helped by the faith of those in me whose faith exceeded my own in myself. In truth, I doubt that I would have continued in the ministry if it had not been for the undergirding faith of the friends that I have known along the way.

Recently I was reading a biography of that great physician, William Osler. There may have been others who were as wise in diagnosis as he. There may have been others who could have excelled him in some branches of medicine. But there was one respect in which he was superb, and that was in putting heart and hope into the despairing. People afflicted with seemingly incurable disease would often rise from their beds of hopeless illness to take their places of usefulness in the world, not because of any medicine that this great physician had given but because by believing in them and their possibilities of recovery, he had led them to believe in themselves and thus to conquer.
In this book, one of Job's friends said to him, "Thy words have kept men on their feet." Well, that has been my experience and mine...The words of some friend. What kind of words? Not the words of questioning, not the words of cynicism and doubt. They have been words of confidence. We ought to be so busy in saying the helpful word, the word that would lead to a larger confidence in God and to a larger confidence in our possibilities to win, that we would not have time for the cynical word. The cynic may be clever but he is never helpful. It is never said of him, "Thy words have kept men on their feet." Many a time the greatest service we can render a human soul is to believe in him. The more we share the spirit and view of Jesus the more completely we will see in ourselves that tendency to cynicism that can only hurt us and hurt others. May God grant that we may receive of His fullness that we may conquer this devilish tendency.
There is a Reason

"For affliction does not come from the dust, nor does trouble sprout from the ground". Job 5:16

With these wise words Eliphaz seeks to meet the need of his suffering friend. Job is in utter agony. His physical suffering is terrible. Pain walks with fiery feet along every nerve of his body. He is suffering yet more because of his grief over the graves of his sons and daughters. But he is suffering most of all through the shattering of his faith. Now that the rains of trouble have come, that the winds of adversity are blowing, his house of conviction is falling into ruins.

His had been a snug and comfortable faith. He was sure that a good God was ruling his world. He was sure that this good God was almighty. Since this God was good and all powerful, he was naturally sure that every evil man and every evil deed would meet its just punishment not in some far off to-morrow, but in the here and now. He was equally sure that every good man and every good deed would be rewarded, not to-morrow, but to-day.

But this comfortable faith was being torn to shreds and tatters, not simply by the arguments of his friends, but by the rude facts of experience. Job refused to lie to himself. He knew that he had been a man of integrity. He knew that he had lived in all good conscience up to this hour. He was too honest to play at being penitent when he was not. But in spite of his good life, he was even now suffering dreadful pangs of hell. Since he saw his faith contradicted in his own experience, he dared to look at the lives of those about him. When he did so he discovered that good men did not uniformly prosper. He saw

See 2 Tim. 4:6-9.
further that bad men did not always go to the wall. Some of them grew old in their prosperity and were carried to graves in honor.

This fact once left Job perplexed and bewildered. It put him in a kind of lawless world where nobody knew what to expect. He, himself, seemed to be the victim of a God who was as capricious as chance, itself. As wicked men sometimes prosper, as good men, like himself, fail to prosper, his suffering became meaningless. There was no high purpose in it, there was neither time nor reason.

It is never quite easy to suffer. But it is much easier when we have what seems a justifiable reason. But this consolation was denied Job. I was told years ago a distinguished and very busy and weary surgeon who had two patients to operate. One had a minor disease, the other had a disease that made an operation very doubtful and dangerous. Somehow this weary man got these two patients confused. He operated the woman with the minor disease for the major with fatal results. The woman died. Two years later he was to perform an operation on a man. The operation was always the harder when the results were more doubtful and dangerous. Somehow the weary man got these two patients confused. He operated the woman with the minor disease for the major with fatal results. The woman died through a mistake. How hard for this physician to explain her death to those that loved her. Even so, Jobs major operation seemed no more a mistake than a beneficence on the part of God to make this more than a mix-up, a divine mistake. Now it was to this bewildered and broken man that Eliphaz spoke.

Part II

What had he to say?

A part of his answer is quite true and quite wise. "Affliction does not come from the dust, nor does trouble sprout from the ground." You are not suffering, he declares, "at the hands of blind chance. You are not suffering because you live in a topsy-turvy land where there is no law. Indeed you are suffering for the opposite reason. Your pain is born of the fact that you live in a world where there is law, where affliction does not accidently come from the dust."
"Then you are suffering, he declares wisely, " because ours is a dangerous world." He puts it this way, "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." That does not mean that we are going to meet with trouble, or that we are not to seek to avoid it. It rather means that trouble is to be expected in a perilous world like ours. Therefore, if you suffer, such suffering should not be a surprise.

Of course neither Job nor ourselves were consulted as to whether we should like to be born into this kind of world. But suppose you had that choice. Suppose as a representative of this visible world I could sit down and talk the matter over with you before you made your decision. I would have in all honesty to tell you that being born in this kind of world was a risky business. If you dare such risks you might get your shipwrecked. You might get your face wet with tears. You might get your heart broken. Even then if I were fair with you I would tell you there are compensations. If you are brave enough to run the risk you might have a chance of loving and being loved and of greatly serving. But make your choice in the light of the fact that ours is a dangerous world.

But bear in mind that ours is a dangerous world. When Jesus taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation", he was not encouraging us to believe that there was some cloister where we might bolt the door against temptation. He was not encouraging us even to believe or seek some lofty heights where the atmosphere was too pure for temptation to breathe. There is no such height. Jesus himself was tempted in all points like as we are. He is rather telling us how we are to face temptation. We are to face it in reliance upon God. "Watch and pray", he said to his disciples in the garden, "that you enter not into temptation." They were to watch and pray not that they might escape, but that they might
find victory.

But

the supreme reason for the suffering of Job, according to the conviction of his friend was that Job had sinned. As the men of his day he was sure that all suffering was born directly of the sin of the sufferer. Now while it is true that all sin does eventuate in suffering, while it is true that sin always finds the sinner out, it is not true that every man's suffering is not born directly of his sin. Jesus made that plain in his dealing with the man born blind. He declared that his blindness was due neither to his own sin nor to the sin of his parents.

This is not to say that much of our suffering is not the results of the operation of the law of sowing and reaping. I dare-say that the majority of the suffering that has come to this world has come through man's wrong choices. Toynbee tells us that if we go through the cemetery of dead nations we shall find that they did not die from lack of a proper economic set-up, they did not die for lack of man either an army or a navy. They died for lack of character. They died mainly because of their own wrong choices.

alone but to others as well

But there are other causes of suffering of which Eliphaz had no knowledge. For instance we often suffer because of our ignorance. As a lad I had one day a great game along with other boys of fox and hounds. I was one of the hounds. I ran till I grew very warm, then I removed my heavy winter coat and sat down to rest. The result, next morning, I had pneumonia that resulted in quite a flirtation with the undertaker. There was no moral blame to my sickness, I was suffering as a result of my own ignorance.

Years ago there would come epidemics that would desolate whole populations. They were called "acts of God." But they were not in reality acts of God. They were born rather of man's
failing to act in accordance with the laws of sanitation. Men suffered as they suffer still from ignorance.

Then there is an ignorance that is even worse because it has an immoral taint. We are to blame for the suffering that comes as a result of our ignorance if we might have known better. When Simon Peter reminded those who had helped or consented to the crucifixion of Jesus that they had acted in ignorance, he was not excusing them. Their ignorance was deliberate. They did not know because they had shut their eyes and stopped their ears to the truth. Therefore they suffered as a result of that ignorance.

Then we suffer because we are bound up in a bundle of life with others. When Ulysses said "I am a part of all I have met", he was speaking sober truth. That fact was never quite so evident as it is to-day. As nations we are a part of each other. That nation would be mad that could hope to be free and independent and prosperous while other nations were oppressed, dependent and impoverished. As nations, we are a part of each other.

As this is true of nations it is equally true of differing groups within the nation. Every group, be it ever so small a minority, can make a worthwhile contribution to our well being if given a proper chance. Every group can hamper and hold back if not given a chance. Therefore nothing could be more stupid than to claim rights for ourselves as a majority that we denied to the minority. We can no more unhitch ourselves from these than we can from our own shadows. Whether we shall be a part of them is not a matter of choice. The only choice we have is in whether we shall so accord them as to make them a source of building or make them a source of weakness and disintegration.

Then there are those who suffer because of their own choice. They take upon themselves the burdens of others. It was the making of this choice that caused Jesus to be a man of sorrows and
acquainted with grief. It was through his own decision that he was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. In the power of his spirit, heroic souls have suffered for others across the centuries. In bearing one another's burdens they have fulfilled the law of Christ.

Here is a distinguished Scottish physician, Joseph Bell, by name. He is said to be the original Sherlock Holmes. One day the little daughter of a poor man was brought to the Royal Infirmary. She was suffering from the deadly, dangerous disease, diphtheria. An operation was performed but the distinguished physician saw that the patient would likely die unless the deadly poison was removed from her throat. At that time there were no instruments that could be used for this purpose. Therefore this physician put his own mouth to that of the little child and drew out the poison. Thus he bound himself in a bundle of life to the poor man's daughter.

There are other types of suffering still for which we have no full and adequate reason. So far as I know nobody can tell fully the beneficent results wrought by such hurricanes as we have had in recent weeks. We do not yet know just the good of disease germs. There are many heartaches, tragedies and disappointments for which we have no adequate explanation. The reason lies beyond our human sight. Maybe in the land of further knowledge, we shall understand.

Part III

But if the reasons that Eliphaz gives of Job's suffering are not all together adequate, he is surprisingly wise in his direction to his friend on how to handle this suffering. Naturally he does not see as clearly as we who are enlightened by the New Testament. We know now that it is not what life does to us that is finally significant. It is the response we make. Two people can go through an identical experience, one will be impoverished by it, and the other enriched. The directions that Eliphaz gives are quite wise.
"As for me I would seek God and to God I would commit my cause."

That "As for me" sounds a bit self-righteous, yet what follows is thoroughly sane. To commit one's cause to God is the height of wisdom whether in Job's day or in our own. It is the only way that we can possibly meet the tragedies of life and win a clear victory.

Eliphaz urges his friend to commit his case to God because of God's amazing adequacy. He tells them that he will deliver him from six troubles and even from seven. By this he is declaring that God will deliver him constantly, continuously. Of course the deliverance of which Eliphaz is thinking is not so much as that which is offered to us. He is affirming that God will keep Job out of trouble. But that God does not promise to do. Job was already in trouble.

What this deliverance means to us is this. Not escape from trouble, but power to meet it and use it in the fellowship with God. He does not promise that we shall not ever give in to any fiery furnace. He does promise that he will walk with us in the midst of the fire. Not only so, but that through that experience we shall come to a wealth that could have never been ours without such a trying experience. He does change our want into wealth and our tragedies into triumphs.

One reason for this is not far to seek. Somehow most of us do not turn heartily to God unless we must. It is only after we have gone to our own cupboards and found them utterly empty that we turn to our Friend for help. It is only as the hands of a great need grip our shoulders and press us to our knees that we really pray in dead earnest. Therefore this man, even in that day, said truly, "Happy is the man whom God reproves". Whoever finds God at any cost, never pays too great a price. To such a one all God's resources are available. The very stones become his allies. All
nature fights on the side of the man headed toward God.

To-day I may bespeaking to one who is suffering. You may know the reason for your suffering or you may not know it. But whether you know or not, this is surely true. If you meet it within the will of God, it will work to your good. Sometime ago I stood by the bedside of a once vigorous young woman who had been wrecked by a car. She was blind, she was paralyzed from the shoulders down, but she was unbelievably radiant. When the nurse whispered to me, "She is in utter agony every living moment," her face became more radiant still. Then she said this amazing word, "As I lie here and suffer, I catch myself wishing that I might bear the pain of others, I have learned so well how to handle it." That is a miracle that nobody can work except a living God.
My friends disappoint me like a stream,—disappearing in the summers

glow. Job 6: 15-17 (Moffat)

"My friends disappoint me." On the lips of a man whose one thought was
of what others owed him rather than what he owed to others, this word would
be little more than a wail of self-pity. But on the lips of Job, they take
on a deeper and darker meaning. This is the case because Job was a man of
a generous and roomy heart. For him, to live was to give. "Deeds of
week day holiness" were constantly falling from his hands, wherever he went.
Withered souls bloomed in the newness of life like flowers in a well watered
garden. But now that his own black hour has come upon him, he justly feels
that his friends have let him down.

Part I

Why did they fail him?

It was not because they had no eye for his need. There are those who
seem possessed of a strange blindness to the sufferings of others. Sometimes
they are too busy, sometimes too selfish and cowardly to face such ugly facts.
Thackeray makes the cutting criticism of Swift by telling him that the two
women that loved him, Stella and Vanessa, both died near him, but away from
him. He did not even have the courage to see them die.

When the priest and the Levite were put on trial along with those
brigades who robbed that defenseless man on the Jericho road, I can imagine
their attorney put them on the stand to testify in their own behalf,

"Did you see the wounded man?", he questions the priest. "I saw
somebody who looked as if he were wounded", came the answer. "Did you
go to his assistance?" was the next question. "No", said the witness. "Why
not?" his attorney continued. "Well", he replied, I thought the chap was
shaming, I was sure that he could go on his way in his own power if he were
so minded. I believed this so strongly that I did not even take time to
investigate. I was in a hurry, so I failed to see him as he really was."
The Levite gave a similar testimony. He confessed that he passed along the road that day, that he saw the wounded man. He also confessed that he made no effort to help him. His reason was not that he thought the chap was shaming, but that he thought he was beyond help. "I, too, was in a hurry, so I did not take time to investigate." Neither of these men quite dared to face the ugly facts. But this was not the case of the friends of Job. They were clear-eyed to their friend's agony.

If they did not fail because they refused to see, no more did they fail because of indifference. When they knew of the deep need of their friend, they went into action. They paid him a visit, that was good so far.

It seems that our Lord set a great premium upon visiting. He told of a certain humble-hearted man who was taken completely by surprise at the richness of his reward. When he confessed that he did not understand why he was receiving so much when he had given so little, this was the answer of his Lord: "You visited me." Of course the one who had been really visited was the nameless nobody, but that was all the same since there was the reply: "I was the one who received 

"as much as you did unto one of the least of these, you did it unto me."

Not only did these friends visit Job, but they so suffered with him that they sat for seven days and nights sharing his suffering in utter silence. Had they not spoiled this fine record, they would have been immortal. But at last they broke into a hurricane of talk. Thus they spoiled everything I have an idea that as many who have visited the sick since that day—they have stayed too long and said too much, and what they said was more harmful than helpful in spite of the fact that they were earnestly seeking to help.

If they then did not fail because they were blind or because they were indifferent, why, I repeat, did they fail? They failed because of inadequate resources. When our plumbing got out of fix sometime ago, we sent for the plumber. He made us a very prompt visit, but he was just as prompt in leaving. He did not have the proper tools with which to do the work.
Even so, these eager friends were disappointed. It was disappointing as a stream that had run dry. That word 'dry' is one with which we of the churches are familiar. It is generally intimately associated with ministers.

Did you ever hear of a dry preacher? A young fellow said the other day, "I wouldn't dare strike a match in the presence of my pastor." Yes, we ministers are sometimes accused of being dry, and sadder still—often enough the charge is true.

But while this is not so, this is in every circumstance, I must say that we ministers do not have a corner on dryness.

There is such a thing as a dry congregation. Ezekiel faced one once. "There were very many in the open valley; and lo, they were very dry." He had faced congregations that were so filled with life that preaching was a luxury. He had to face others that were so dry as to force him in despair to make others that made him cry in desperation, "Oh wretched man that I am!"

Indeed, there are congregations that can dehydrate a minister except for the help of the Lord. These friends then failed because they lacked adequate resources for the demands that life made upon them.

Part II

Now the failure of these friends was sheer tragedy. That is true for us as for them.

Their failure is tragic in the first place because, it hurts, those whom we might help. Job was not the better for the earnest efforts of his friends. He was worse. One day, a father came, all eager wistfulness, to Jesus, seeking help for his afflicted son. It so happened that the Master was away. And there was not anything done. The disciples were not able to heal the boy. But they failed so miserably that they all—but they destroyed the faith of his father. They so put out his light, that his one-time certainty had dwindled almost to darkness. The best he could say, to Jesus when he came was a big "If." "If you can, do anything at all!"

Not only did these friends fail Job, they failed themselves. They missed the joy and strength that might have been theirs if they had
measured up. They same was true of those disciples to whom we have just referred. The same is often true of us. There is something very painful in the realization that one has failed in something to which he has given, is in facing a need that we long to meet but cannot. We, ourselves, go from the need to understand that these through human error have been made weaker and more helpless. The more we help the more we can help. Here it is to help is to non-return. We have been told, at last, to face it, that we certainly true. "To whom that hath shall be given, but to him that hath not shall be taken away even that he hath." But their failure reached its climax in the fact that it was so needless, so unnecessary. To fail and disappoint is bad enough when it is so we must forget the anguish of a draft. We can all of us have such experiences. We cannot look back to this hour without a pang. In fact, our most torturing memories often times is not the harm we did, but the good we failed to do.

"I never cut my neighbor's throat,
My neighbor's gold, I never stole,
I never spoiled his house and land,
But God have mercy on my soul.
For I am haunted night and day
With all the good I have not done

O unattempted loveliness, O costly valor never won."

Many years ago, a company of eager children were standing about a Christmas tree in our village church. Among them was a youthful half-wit. He watched, dumbly, as the happy children unboxed presents and the smiles that flashed about him. At last, Santa Clause took down the largest package from the tree and called the name of our village half-wit. The poor chap seized it eagerly, untied it with stubby fingers that shook with excitement. But when he lifted the lid, the box was absolutely empty. Somebody had committed an act of sheer devilishness. We are hanging presents on the Lord's Christmas tree, each of us. The presents we hang are the lives we live. Some lives are all but empty. That fact is tragic enough in itself, but it becomes all the more poignant, of course, the more we have hung for her by our needles so bright, beautiful and simple. The story that may just have been cropped or not related at all, though.

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Part III

How then can we win where the friends of Job lost? How can we be adequate to life's demands?

Of course we are far more richly blessed than were these friends of Job. We come to our opportunities with a New Testament in our hands. Thus armed we ought to be adequate, to life's demands.

We can follow the example of these disappointing friends. We too can visit those in need. I know a visit can be a very cheap and meaningless affair, but it can be as meaningful as the remaking of a life. What a visit that was that Jonathan made to David when his friend was under the frown of the king! David was destined to wear the crown that everybody thought belonged to Jonathan. Nor would Jonathan have had to commit any act of violence to win that crown. If he had only let David alone in his black hour, David might have cracked up. Then Jonathan would doubtless have reigned in his place.

But this devoted friend, fearing that David might fail, paid him a visit. He went to him, says the record, and strengthened his hand in God. How utterly foolish for that generous man to uncrown himself. But we may be sure that he received another crown in its place, one that fitted his heart as well as it did his head. I daresay he still wears it in the land of eternal youth.

On the streets of ancient Rome one day I imagine I ran into that man with the ugly name, and the beautiful heart, Onesiphorous. After we had greeted each other, he suggested that we pay Brother Paul a visit. Thinking that the apostle was still living in his own hired house, I readily consented. But when we reached his one-time home, we were told that he was living in some had house to become a priest. Nor did he die without one of the prisons of Rome.

Not knowing just what prison Paul was in, we set out to make the rounds. Not finding him, I told my friend that I had some pressing business on which we had been engaged.
to look after and that we should do well to quit; since we had tried to find him and had failed. But my stubborn friend would not hear to it. So I left a little from the place I had failed to find it, and I went him to his silly quest. Later I read with mingled joy and shame, this word, "The Lord grant mercy unto the household of Onesiphorus, for he oft refreshed me; and not only to myself, but also to all the household of his. But my stubborn friend would not hear to it. So I left him to his ailly quest. Later I read with mingled joy and shame, this word: "He was not ashamed of my chains, but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me eagerly and found me." I read further: "I have not found my name., Rut it was not there."

But it is not only necessary to visit, but to have something to share. The first step toward giving is receiving. It was my privilege to live as a boy on one of the most beautiful streams that ever made poetry of its silver flow in the mountains of mind. In the clearest days of birth, journey toward the sea. That stream is constantly giving. It gives beauty, it gives laughter, it gives life and power. How does it manage? It is constantly receiving from the vast resources of the hills.

Here is a word from Jesus, "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink". We can do little in inducing others to drink of the water of life if our own lips are parched. Those to whom we speak will be eager to know whether we met victoriously in our own lives enough if the faith we commend has worked out for ourselves. People constantly ask that question put to Daniel in the long ago, "Has your God whom you serve continually been able to deliver you?" Have you found what Jesus promised to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? "I have received of the fullness of his life, in the spring of water welling up to eternal life," there is Gold for an inside spring.

Now having thus received, we shall have something to give. Having thus drunk, our Lord promises that out of our hearts will flow rivers of living water. Thus we shall become channels through which God's amazing love and mercy may flow out to others. We shall give consciously. We shall help when we are seeking to help. We shall also give unconsciously. We shall give by the grace of God, full of joy in the spring of our lives, what we are. There will be a naturalness, a spontaneity about our giving. Then we shall give constantly.

Listen how John explains the amazing difference that knowing Jesus has made in his own life and in the lives of his fellow Christians: "Of his fullness have all we received." They have received of the fullness of his life, they have received of the fullness of his enthusiasm for others.
had received of the fullness of his joy. They had also received of the fullness of his power to help. They confronted life with an amazing adequacy. Having found the best of themselves, they were able to give the best to others.

Now we can serve superlatively in no other way. However eager we may be to help, we cannot render our best service in our own strength. The difficulty with so many of us is not that we are bad, not that we are cruel, not that we are even indifferent. It is rather that we are inadequate. We are too spiritually empty.

This story while true is not altogether original in its application:

Years ago, as a student, I walked from Cambridge to Boston. As I crossed the bridge that spans the Charles River I thought of another bridge over that river, upon which Longfellow stood when he received the inspiration for one of the sweetest songs, "The Bridge at Midnight". With the romance of youth in my heart, I leaned over the rail of the bridge to look at that same river hoping that some inspiration might come to me.

But I was disappointed almost to the point of disgust. The stream was as wasted and emaciated as a starving monster. I could see the mud and the wreckage that lay at the bottom of the stream. Down below were some fishing vessels, heeled upon their sides in the mud, awkward and ugly as they were useless. With the wonder that anybody could see poetry in such abounding ugliness, I turned away. Hours later as I returned to Cambridge, I decided without any expectation to take one more look. When I did, I saw at once that the stream had undergone another transformation. It was abounding in life. So far as I could see, the mud and wreckage were gone. The ugly ships were no longer heeled on their sides, but floating gracefully on their keels, ready to brave the high seas.

Naturally my deep interest was aroused. I was eager to know how the miracle had come about. When I asked this once ugly and sluggish stream for the secret, it did not tell me that it had simply clinched its fists and squared its jaws and become different by sheer determination. Instead,
pointed away to the vast Atlantic, and said, "I opened myself to the abundance of the sea. Of its fullness, have I received."

This word received is the keyword of the New Testament. We really do not have to wrest the Kingdom of Heaven by violence. We do not have to wrest the mercies of God and his amazing resources from grudging hands. They come to us as gifts. To us he is saying at once hopefully and wistfully what he said to a group of frightened things long years ago, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Having thus received this little insignificant group went out on their mission. As they went they had so much to give that the desert rejoiced and blossomed as a rose. The same today is true for you and me, if we are only willing to receive what our Father is so abundantly doing for others.
THE GREAT SPY

"If I sin, what harm is that to thee, O thou Spy upon mankind?"

Job 7:20 (Moffatt)

This is a startling word. It shocks us with its stark blasphemy. Here is a man who dares to speak his mind. With a boldness born of desperation he turns upon God and tells him frankly that he is no father, he is not even a friend, he is nothing but a spy. What a horrible thing to say! Even so, almost all of us, either articulately or inarticulately, have said the same thing. Sometimes, as a boy, when my conduct was below par, I have had an older brother or sister to remind me that God was looking on. I may have been a bit startled by that fact, but it never made me feel more kindly either toward God or toward the one who warned me. My father and mother were too wise to preach at me in this fashion. They somehow gave the impression that God might be interested when I was doing my best. But there were times when I thought of God as a great spy. We find the same idea in one of our Negro spirituals. "He sees all we do, He hears all we say, our God is a writin' all the time." Therefore, millions have turned upon him as did Job saying, "If I sin, what harm is that to thee, O thou Spy upon mankind?"

I.

How did Job come to ask this terrible question?

Let us acknowledge at once that Job was not trying to be shocking. There
are those that love to startle their fellows by saying shocking things. They deal flippantly and with an air of superiority with the faith of others. Sometimes these perpetual Sophomores get into the pulpit. Sometimes they are entrusted with classes in the Church School. Sometimes they become instructors or professors in our schools and colleges. Here is one such "strutting his stuff." He is facing a large class of freshmen. "You freshmen," he says with an air of vast superiority, "have come here tied to your mother's apron strings. I am going to get you untied. In fact, I am going to kick your props out from under you, and teach you to swim. If you can't swim--blank you, you ought to drown." I daresay some of them did learn to swim, while some of them drowned. But, be that as it may, no such sophisticated Sophomore is fit to teach anywhere. Job is not trying to be shocking.

This question is born of suffering. It is a question that was wrung from Job while he was being tortured upon the rack. Job has known prosperous days. He has been a highly successful man. His fellows have respected him because of his success. But now, reverses have come. One loss has followed hard upon the heels of another till there is want where once there was wealth. Job is suffering in that loss. He could get along without his money better than he could get on without that which went with it. During the worst days of the depression, a friend of mine who was wealthy, said to me in a moment of confidence, "It looks like I am going to lose every penny I have." When I tried to comfort him by telling him that he needed but little, he answered, "Men respect me in part because I am a success. I hate to be rated as a failure." The same was true of Job.

With the loss of his wealth had gone also the loss of his health. I do not know what connection there was between the two in the case of Job. But in the case of ourselves the connection is often very close. Many a man loses his wealth, then worries himself into sickness. But, be the cause what it may, Job had become a great physical sufferer. His days were days of bitterness,
and his nights nights of agony. There are few things harder to bear than persistent nagging pain. A part of Job's tragedy grew out of the fact that pain was walking with fire shod feet along every nerve in his body.

Then Job had lost the undergirding of human sympathy. How many of us would have gone down at one time or another but for a friend? But Job did not have a single understanding friend. His children were all dead. His wife had grown weary of his groans and complaints. She thought his case hopeless, that he would be better off out of his misery, that he ought to commit suicide. She was sure that the easiest way to do this was to affront her petty and vindictive god. Therefore, her helpful advice was this,— "Curse God and die." His friends were wise enough to sit in silence with him for seven days. But beyond that they could not go. They then turned loose a deluge of words upon him that were more painful than his bodily ills.

These friends had a very easy reading of Job's riddle. They knew exactly why he was suffering. In spite of the fact that he had been outwardly respectable and seemingly decent, he was in reality an outrageous sinner. This was the case, because, according to their simple faith, every righteous man prospered, while every unrighteous man went to the wall. The fact that Job had gone to the wall was proof positive of his guilt. "Whoever suffered," they asked with smug conviction, "being innocent?" Thus tortured, Job became desperate. He became so desperate that he turned upon the God in whose name these friends claimed to speak with this biting question, "If I sin, what harm is that to thee, O thou Spy upon mankind?"

II.

What is the content of Job's complaint? What accusations does he bring against God? Taking the chapter as a whole he makes three charges.

1. God has placed man in a difficult world where he must fight from
the cradle to the grave. "Is there not a warfare to man upon earth?" "All life," declares Job, "is a conflict." It is a hard conflict where a man may lose his soul. Evidently Job thinks this is all wrong. If he had only been the Creator he would have put man in a world where life would have been far easier than it is on this troublesome and tempestuous planet upon which we live.

Not only is life a battle, but it is a futile battle. It is a game where the cards are stacked against us. There is no way in which we may possibly win. "I am forced to live empty months," he wails. "Empty months," that is a striking word. The whole business of living is mere emptiness. It is made up of empty hours, empty days, empty years. All life is empty. Empty of what? Empty of meaning, empty of hope, and therefore empty of all abiding joy. "That," says Job "is what life means to me. It is a hard and empty affair, God has made it so."

2. A second charge that Job brings against God is that he has made man such a frail and insignificant and fleeting creature, that nothing he could possibly do would really matter. He is too petty for it to matter. But in spite of this fact God insists upon treating man's sin as if it were a something of tremendous importance. "If I were really great," Job seems to say, "then my sin might signify. But I am not great. I am more fleeting than a cloud. Am I the sea or a sea-monster," he asks desperately. "By no means" he argues. "I am so frail and petty that my sin cannot be of consequence. For this reason, God ought to condone it. He ought to pass over it as something of no significance at all."

3. But this, God refuses to do. Instead of taking this broad-minded attitude, instead of pitying his littleness, He actually spies upon him. God listens to his every word, he watches his every step; and, when he does wrong, he never fails to punish. "His one interest in me," Job feels is not to
help, but to find fault." I remember hearing this desperate complaint from a man who had fought a losing fight: "I asked God to help me, but he didn't. When I needed Him most he refused to do a thing." Job felt that his God was not only refusing, but was actually torturing him. This was "sorrow's crown of sorrow,"-a God whose only interest was to spy and punish.

III.

What can we say to this desperate man? What can we say to modern Jobs who are often quite as perplexed?

1. Take Job's first charge, that life is a battle. To this we have to agree. Life is a battle. This is the case, for one reason, because God has placed us in a realm of choices. In a recent magazine there was a thoughtful article on "The Burden of Choice." Choice is a burden. But it is one that you and I have to bear every day. Every day the roads fork, every day we must take the higher road or the lower road. Thus life becomes a continuous conflict.

But while life does bring struggle, it is not, as Job contends, a purposeless and futile struggle. Naturally, we feel at times that life ought to be easier than it is. There are multitudes that long to live on Easy Street. But these forget that Easy Street often ends in Rotten Row. The youth for whom I am most afraid is not the one that is having a hard time, but the one that is having a too easy time. A gentle south breeze may be good to sleep under, but we need the rude north winds to lash us into vikings. It is at least significant that all the great peoples live in those temperatures and lands where life is a bit difficult.

A naturalist tells us that for some months he kept in his study the cocoon of an Emperor Moth. When winter began to change into spring he heard a noise inside that uncouth prison that told him that the prisoner was bestirring him-
self and seeking to be free. Day after day the fight went on, seemingly becoming more intense with each passing hour. At last, in a moment of mistaken sympathy, the naturalist decided to do this struggling creature a favor. He, therefore, took his shears and clipped the end off his prison house. And now the fight was over. But as he watched to see a colorful creature walk forth to spread its wings in the air and drink the nectar of the flowers, he was disappointed. Instead, he saw an ugly monstrosity with wings far too small to lift its unshapely body. All the poor creature could do was to turn its back on its fine possibilities and crawl away to die. This was the case, not because its lot was too hard, but because it was too easy. Life is a battle, it is one full of high purpose. It is one where we are sure to win if we stay within the will of God. He can even change our defeats into victories. "To them that love God, all things work together for good."

2. Then what shall we say to Job’s declaration of man’s littleness?

"What is man" he asks, "that you make so much of him?" By this he means that man does not signify at all. There are quite a few today that would agree with Job. Modern man is being dwarfed in many ways. He is being dwarfed by his low origin. He is a product of “blind forces that had no pre-vision of what they were creating.” He is being dwarfed by the universe of which he is a part. One has suggested that if our whole solar system were to drop out of sight it would mean no more than the falling of a single leaf in a great forest. Then man is being dwarfed by the totalitarian state. In many parts of Europe today the individual does not count anymore. Only the State counts.

But in spite of all this man is a grand creature. He is a son of Adam I know, but he is also a son of God. The author of the eight Psalm asks the same question that Job asks. "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" But in what a different spirit he asks the question! "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou has ordained; What
is man, that thou art mindful of him?" "He is a child of God," comes the answer. He is greater than all the stars, greater than the universe. "Thou hast made him a little lower than God." Man is God's son, sharing in the divine nature.

Since he is such a grand creature all that he does is significant. His sin, therefore, cannot be passed over and condoned. Man's sin is significant because of what it does to the sinner himself. No man ever sins without hurting himself. This is not true simply of those glaring sins of the flesh that leave ghastly marks upon our bodies. It is equally true of those sins of disposition, selfishness, indifference, neglect, and lack of love. All sin separates us from God. All sin erases little by little the image of God from our souls.

But what is more terrible still, sin does not stop with hurting the man who sins, it hurts others. It is the most anti-social something in the world. No man ever goes right alone. Thank God for that. If you and I turn our feet toward the highest, anytime anywhere, somebody will be sure to follow us. But there is a tragic side to this,—no man ever goes wrong alone. If we sin, however secretly, that sin weakens us, it weakens our fellows, it weakens our church, it lowers the moral temperature of our world. When I was a young fellow I worked one summer in the forest getting out timber. We used to cut magnificent trees that were almost five feet in diameter. Now and then a friend would watch one of those giants fall, then say, "It seems a pity to cut a magnificent tree like that." But that which was more pitiful still was the fact that, as the giant crashed to its fall, it reached out its strong arms and laid hold on other trees. Here it siezed a young pine, there a tough hickory, over there a tall and stately poplar. No tree falls alone, neither does any man. Therefore, sin is of infinite significance both to the sinner and to his fellows.
But what stake does God have in my sin? Why does he take sin so seriously? We can get a partial answer in terms of our human relationships. Years ago I knew a father who lived in the backwoods where there was only one physician. He was a man of unusually fine character. But for some reason he and this physician had had a misunderstanding, and no longer spoke to each other. But one night this father's boy became desperately ill. The father used what homely remedies he had, but the patient grew worse. Then he swallowed his pride and sent for the doctor with this appeal—"My son is dangerously ill. Come at once." This physician had an opportunity to do the generous thing, but he was not big enough. He refused to come. Then, as that father continued to watch by the bedside of his boy, his once kindly face grew grim and hard. Increasingly a fierce hot anger stole into his heart. "That doctor is torturing my boy," he said to himself. "He is trying to kill him. If he succeeds, his own life will pay for that of my son."

But by the mercy of God the boy got well. Not only so, but by and by these two forgave each other and became friends. But why was this father so hard on the physician, in the first place? Suppose the doctor had said, in excusing himself, "What harm was it to you that I did not come? You were not sick, it was only your son." This is the answer:—That father was bound up in a bundle of life with his boy. God also is a father. Therefore He cannot but suffer in the sufferings of his children. In fact, His suffering is as much greater than ours as He is greater than ourselves. Whatever, therefore, our sin may do to others, its sharpest shafts always pierce the heart of God.

3. Then look at that last charge. "God does nothing but spy and punish." But does God spy on our sin? No. It is not necessary. Our sin does that. "Be sure your sin will find you out." I would not go so far as
WHY BE PATIENT

What is my end that I should prolong my life? Job 6:11
What is my end that I should be patient? NASB
What is before me that I should be patient? Moffatt

As a lad in Sunday School there were certain questions that every child was expected to answer. At the top of the list was, "Who was the first man". Then, "Who was the meekest man". A close rival to these was, "Who was the most patient man". In answering this question the supreme place was given to Job. But after getting better acquainted with this worthy gentleman I have become convinced that he owes his reputation more to what the Apostle James said about him than to what he was in himself. This does not mean that he was not a man of real patience. Yet he himself would be the first to confess his impatience.

"What is there before me that I should be patient?" Here Job is not only laying no claim to patience but he is affirming his right to be impatient. He had suffered great loss. He was in agony. Therefore, he felt that he was right in raging. He had lost patience with his wife, informing her that she was talking the language of the fools. He had lost patience with his friends, calling them miserable comforters. He had lost patience with God. Thus this patient man was exceedingly impatient.

PART I

What is patience? Here is one Bible word that has continued in circulation through the years. Patience is a word we meet in our magazines and newspapers. It is in constant use among us. We speak of losing our patience and at that some of us have not lost much. We affirm that we have no patience with a certain person or a certain idea. Some of us perhaps have no patience with patience. What, then, does the word mean?
Webster gives two prominent definitions. First, patience is the power to wait. Of course this waiting is for something that the one who waits desires. It is, therefore, power to wait for a hoped-for good. It is, therefore, more than indifference. I attended a rather wild meeting years ago. I noticed one chap at the altar who was enjoying a sound sleep. "What is he doing", I asked one of the leaders. "He is waiting for the power", was the answer. I replied that he seemed to be very patient. But of course I answered in jest. He was not patient, he was seemingly asleep.

Patience, then, is power to wait for a hoped-for good. It is power to wait when that hoped-for good is an order that you have given in a restaurant when your waiter seems to have taken a journey into a far country. It is power to wait for your husband when dinner is on the table and is getting cold. It is power to wait for your wife when you are in the car with the engine running and the horn blowing. It is power to wait for some indication of intelligence in your teen-age boy, or the power to wait for your growing daughter to put on some clothes. It is power to wait for some signs of improvement of a dissipated friend. It is even power to wait for an unanswered prayer.

A second meaning of patience is power to endure. It is power to endure pain, to endure disappointment; to endure the suffering brought about by your own failures or by the failures and follies of others. Moses had this type of patience to a high degree. He had to deal with a bunch of fretting cry-babies. They were always whining, always complaining, always threatening
to trek back to Egypt. But he was patient, "He endured as seeing him who is invisible".

PART II.

When we lose patience we suffer a real loss. This is the case because patience is a virtue of genuine worth. What is the good of it? It is significant that patience holds a high rank among the writers of both the Old and the New Testaments. Paul urges that we be sound in patience. He tells us that patience is one of the fruits of the Spirit. Luke tells us that by our patience we shall win and save our souls. It is, therefore, not something that we can put up or lay down without any serious differences.

When we look for patience at its highest and best we naturally turn to Jesus. How patient he was! How good he was at waiting. He could spend the morning years of his life in a carpenter shop. He could wait on the slow understanding of his friends. He could wait for the triumph of his Gospel. He could wait the slow development of the individual.

Then, how he could endure! He was misunderstood by his own family. At times they thought him mad. How he suffered at the hands of his friends. He chose twelve that he sought to build into a brotherhood but up to the time of his death he seems to have made almost no progress at all. They went into the Last Supper spitting out words at each other and arguing as to who was going to be greatest. How he endured at the hands of his foes!
He endured even to death. He was perfect in patience. He was the very patience of God.

Here, then, is the treasure that we must choose if we are to endure. Patience is good in that it enriches its possessor. If you lose patience with yourself as some have, if you lose patience with man or with your failures, if you lose patience with God, you become fretful and peevish and miserable. Patience is a prize that enriches its possessor.

Then, patience is good because it is a help to those who have to live with you. If you have no patience you are hard to live with. Some of you are finding it hard to stay awake. Why? Your baby woke up early because he was hungry. Well, instead of waiting he roused the household. Or, he had a pin scratch. But instead of seeing it through with honor he howled to high heaven. That is very trying when the baby weighs only 15 pounds but when he weighs 150 pounds it is more trying still. If the worst comes to the worst you can take a small baby on your lap and administer what is needed but it is more difficult if he is a big baby.

Finally, patience is essential for the putting through of any worthwhile task. If you set out to raise a crop of corn you have to have patience. You cannot accomplish your purpose in a moment. If you undertake to be really helpful to any human soul that, too, needs patience. It was my privilege to go to the famous Webb School. I was hardly prepared to enter the freshman class but because that class was so young I entered as a sophomore. I expected a bit of a hard time but the difficulty and the humiliation exceeded my expectation. I must have failed but for one fact. The head master,
Old Sawney, as he was affectionately called, refused to lose patience with me. Instead he took me alone and told me I could hold the class if I would learn one Latin word a day. Through his patience I won.

How many of us fail not for lack of opportunity, nor for lack of ability, but for lack of patience. We make brilliant beginnings but to some we lose our patience and quit. Our world is cluttered up with ruins and half-finished tasks because those who began them and might have carried them to completion lost patience. Patience, then, is more than a luxury—it is a necessity. It is that without which there is no valiant and victorious living.

PART III.

How, then, shall we acquire patience?

I think it might help us to desire patience. There are quite a few that do not even desire it. Patience is not an American characteristic. We love short cuts. We love quick returns. We want to be master of the piano by taking ten easy lessons by correspondence. We are willing to make a million at a touch but are not patient enough to make a living. It is hard to get us started toward the promised land, it is harder still to keep us going.

Not only must we desire patience but we must realize that patience is the result of a cause. In this it is like joy. We urge people to be joyful oftentimes without giving them any reason. "Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag and smile, smile, smile", may be well enough as a popular song but the smile that really counts must work from the inside out.
and not from the outside in. It is the same with patience. It must be born of an inward conviction.

Job faced that fact himself. He asked the question, "But what is before me that I should be patient?" Well, in answer to that question I might say that whatever stage that any of us have reached the supreme values are yet before us. However perplexing and tangled life may have become if we are truly Christians we are facing in the right direction the best is yet to be. God is still before me. I have not run past him yet. Eternity is still ahead and because God and eternity are still ahead, victory is still ahead.

Paul emphasizes the fact that nothing can defeat us if we refuse to become impatient and quit. He puts it in this fashion, "Let us not be weary in welldoing. In due season we shall reap if we faint not". There are some tasks, there are some victories that are beyond our reach but the supreme victory is within reach of every one of us if we patiently persist. In the realization, therefore, that nothing can defeat us but our impatience let us gird ourselves to battle bravely to the end. What is before me that I should be patient? Answer -- God, Eternity, victory, every high prize for which the soul longs.
Finding God

O that I knew where I might find him. Job 23:3

This cry was wrung from the lips of Job by the torturing hands of pain. It is the wail of one who is on the rack. His is an agony not only of the body but of the mind and heart as well. But instead of crying for ease, he sums up his whole longing in one word. That word is God. If he could only find God, he is sure that nothing else would really matter. Therefore he cries "O, that I knew where I might find him". That word is at once a sob and a prayer.

Part I

Now while Job's prayer is unique, it is also in a profound sense universal. It is far older than this majestic drama. It is older than The Bible. It is older than human history. It is as old as man. It voices a longing that is characteristic of us as a race. Here is a hunger that has been and is the experience of the most cultured of people. But it is no less characteristic of the most backward. This prayer of Job is therefore an intensely human prayer. It voices the hunger and thirst of all men.

For instance, as Paul walked the streets of ancient Athens he knew that he was in the intellectual capital of the world. But these Athenians were as religious as they were intellectual. He was impressed by their that many altars. I perceive he told them a little later "you are very religious!". But the altar that impressed Paul most was the one that bore this inscription "To an unknown god". These cultured people had learned much. They had made many discoveries. But they had not made the supreme discovery. They were still being tortured in a greater or lesser degree by gnawing hungers and burning thirsts. This was the case because they
had failed to find God. As this longing is characteristic of the most enlightened, so it is also of the most backward. Years ago I heard a Quaker missionary tell of his work among certain savages of the Long Grass Country of Africa. These people were at the rear of the procession. They wore no shred of clothing. But benighted as they were, he soon saw that even they were in some fashion seeking after God. He witnessed their religious dances. These they carried on with frantic desperation until they frothed at the mouth and fell in rigid fits. That was their ghastly way of voicing this age-old longing of Job "O, that I knew where that I might find him".

As this longing is characteristic of the race, so it is of the individual. It is voiced again and again by the best of men. Here is an ancient saint who in some fashion is being robbed of the privilege of finding God in the temple services. No doubt he has some sense of God where he is in the wilds. But that is not enough. He longs for a clearer view. He longs with such heart breaking intensity that his tears become his food day and night. "As the hart panteth after the water brook," he sobs, "so panteth my soul after thee, O God." His thirst is like that of a deer in a land that was so often poverty stricken in water.

A boyhood memory brings this picture clearly before me. I was working in the field near the Buffalo river. I heard the baying of hounds. Soon I saw a spent deer coming toward me. But this deer was not looking to me for help. He was running in my direction because behind me was the river. If he could only reach the river he could quench his burning thirst. Not only so but he could find rest and freedom and life. Even so this ancient saint thirsted for God.

But if this thirst belongs to the best, it also belongs to the worst. By this I do not mean to affirm that every man is consciously eager to find God. There are multitudes that seek to forget him altogether. There
are multitudes that try in every way to avoid him. God is the least of their desires! What they really desire, what they must have, is a better car, a better income, another drink. They might differ widely in just what they deeply desire, but all of them are eager for something which they have not found. Not only so, but the intensity of their search for satisfaction in the realm of things, the more restless and wretched they become. Though they might emphatically deny it, what they are really missing is God. Job's tearful cry, "O, that I knew where I might find him" is therefore universal.

Indeed it is just this hunger for God that is a badge of our greatness. Man is the one creature who cannot be satisfied with things. When a certain rich farmer sought to satisfy his restless soul by larger and fuller barns, even our Lord could find no better name for him than "Fool". The swine that the Prodigal fed in the far country were doubtless contented swine. No tormenting memories tortured them. Unrealized ideas made them restless. But the Prodigal could not live on such fare. He could be satisfied with nothing less than the plenty of his father's house. This longing for God is therefore at once universal and a mark of our greatness.

Part II

Not only is every man hungry for God, but every man needs him. The fact that I hunger for bread indicates that I need bread. My body cannot get on without it. The fact that I thirst means that I need water. Unless I find water and drink it, I die. My hunger for God means that I need him. Every man does. On this fact I think most of us can agree.

So true is this that nothing less will do. Though if it were possible I might win all else; if I miss God, life would be a starved and futile affair. On the other hand if I should find God, though if it were possible I might miss every other prize, life would still be a thing of beauty and a victory. There is simply no great living without God. In fact there
is no living of any kind without him. As this book states, if God were to withdraw his breath, all life would perish. Then every man needs God.

When we turn to the Book of Acts we come upon a group of people that are bewitchingly different. What have they found? In the language of the street, what makes them tick? Here at least is part of the answer.

They are tremendously alive. In their presence we feel that they have entered into the purpose of Jesus, "I have come that they might have life and have it in abundance". Sometime ago I went from the bedside of one dying who was slowly giving up to tuberculosis to watch a football game. All these, both sick and well, were alive; but those on the field were tremendously alive. It was so with these early saints.

Then they were possessed by a tremendous eagerness to share. Those to whom they went did not always make an evident response. But with a good will that nothing could kill, they persisted. "Now these Christians love each other," the pagan said wistfully. But their love was not confined to their own. It went out to the high and to the low. It put its arms around men on the throne, also slaves and hopeless outcasts. They were possessed by an all-but-irresistible passion to share.

Then they had a dauntless optimism. They saw the evils of their day. They faced their grim impossibilities. But they were sure something could be done about it. They were sure that they were playing on a winning team. They were unbelievably hopeful and expectant. Nothing could discourage them. Being thus sure of victory nothing could rob them of their song. Over their successes they rejoiced. In the presence of their defeats, they rejoiced. When two of them were shamefully beaten they went from the humiliating experience rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for their Lord.
Being thus vital, passionate, hopeful, they were naturally powerful. Indeed they were possessed of a power that was simply irresistible. "The weapons of our warfare," says Paul, "are not carnal." At that those who tend to believe only in physical force would lose interest. But Paul passes on to this affirmation, that his weapons are powerful. Indeed they were. They were so powerful that it enabled him with his fellow Christians to turn the world upside down. What then was their secret? During these hot and wistful days, I have thought more than once of what a privilege it would be to hear the music of cold rivulets flowing down from the heights, and the boughs of tall trees made taller because they grew upon lofty places. How fine to lift my eyes to rugged cliffs that towered so high that they would sometime, wrap their rugged shoulders, in clouds. How refreshing to have a breath of coolness from snows that never melt. Now I could have all this if I only had a majestic mountain. Give me a Pike's Peak and all these extras will come of themselves. Even so these early saints had life and passion and power because they had God. Job's prayer had been answered for them in a vivid and sure way. Going out God with a compelling awareness of they possessed all that was necessary. Being thus armed it is a fact that they remade the world of their day.

From this we see that God meets our two supreme longings. He gives us inward satisfaction. This verse indicates when he daringly cried, "If any man thirst let him come to me and drink." It is the testimony of countless millions that in him they have found satisfaction for the deepest thirsts of their hearts.

But as we long for the satisfaction of our own personal needs so we long for the privilege of being helpful. Every body at his best wants to count. All parents have had the experience of being hindered in some task by a little child because that child desiring to help,
FISHING FOR WHALES

"Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook?"
—Job 41:1

Authorities differ as to what a leviathan is. Sometimes he is a crocodile. Sometimes he is a whale. As the author here is talking about the biggest and strongest something that he knows, I take it that he is talking about a whale. So the text would read, "Canst thou catch a whale with a fish hook?"

The text, you see, is a question. It is a question born of astonishment. It is fairly athrob with amazement. Here is a chap gone fishing. The particular fish that he is undertaking to catch is a whale. Yet all the tackle he has for this difficult and dangerous enterprise is a bit of ordinary tackle such as he would use to catch a sun perch in the Buffalo River. No wonder the observer looks at him and asks in utter bewilderment, "Canst thou catch a whale with a hook?"

As there is amazement in the text, there is also rebuke. "Don't be silly," the observer seems to say. "Don't go out on a fool's errand. Do you have any idea how large a whale is? Don't you realize a creature weighing nearly one hundred thousand pounds cannot be landed by a mere fish hook? Look at yourself. Pull yourself together. Come down to earth. Be sensible."

I think there is also a touch of pity in the question. If this observer is a harsh man, of course he is laughing at the fisherman. "Ha, ha! How stupid! How utterly silly! How can one be so senseless as to go out after game as big as a whale with no better equipment than that!" If he is a kindly man, as I take him to be, there is pity in his question. "My friend," he is saying, "You are going to give yourself a lot of pains for nothing. You are headed for disappoint-
ment. You are headed for utter disillusionment and failure: "Canst thou catch a whale with a hook?"

But why this amazement and warning and pity? What is wrong with the conduct of this fisherman. There is no mistaking the fact that something is wrong. But while confessing that we hasten to affirm that not everything is wrong. He is right in some respects just as emphatically as he is wrong with others.

II

What then is right with this fisherman?

1. He is right in that he has set for himself a definite goal. He is not just going fishing. He is going fishing for a particular kind of fish. That is sensible. When a ship sails for Europe, it does not sail for the whole continent. It sails for one particular "little spot on the map. So when this man went fishing, he was perfectly sane in making up his mind in advance the particular kind of fish that he was going to catch! He was not out for anything from jelly-fish to sharks and whales. He said that very wise word, "This one thing I do."

Now definiteness of purpose is of value. This is true for many reasons. The man who knows exactly what he is trying to do can be at peace with himself. A double-minded man, says James, is unstable, unreliable in all his ways. He can't even get on with himself. When, generally speaking, are our most annoying periods! They are those times when we are torn between two or more decisions, times when we stand at the forks of the road and cannot reach a conclusion as to the road that we are going to take. The undecided man is a wretched man. He is confused and unquiet.

Then definiteness of purpose leads to power. One who has ordinary abilities can almost do the impossible if he can focus his energies upon a single purpose. But the most amazing capacities will come to very little if they are squandered in a score of different directions. It has been well said that for the ship bound for no harbor no wind is favorable. I don't care how speedy may be your car and how abundant your gasoline if you do not know where you are going you will not get there.
Years ago Mrs. Chappell and I were touring the New England states. About two o’clock in the afternoon we came to the Wayside Inn. It is an interesting and historic building. But with the typical enthusiasm of youth we looked it over hurriedly and soon were on our way. But soon after we got lost. We drove with full speed ahead. About ten o’clock that night we came to an inn and decided that whatever the inn was we had better spend the night there. So we went in and registered and found ourselves stopping at the Wayside Inn. We had been there some eight hours before.

Coleridge had a genius that was surpassed perchance only by that of Shakespeare, but he could never get himself organized. If he had written all the books that he planned, he would have given to the world a library, but he was able to leave here a few glittering fragments that make us sorry that he did not leave the world more of the wealth that God had really put in his soul. But the trouble with him was that he could never say, “This one thing I do.” Squandering himself, his very power became weakness.

While I was pastor in Washington, the Government sent me to speak to the operators in the Canal Zone. I reached this interesting place just as the Canal was being reopened after being blocked for some six months by a landslide at the Culabra Cup. As I passed through this place that had been blocked, I saw that they were removing the mountain so that such a landslide could not occur again. How were they doing it? They were not using big bulldozers such as we would use today. They were using water—hydraulic pressure. When that water fell, it came down so gently that it would have hardly hurt a baby if it had hit him in the eye. But now the water was organized. Under its pressure the mountain was taking to its heels.

Did you ever hear of that hunter who went out one day, not hunting any particular game but just hunting? By and by he found the track of a deer. That quickened his interest and made his mouth water. He said, “I will have venison for supper.”
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But as he tracked the deer, he found the track was crossed by that of a fox. "A fox will be just about as much fun," he decided. So he turned from the deer track and set out to find the fox. By and by the track of the fox was crossed by that of a rabbit. "A rabbit is much better to eat than a fox," he concluded. So he set out on the track of the rabbit. But by and by this track entered the thicket and while he was deciding to try to follow he saw the track of a field-mouse. He set on this track and when darkness came, he was at the hole of a field-mouse, but it was too late to catch him, and he went home empty. What was the matter? He could never make up his mind. He could never say, "This one thing I do."

Indecision, therefore, is a crippling thing. Elijah put the question to his people long ago. "How long hal$ ye between two opinions?" That is, "How long do you go crippling, limping between two opinions?" Indecision hangs-strings you. It makes you like the donkey who stood between two luscious bundles of hay, but he could never make up his mind as to which one he would eat. Therefore, he starved to death. "Where are you going?" I asked this man. "Fishing," came the answer. "For what?" "For whales." That is sane so far as it went. He at least knew what he was after.

2. The second respect in which this man was right was that he not only had a definite purpose, but it was a worthy purpose. Possibly he did not get to fish but once in a year. Why not go after something highly worthwhile. Why go into the fishing business with nothing better in mind than turtles or mud-cats? The man who has a big purpose is far ahead of the one who has a shabby one even if he never wins it. The greatest crime is not failure, but low aim.

In one of Ovid's stories there is a young chap named Phaethon. He learns one day that his father, who is forever away from home, is no ordinary man. He is the sun-god, Apollo. Thrilled by this information, he makes his way to his father and asks him if he is really his son. The father answers in the affirmative, and he said, "To prove that. I am telling you the truth, I will grant any request that
you desire. Then this heroic, if foolish, son made a great request. He said, "Let me drive the chariot of the sun for one day." The father did his best to persuade him to ask a lesser boon, but the son stubbornly clung to his request with the result that it was granted.

When the morning came, the father with many misgivings stopped the chariot upon the eastern horizon, put the reins of the fiery horses into the hands of his son, and with earnest words of warning sped him on his journey. Everything went well for awhile. Then by and by, says the story, when the fiery horses drew near the zenith they took fright. The boy's weak arms were not strong enough to hold them in check. So they dashed away down the skies and came so close to Africa that all the people were burned black. Then the boy was thrown from the chariot and fell dead by the river Po in Italy. The nymphs found his body and gave it honorable burial and wrote over him this epitaph: "Here lies Phaeton, driver of his father's chariot, who, though he failed, yet died in a great attempt."

We are therefore not going to blame this fisherman for setting out to catch the most worthwhile fish of which he could conceive. Of course, I am not by this urging upon you to set your mind and heart on the position that looms largest in the eyes of men. You can't all be President however much we glory in our democracy! I am in serious doubt if any of us can be in the next fifty years! When the speakers to the university of Flatwoods used to tell me as a small boy that I might be President one day I really was not flattered. I had serious doubts as to whether I would ever even be Vice-President. Position is no guarantee to greatness anyway. The fact that a mosquito lights on the top of a Washington monument does not change him into an eagle. Pygmies will be pygmies still though perched on the Alps.

What then is a worthy prize? Here is the biggest that I know. Paul, who lived so magnificently, made it his purpose. What was it? It was not to be the greatest man of his day or the most famous. It was to lay hold of that for which he had been laid hold of by Christ Jesus. That is, he said, "I am out to realize
God's plan in my life." God has a plan for every one of us. To find it and fill it is the highest possible achievement. Therefore, in being a man of one purpose and that a worthy purpose this fisherman was right.

III

Wherein was he wrong? Let me repeat he was not wrong in having a definite purpose. He was not wrong in setting out to catch the biggest fish possible. I am going to applaud him for this however loud the crowd may laugh. But having applauded him, the only consideration that keeps me from joining in the laughter of the scornful is the pathos of it all. For that which makes all his high purpose good for nothing is this—he refused to suit the means to the end to be attained.

Had I met this ambitious fisherman, I hope I would not have laughed at him. I hope I would not have greeted him in scorn. I hope I might have said with sympathy and real understanding, "You are on a great and worthy quest, but you have got to make a whale of an effort if you catch a whale of a fish. That little pin-hook of yours is all right for minnows and sun perch, but it won't land a whale. In other words, you have got to suit the cause to the effect to be attained. If you expect to reap a great harvest, you must do some great sowing. To ignore that law is to court failure.

This is true in every department of life. It is true in the world of business. I know that there are exceptions. There are men who strike oil. There are those who play the stock market and get away with it. There are those who bet on a horse-race and sometimes win, but these are the exception rather than the rule. Generally speaking, our dividends even in business are in proportion to our investment.

That is true, generally speaking, in the world of art and literature. Of course, there are some far more gifted than others, but other things being equal you enjoy music in proportion to your capacity. You find as much in the library as you bring to it. In the art galleries of the world you only take away in proportion to what you carry there. You can never carry away a hog's head of water.
from the spring when you brought only a pint cup with you. This is equally true
in the realm of friendship. The only way to have friends is to be one.

It is supremely true in the realm of religion. Salvation is free. That is
a fundamental truth of our holy religion.

"No price is set on the lavish summer,
June may be had by the poorest comer;
It is only God may be had for the asking,
It is heaven alone that is given away."

But this God who is had for the asking is a God who cannot be received except
at the price of our utter giving. I am speaking to some who are finding their
religious lives highly unsatisfactory. The truth is for many religion is little
more than a bore. They will tell you frankly, "I don't get anything out of it."

Why is this the case? Is it because there is nothing really in it? Is it
because the great prophets, the apostles, and the saints of the centuries have
been dupes and fools? Is it because that the promises of the New Testament as
wealthy as they seem are after all paltry—that they are not to be taken at their
face value? Or is not this the case—you are trying to get the greatest result
in the world, Christlike character, with a pin-hook of an investment? It won't
work. "Canst thou draw out leviathan with a hook?" Can you catch a whale with
your rod and reel? Can you have the holy God in your life and hold to your own
selfish ways at the same time? The answer is—you cannot! The only way to have
the best is to give the best. The only way to have all is to give all.
"Canst thou draw out leviathan with a hook?" In other words, do you expect to catch a whale with so small an instrument as a fish hook? This wise philosopher and preacher had seen a young fellow setting out to fish. His tackle was in his hand. He was going out for a day's sport. "Just what kind of fish are you after?" he asked. "Whale", was the solemn and earnest reply. "I am going out to fish for whale."

Had this wise man been less big of heart he would have laughed outright. It is very ridiculous, is it not? How can any man keep from laughing? Think of going out whale fishing with an ordinary rod and line and hook. The reason this man did not laugh was not because it was lacking the humorous element. He refrained from laughing because there was a genuine mingling of pathos along with the humor. This young fellow was expectant. He really thought he was going to catch a whale. How disappointed he was going to be. What sad disillusionment was ahead of him.

So sorry was he for this young and ignorant and inexperienced enthusiast, in fact, that he turned upon him with this question: "Canst thou draw out a whale with a hook? Are you really in earnest? Are you counting on winning? Do you really think that you will get the prize?" And this sane and gracious preacher was not asking this question for information altogether. The big reason for his asking it was to induce this young fellow to think. He did not want to rob him of his enthusiasm, but he desired that his enthusiasm be not blind, but open-eyed and intelligent. "Think", says he kindly, "of the absurdity of your undertaking. Surely you can not expect to catch the largest of all God's creatures with a frail thing like this fish hook."

To speak in all kindness this young fisherman is somewhat foolish. He is guilty of a great absurdity. If we do not love him we will laugh at him. If we do love him we will grieve over him. "Ha! Ha!" we say as we look on as mere strangers. "What a ridiculous and stupid fellow he is." And even his best friend can not dispute our statement, though he confesses it not so much with laughter as with tears.

But wherein does his stupidity consist? What makes both his friends and his foes agree on the fact that he is acting in a dull and stupid fashion? "I know", one is ready to answer who is no wiser than this young fisherman himself. "He is stupid because he has made up his mind as to just the kind of fish he is going to catch. How absurd to go out to fish with a definite purpose and a fixed goal in mind." But that is the furthest possible from the truth. For this young fellow to have decided upon a definite goal was altogether sane and sensible. To have refused to do so would not have been wise. It would have been the very opposite. Happy is the man who knows what he is going to undertake in life. Happy is that individual who decides early as to where he or she is going to invest themselves. A man cried one day: "O wretched man that I am." One cause of his wretchedness was just this: he was undecided. He did not know exactly what he was going to do.

Indecision always means wretchedness. I testify to you that some of the darkest and bitterest and most vexatious moments of my life have been those moments when I was torn between two opinions. One of the veriest hells that I have been in is the hell of indecision. A ship out at sea can ride the waves and pass through the severest of storms. But if the same ship were anchored to the shore it would beat itself to pieces.
Fishing for whales #2

The decided man, the man who knows exactly what he is going to fish for in life, has it over the undecided man not only in point of peace and happiness, but also in point of effectiveness. The undecided man scatters himself. He squanders his resources. That hunter who set out hunting for anything or for nothing in particular is an example. He came upon the tracks of a deer and he decided he would kill a deer. But soon he changed and began to trail a fox. Then a rabbit trail crossed the fox trail and he took after the rabbit. When sundown came he was tracking a field mouse. And he came home hungry and tired, having caught nothing.

How much wiser is the weasel. A certain great naturalist has an article on the weasel that he calls "The bloodhound of the hedges". This tireless hunter, he tells us, will single out the particular rabbit that he wants for his dinner. At once he sets out in pursuit. The rabbit is fleeter of foot, but the weasel keeps on. Sometimes the pursued is far ahead. He goes through thickets and into burrows. But this bloodhound keeps on. Other rabbits may spring up right in his path. He may blunder over one far fatter than the original rabbit that he started to pursue. But nothing turns him aside. Like the fatal Nemesis, he never hesitates, never stops, till the chosen prey becomes his own.

There is a tremendous power in concentration. You remember how that some years ago there was a landslide at Culebra Cut that put the Panama Canal out of commission for months. When I was there three summers ago they were removing that mountain. They were doing the job by hydraulic pressure. I watched them as they turned a stream of water on the mountainside, and it seemed to melt, and the rocks were moved out of their places. That water, when it fell from the clouds, came from a far greater height and yet in its falling it would not have hurt a baby if it had hit him in the eye. Why? It was too scattered. But when it was concentrated, when it said to itself, "This one thing I do", it could uproot trees, move rocks, wash away mountains.

Here we find, I think in all charity, the secret of the power of the Catholic Church. The power of the institution is not in the highest sense moral power. The reason this Church can accomplish what it accomplishes is that it is able to deliver itself at a given point. It is able to gather its energies together, to focalize them upon whatever task they decide at the time to put over.

He, this fisherman was a decided gainer by the fact that he knew what he was going to do. He was at least showing more wisdom than the man who squanders himself in a dozen different enterprises. To know what you are going to do not only keeps a life from scattering, but it saves it from that inaction which always ends in wrong action. That donkey that stood between two bundles of hay and couldn't decide which one to eat made at least this decision, that he would die, for he starved to death between them. When Felix refused to decide for Christ under the impassioned appeal of Paul he did not then and there determine that he would never be a Christian. But in refusing to become a Christian then he chose to remain away from Christ forever more.

Neither was the stupidity of this man shown in the fact that he decided upon the biggest game. I know that cynics might have laughed at him for selecting the whale as the object of his conquest. Why should they? Why should not every young man and every young woman as they cast about them to see where they will invest themselves, decide as did this man, that they will invest themselves in the highest way. Why not, when you decide upon
Fishing for whales #3

the prize for which you will contend, enter into the contest for the supreme prize? I will not condemn him for having decided to seek the highest and the biggest and the best. I will rather commend him.

I know some of the arguments against him. A man is foolish to set out to catch a whale because a whale is so hard to catch. And because a whale is so hard to catch, the man who sets himself to his capture may fail. And to all this I agree. The task is difficult and failure is altogether possible. But there is something fine in having undertaken to do the great thing, even if you fail. A man is the bigger for the effort, even though he seem to get nowhere. (Adventure of Phaeton)

There are many fish that are smaller than a whale. I tell you that frankly, many that are far easier to capture. If you are a mind to you can go in for the very smallest. I can tell you how when the season comes in you can capture a whole tubful of tadpoles. I know how you can capture mud-cats and turtles. In fact, I might give you a little inside information on suckers. There are many kinds of fish that you can capture without a very big investment, either in tackle or in trouble. But I, for one, give my congratulations to the man who is satisfied only with the biggest and best.

By this I do not mean that everybody is to make up their minds to be president. Not all the big folks in the world have been president. I can say that without any discourtesy. What is the highest possible prize, anyway? There was a man named Paul who claimed to be seeking the highest prize and I think he was exactly right about it. What was Paul after? He said he was trying to lay hold on that for which he had been laid hold of by Christ Jesus. In other words, he was trying to fulfill God's plan in his life. For you and for me to be the best and do the best that God made it possible for us to be and to do, for us to carry out his will in our lives is absolutely the supreme success. That is the biggest of all big prizes. The man who does that wins in the finest possible way.

In what, then, did the stupidity of this man consist? It was not in the fact that he had a definite purpose. It was not in the fact that he set himself to the highest. It was in this, rather, that he failed to see that there was any necessary connection between cause and effect. He seemed to think that this, after all, was a bit of a world of chance. He failed to remember that as a man sowed so he reaped. He failed to take into consideration that if you have a great effect you must of necessity have back of that effect a great cause.

For this reason I have not the slightest disposition to laugh at him for trying to capture a whale. But why in the name of all that is reasonable did he set out to do such a big thing armed only with a fish hook? I went one day to fish in the spring branch. All I had was a short line and some reed and a pin hook. But that was enough. I was only fishing for mullets. Had I been fishing for whale you would have had a right to either laugh or sob, according to your personal feelings toward me.

But the strangest part about this whole story is that there are so many folks today who are doing just what this foolish fisherman did long years ago. They are out with a fish hook trying to catch a whale. We find it in the financial world. There are many people who believe they can reap without sowing. They feel that somehow they can beat the game. They feel that they can have a great effect with a puny cause. They feel that they can catch a whale with a pin hook. What else is the man who is betting on
a sure thing seeking to do? What else is a professional sucker seeking to do? That is the game also of the bootlegger. It is the game of every man who is out in the world after illegitimate profits. He is trying to get the cause without the effect. He is trying to reap without sowing. He has gone out after whales, but he has no adequate tackle for the capture of the great monsters.

Here and there a man may seem to win on a mere chance. But that is the rarest of rare exceptions and not the rule. The rule is that a man's dividend is in proportion to his investment. If you will examine the last statistics I think you will find that John D. Rockefeller's income was more than mine. I confess that I haven't looked this matter up recently, but that would be my personal opinion. Now if you were disposed to try to humiliate me by flaunting this fact in my face I have an adequate answer. If his income is greater than mine it is because he has more invested.

The same law holds in the professional world. I am not saying that ability counts for nothing, but there is something that counts for even more than ability, and that is fidelity to your task, integrity, unswerving and loyal purposefulness. If you will look over the list of those who have achieved in law and in medicine and in the ministry you will find, as a rule, that they have paid the price for their achievement. If they have ever caught any whales they have come to their task equipped for the pursuit of such big prizes. Of course there are others who will tell you otherwise. They got there by favoritism, or they had a pull or they know how to spot the professor on the examination, whereas you were unfortunate. But in the face of all that, this I tell every young man and every young woman who expects to do any successful fishing, get your tackle ready. Do not go after whales with pin hooks.

That is also true in the realm of art. All men who have achieved in literature have done so at the price of hard work. Old Sir Walter Scott writing away kept over his desk this word: "Night cometh." And mindful of the coming night he worked, how unceasingly he toiled. How unceasingly all men have toiled who have won. "Come see the man who has been in hell", they said of Dante. Dante caught a whale, but look at his pained and scarred face and you will see that he did not catch that whale with a fishhook.

And, my friends, this same law holds in matters of religion. The supreme prize, as I said, is the doing of the will of God. Men do not drift into that high state. You do not become a saint in your sleep. There are no pullman palaces run into the "City not-made-with-hands". To fish in God's great ocean with a pinhook is to catch nothing, but rather to be caught by the devilfish of failure and disillusionment.

Why do most people get so little out of Christianity? The answer is the simplest in the world. It is because they put so little into it. They are trying to catch whales with a fishhook. They are trying to experience the mightiest effect in the world with a shallow and listless and lightweight case. It all ends in failure and disappointment.

Never once did Jesus Christ invite men to follow him because it was easy. Never did He encourage people to believe that they could catch whales with fishhooks. He lets us know right at once that the easy way is the downward way and that character is costly. "Which of you expecting to build a tower sitteth not down first and counteth up the cost?" To become a Christian at all is costly. It is the greatest achievement in the world, but it is expensive. It comes at no less a price than absolute self-denial.
And in the fulfilling of your mission, the doing of a Christlike work in life - that, too, is expensive. "Except a corn of wheat fall in the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." The great prize called life is captured only at the price of the laying down of life. No amount of pinhook fishing will bring you this worthiest of all prizes.

Yet with our eyes wide open to this fact we continue to take the easy way. We continue to believe that we can capture whales with fishhooks. The heroic is utterly dead in many of our lives. We want whales, in a sense, but we do not want them badly enough to face danger, to face temptations, to battle with storms in order to capture them. We ask what is easy rather than what is right. We seek for the popular path rather than for the path of holiness. To win we must stop seeking a cheap and easy way. To refuse to do so is to be an everlasting failure.

There were too men in the early Church. One was named Barnabas and the other Ananias. They were men of means. They had an equal chance. Barnabas came and dedicated his all to Christ. In so doing he became an abiding benediction to the Church. The other man, Ananias, wanted the reward without the sacrifice. He came fishing for whale with his pin-hook and caught nothing but death.

There were two very brilliant Pharisees who heard the gospel message. One of them was Paul. He suffered the loss of all things. He put everything on God's altar, and he won an enduring prize. The other was the gifted and attractive young ruler. He looked on the prize and longed for it but he was not willing to pay the price. Thus he threw his life away.

There are two outstanding examples of this in literature. One of them was Tito Welima. Tito always sought the easy. His one purpose was to dodge the difficult. He wanted the prize but he did not want to invest anything in his tackle or in his effort. He ended with the fingers of a man who had wronged about his neck. He ended a hated criminal.

The other man was Jean Valjean. He took the hard way. It was the way that turned his hair gray and put shackles on his wrists, but it freed him from the shackles of the soul. He caught a whale, did this man. But oh the price he paid.

And now this question I bring to you. You are after the prize. I trust it is the highest prize. If so remember that there is a price that must be paid.

"No price is set on the lavish summer; 
June may be had by the poorest comer,
'Tis heaven alone that is given away,
'Tis only God may be had for the asking."

But this great and loving God who may be had for the asking gives Himself to that kind of asking that means the giving of all on our part. "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." But that is only when we ourselves cease to fret against the yoke and yield ourselves unreservedly to Him. If you go out fishing for whales you may expect to win only on one condition, and that is that you remember that your tackle must fit the game to be captured. To fish for whales with pinhooks is to come home disillusioned and disappointed.

What question? This - Willingness to do His Will.
Job 41:1 "Canst thou draw out the leviathan with a hook?"

There is a difference of opinion as to what sort of creature the leviathan is. Some authorities say a crocodile. Others say it is a whale. Since the context indicates that this fisherman is undertaking the hardest task possible, I assume that he is trying to catch the largest creature in the world—a whale. So the text would read, "Canst thou catch a whale with a hook?"

As you can see, the picture suggests an absurdity, a complete possibility. Therefore all that look on this fisherman are amazed at him. Some are cruel enough to laugh with cynical laughter. Others more kindly refuse to laugh, but they cannot help but pity. One seeking to call attention to the absurdity of this undertaking and to the certainty of its failure and disappointment ask this question, "Canst thou catch a whale with a hook?"

I.

While there is much that is wrong with this fisherman, there is also much that is right. What is there about him to commend?

1. He is to be commended in that he is going fishing. At least he is not an idler. He is not a parasite. He has made up his mind to use his life in a constructive way. Since fishing is a thrilling business, he has decided to use his life in an interesting and thrilling fashion. That is to the good.

2. Not only has he made up his mind to fish, but he has reached a decision as to just the kind of fish
he is going to catch. He is therefore a man of one purpose. He is able to say, "This one thing I do." The man who knows exactly what he is going to do has it all over the man who is undecided.

This is true in the first place because decision makes for peace of mind. Some of our most wretched moments are moments of indecision. Much of the restlessness of youth is that youth knows it has something to invest, but faces difficulty in deciding where to invest it. The man who cried, "O wretched man that I am," was tortured into that wild cry partly by indecision.

Decision is good in the second place because it leads to action. Indecision so often leads to inaction. You have seen a man start across the street. Then some autoist sounds his horn? and he half decides to go forward, then to return to the curb. He ends by standing perfectly still. There is as much truth as humor in the story of the donkey who stood between two luscious bundles of hay, but since they were equally desirable, he was unable to make up his mind as to which one to eat, so he starved to death.

Hamlet was a keen thinker, but he could not decide. He was unable to make up his mind, therefore he was unfit for any decisive action. He was speaking of himself when he said, "Thus the native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought, and enterprises of great pith and moment with this regard their currents turn awry, and lost the name of action." Decision leads to action.

Not only does decision make for peace of mind and decisive action, but it makes for powerful action. It is perfectly amazing how much an ordinary person can do
is he focuses all of his energies in one direction. There is enough heat in an acre of sunshine, we are told, to blast a stone as if it were cotton. If that heat were only localized! When I was in Panama years ago, I saw men moving a hill by hydraulic pressure. When that water fell it fell so gently that it would not have hurt a baby's face, but now it could make hills take to their heels because is saying, "This one thing I do."

Then it is equally amazing how little the most capable can accomplish if they fail to focus. Coleridge had a genius almost equal to that of Shakespeare, but he was undecided, therefore he left only a few good fragments of work. You may be possessed of the finest of cars and endless gasoline, but if you do not know where you are going, there is little chance of your getting there. It was all to the good that this fisherman was a man of one purpose.

2. Not only was he a man of one purpose, but the purpose he had chosen was worthy. "Blessed is the man who aims high." I know that he may fail. Generally speaking, we do fail in proportion to the greatness of the task we undertake. If you make up your mind to go with the crowd merely to float down stream, any old piece of dust can do that, but if you decide to breast the current and take others with you, you will fail in some respects, but you will go far further than the man who does not decide. The supreme cowardice is to be so afraid of making a mistake that we fail to do anything. When this young fellow tells me therefore that he is going to catch a whale, I am not going to
laugh at him. I am going to commend him.

By this I do not mean that everyone of us ought to set our hearts upon winning fame or gaining some distinguished position. Bigness of position does not necessarily mean bigness of soul. We have put too much emphasis on the conspicuous. The favorite speech to the youth when I was a boy was to remind them of how the highest position was open to everyone. I have listened to speakers at the University of Flatwoods tell how anyone of us might be President some day. I was never thrilled as much as I might have been. I had serious doubts of being nominated to say nothing of being elected.

Of course we cannot all be conspicuous and famous, but we can all do something far better. We can fulfill God's plan for our lives. There are naturally many great things that I should like to do but cannot, but I can find the will of God for me and enter into it. That is the highest and the best. That is what Jesus did therefore when he said at the end of the journey, "I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do." Though he went out in seeming failure and defeat, he achieved the highest place. This young man then was right in that he went out with a definite purpose and that a worthy purpose.

II.

But along with the rightness, there was that which was wrong.

For he was seeking the highest and the best, but the trouble was that he did not fit his effort to his purpose. He was seeking a million dollar dividend from
the investment of a penny. His choice was fine, but his failure was to rightly implement his choice. He desired the best, but on his own terms. He was out to win provided he could strike a bargain and get the greatest for the least.

That is the blunder that is all too common. There is a Spanish proverb, "Take what you want. Take it and pay for it." But too often, like the fisher for whales, we seek to take it without paying for it. In our best moments we make high decisions, but too often we lack the gallantry to see them through.

At last we have come to the place where the nations of the world are agreed as to the necessity of abolishing war and establishing a permanent peace. I think it would be impossible to find any intelligent man anywhere who would advocate war. Although we all want peace, it is a question of whether we are willing to pay the price of peace. Twice in a generation we have chosen war. We took what we wanted and we paid for it.

I am talking to some young man or woman who is desirous of an education. "You can have it beyond a shadow of a doubt, but if you do win it, you must pay for it." Some of you are dreaming of a happy married life. You have envisioned a home where husband and wife are faithful to each other, where there are children who have a chance to grow up clean and Christian. Your dream may come true. You can have the kind of home you want if you are willing to pay for it.

This comes especially close to us who have chosen to follow Christ. We have made that high choice. We have united with his church. Yet, for many of us
the Christian way has been disappointing. What we have found seems very paltry and poverty-stricken when we lay it along side the wealthy promises of the New Testament. It seems very poverty-stricken when we lay it along side what some have found whom we have ourselves known.

How have we missed it? We have set out to take what we wanted, but we have failed to pay for it. Therefore we have not won. A young fellow who had made a half-hearted effort to be a Christian declared flippantly, "There is not much in it." His position is as ridiculous as it would be if I were to take an ordinary rod and 20 foot fishing line with a hook and sit 30 minutes fishing in the Atlantic Ocean and then declare there wasn't any whales in it. If we find anything of worth in our religious lives, we have to pay for it. We never catch whales with hooks.

III.

This law holds everywhere. Jesus emphasized the fact that discipleship was costly. He never invited any man to follow him because his task would be easy. He said his kingdom was like a pearl. When the merchant found his pearl, he recklessly pushed his entire wealth over the counter in order to possess it. In other words this priceless pearl can only be had by the giving of our very all.

When enthusiastic crowds were thronging about him he saw that although he was making an appeal to them that the appeal was not strong enough. Make some of them willing to give their all. Therefore he called on them,"
count the cost whether he be able to finish. Lest when he has laid the foundation and is not able to finish, all that pass by begin to mock."

But in thus emphasizing the fact that we can only find the best through the denial of self, Jesus is not affirming that self-denial is for the Christian only, and that if we choose, we can refuse it altogether. Self-denial is a universal necessity. No man can except it. It is simply not optional. What is optional is this. You can decide which self you are going to deny. You can either deny the higher self or the lower self.

We have a way of calling things which deny the higher self, self-indulgence. This has come about I think because a wrong choice offers an immediate gratification. We take the goods at once; we pay for them later. The man who gets drunk feels good immediately. His headache and heartache come later. Those who play fast and loose with sexual life have immediate gratification, but the bill is presented later. I am thinking of a man who wrecked a lovely home. He is a father without a child; a husband without a wife. He got immediate returns but he is paying for it on the installment plan.

When Esau came home from the chase, he demanded immediate gratification of his appetite. "Let me gulp down the red stuff there," he demanded. Jacob said, "Let me have your birthright in return." "Take it," he said flippantly, "I am about to die. Then what good would a birthright be?" Then he sat down and ate and drank and rose up and went his way. He got what he wanted immediately, but the story does not end there. Afterward,
there is always that word, "Afterward," when he would have inherited the blessing, he found no place for repentance, although he sought it diligently and with tears.

Now I claim Esau denied himself, the man who wrecked his home denied himself. The young fellow who made it impossible to give what he expected on his wedding day denied himself, and sad to say, he denied his higher self. No man escapes self-denial. We call it self-indulgence because its rewards are immediate, but the bill is always sent round. We are prone to slide, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the of the sins of men are fully set in them to do evil."

Now just as one was denied his higher self in order to make a wrong choice, so we must deny our lower selves in order to make a right choice. There is simply no other way. Therefore Jesus was stating what is true in the nature of things when he said, "He who seeketh to save his lower life shall lose the higher; and he that rejects the lower shall find the higher." Since this is true in the nature of things, it is futile to expect to find life abundant except at the price of self-giving. The sadist disappointments that we face in Christian living grow out of the fact that so many of us are bargain-counter saints. We are willing to be Christian, but only on terms. That is flatly impossible. "Canst thou draw out the leviathan with a hook?"

A high choice is not enough. I made a decision once to learn to play the violin, but failing to follow through, I never became another Fritz Kreisler. The decision to become a Christian can be made in a moment,
but it takes a long time to carry it through. Maybe we call that self-denial because the price must be made in advance. I do not find God and then give myself; I do not get my diploma and then go to college. I go to college and then get the diploma. I surrender and then find God. There is no other way. In an old time testimonial meeting a gentleman with a radiant face gave his experience. It corresponded with the beautiful life he lived day by day. When he had sat down a very serious young man arose and said, "I would give the world for an experience like that." "That," answered the winsome gentleman," is exactly what it cost me. It is also what it will cost you."

This of course does not mean that you are to buy salvation. But what is worthwhile comes to us as a gift. Our books were written by others. Our music is made by others. But in order to enjoy you have to bring to it a capacity to enjoy. Nothing that is given is yours unless you take it.

"No price is set on the beauty of summer, Jesus may be had by the poorest comer. Tis only God can be had for the asking; Tis Heaven alone that is given away."

But the only asking that brings God is the asking that gives self. To give little in your Christian life is to receive little. To give all is to receive all. A cheap religion is one that satisfies neither God nor man. "Canst thou draw out a Leviathan with a hook?"