It has been well said that perhaps the most original and helpful teaching of the great prophet Isaiah was his doctrine of the remnant. It was by this faith that he steadied and kept courageous his own soul during times of tremendous upheaval and disaster. It was by this teaching that he sought to give courage and hope to his fellows. No doubt there was some who listened to him. No doubt there were some to whom a new day dawned because of his helpful preaching. But through the long centuries that have passed since his lips have grown silent he has brought help and strength and hope to far more than he was preaching to in his own day.

I.

What does Isaiah mean by the remnant? He uses the expression again and again. We ourselves are quite familiar with the word. When a mother buys a piece of cloth for a dress, it is impossible, as a rule, to use every shred of it in one dress. There is always something left over. Sometimes enough for a baby dress. Sometimes only enough to make a few squares or a rectangle to sew into a quilt. Sometimes maybe a few strings for a rag carpet or a rug. But these are called remnants. Thanksgiving Day is not far off. It will be a great day for turkey, but the rest of the week we shall have to face the remnant—commonly known as "hash".

Now these are crude pictures, but it conveys a shadow at least of what Isaiah thought of the remnant. He was not the first of the prophets to use
the word. Amos used it when he spoke of the "destruction of Samaria." He said "that the remnant of Samaria would be as if one were to rescue parts of a slaughtered lamp from the jaws of a lion—A leg or a bit of an ear." But Isaiah meant more than this. A remnant of which Amos speaks is a dead remnant. The remnant of Isaiah is living. It is rich in possibilities. In fact, it is the hope of the world.

In speaking of it he takes us into the forest. He shows us an oak tree that has been cut down. Naturally, that is the end of the tree. But from the stump there comes a tender green tree. It grows until it becomes a sapling. It is a living thing. So the remnant of Israel is to be. It is this that makes it so hopeful:—Its glory is not in its size, it is not conspicuous because of its quantity, but because of its quality. Small and insignificant as it seems it has this glory. That it is a vital, growing something. One of the dearest and most convincing convictions of his heart was his faith in this remnant.

II.

How did he come by this faith?

1. What he knew of the nature of God, and what he saw going on among the people about him convinced him that the nation was facing disaster. In addition, about which I spoke to you last week, the prophet saw the Lord high and lifted up. He heard the seraphim crying: "Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts." Isaiah was convinced that this Holy God was against sin. That he hated it. That he hated it with an irresistible hatred that would not endure its being on the earth.

The second part of Isaiah's vision of himself and of his people was their uncleanness. "Woe is me," he said "for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips and dwelt in the midst of a people of unclean lips." Through repentance and confession Isaiah found cleansing. But not so with his people. Professing to be God's chosen, they continued to live in rebellion against God. They practiced injustice one against another. They resorted to their own petty schemes and
and devices. siding in now with Egypt and now with Assyria to save themselves nationally. As a people they were almost wholly without faith.

Now Isaiah with his keen insight could not fail to see that there works must end in disaster. God had punished them, but they had not repented. In fact that they had given up religion altogether. But wickedness and worship went hand in hand until the prophet exclaims in desperation "why should ye be stricken anymore? Ye will rebel ye more and more." From the crown of your head to the sole of your feet there is no soundness in you. So genuinely convinced was Isaiah that disaster was ahead that he named his second son Mahershalaalhashbosh. He did not give him this name because it was a family name. He certainly did not give it to him because of its brevity or its beauty. The main reason was "Speed to the prey, hasten to the spoil." The boy became a living message of warning. When he introduced him to his friends they would naturally ask "Is that a family name?" "No, it means Speed to the prey, hasten to the spoil." It means that God's chosen people are going to be destroyed for and by their sins.

But while Isaiah was sure of the coming punishment he could not bring himself to believe that his nation was going utterly destroyed. This was the case because the nation was not utterly bad. There were a few among the many who were yet true to God. There was a pitiful little minority in the midst of a swaggering majority that yet stood true. Some of this little handful would be saved. With this remnant God would make a new start. Through this remnant he would march on toward the conquering of the world. This faith was stronger, if possible, than his belief in coming disaster. Therefore, he named his first born Shearjashub. That too was not a family name. It meant a remnant who were left.

A tremendous earnest man was Isaiah. He declared that he and his family were meant to be signs to his people. As the brilliant statesman walked about he would introduce these boys. "This is my first born Shearjashub." "A queer name" one would reply. "How did you come to give that to your son? It is cer-
tainly not a family name." "No" said the prophet, "it is a name given in hope and faith. It means a remnant shall be left. It is a declaration of my conviction that the hope of the world is not in the many, but in the few. Not in the swaggering majority, but in often seemingly insignificant minority.

III.

Now this faith that steadied Israel is one that is needed by ourselves. It is important that we impress upon our own hearts this truth. This is the case for at least two or three reasons.

1. We need to remind ourselves of the importance of the minority because of our tendency to worship bigness. Size has always been impressive, but I daresay no people have been more impressed by it than we Americans. We certainly tend to worship at the shrine of what one has called "jumboism". Jumbo, you know, had just one distinction. He was the biggest elephant in captivity. And, as if that were a supreme merit, we want the biggest of everything. We want to have the biggest cities, we want the biggest possible fortunes, we want to live in the biggest house, to belong to the biggest church, and to have the biggest preacher. And the biggest preacher is the one who has the biggest crowd.

But mere bigness is never a real asset. A writer said sometime ago that six hundred thousand people were out at Coney Island on a single Sunday. How impressive, that did their presence mean? He gave the answer "It meant peanuts and popcorn," that was all. They were out on no quest, they were on no crusade. Yet, I need no less of an authority than a great scientist question Christianity, the truth and the value of it, because he said less than one out of ten in a certain city went to church on Sunday morning. We need to sit at the feet of Isaiah to learn the futility of mere bigness. The nations that were troubling Israel were big nations, but they are all dead today in spite of their size. Some of
the pre-historic animals were enormous creatures, but they died nevertheless, they became extinct. Often size does not count.

2. Then we need Isaiah's faith because it is true the hope of the world is almost in the few, never in the many. Every advancement of science, every discovery, every step in moral progress has almost come at the hands of the few. Never at the hands of the many. Who first rebelled against slavery? Against polytheism? Against infanticide? Against all the evils that vex the ancient world? It was not the many, but the few.

When Jesus was crucified there were ten thousand of voices raised against him to everyone that was for him. He was doomed to death by an almost unanimous vote. But there was a pitiful little handful that believe in him. They had known Him intimately and well and had more to do with the passing of the future. The howl of the mob was a momentary noise and nothing more. But this petty minority went out to re-make the world.

What is the hope of St. Luke's Church? It is certainly not in its numbers. We have a membership of some four thousand, but many of those names are liabilities rather than assets. The hope of the Church is not in its numbers, but in the who are really loyal to the Master and the things for which he stands. Every forward step, every real revival has been begun and carried forward, not by the many, but by the few. It does not take many people for God to use for a victorious movement. But those that he uses must be genuine. And the genuine are always in the minority, never in the majority. Therefore, the hope of the world is in the remnant.

3. Finally we need this for our own encouragement. If we look abroad today and see only the seen, we are likely to become discouraged. The crowds are not coming in our direction, but the things that signify have never been vastly impressive. If you had been in Caesarea Philippi nineteen hundred years ago as a shrewd newspaper reporter, you would have found a thousand things in the Roman
Empire than that little meeting where Jesus sat down with twelve friends. But the Roman Empire is dead while those twelve men still march on, and while the faith of which they stood is the hope of the world. Let us then thank God for the remnant. The religious life of the Church, many times, has been at a low ebb, but there has always been a remnant. There is always some good soil, and there are always a few who have not defiled their garments. Let us also dare to pray that we might be a part of that small group to which Jesus Christ is looking. These are the ones that are to salt the earth.
I'D LIKE MY HEAD

"My people doth not consider."

—Isaiah 1:3

Tonight we are seeking to do honor to the young men and women who have gone
out from our church and from our homes into the service of our nation. We think
of them with deep gratitude as they represent us at many a distant and difficult
post. But of course the message I am to bring is not going to be addressed to
them. Such a procedure would be futile since they are not here to hear it. No
more do I propose to waste your time in praise of their heroism. This would be
equally futile; they do not need my praise. Their own devoted gallantry has al-
ready honored them, to use Lincoln's immortal phrase, "far beyond my power to do
or express." But I am speaking to you who are parents, and especially to you who
are in life's green spring, in the hope that we may be led to work together as
to help to guarantee that this tragic night through which we are now passing shall
be in abiding day.

Let us look now at my text. If we read the whole passage of which this is a
part, we can see that the prophet is indignant to the point of desperation. His
words are hard as stones. All that keeps us from stopping our ears in bitter re-
gretment is that we know that these words come from a broken and bleeding heart,
haplessly in tears. But why did the prophet so hate? Why is he so scathing in his
indictment against his foolish people, and incidentally against us? It is not
merely that they have sinned. It is not that they have made wrong choices and
have in consequence suffered. It is rather that they have refused to learn from
their suffering. The tragedies resulting from their wrong choices seem to have
taught them nothing.

"Why," he asks in grieved amazement, "should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more; the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores. Yet you go on sowing your tares and reaping your ghastly harvest. You are duller than the stolid ox," he continues. "You are dumber than the donkey. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib. They know where they find food. They do not go to the desert for refreshment. But you are not so wise. You keep falling into the same traps, committing the same sins, suffering the same dire consequences. You refuse to learn."

The indictment is as true of us as of them. Often when we wish to rebuke somebody we call him a goose. But what a slander against the goose! Geese can learn. Years ago I visited Jack Minor, the Canadian bird-man. He showed me a very cunning arrangement he had for trapping wild geese. There were two lakes joined by a ribbon of water. This ribbon of water was wired in with a gate at each end. When the geese were passing from one lake to another, Jack Minor could touch a spring and close these gates. Thus, he would often catch as many as sixty geese at a time. Having caught them, he would tag a leg of each goose with an aluminum tag. Had he caught the same goose twice, he would have known it. But in all the years this has never happened. Yet we get caught in the same traps generation after generation. We are so slow to learn! It is this slowness that is largely responsible for the tragedy that we are now suffering.

II

Let us look briefly at our present situation and see how we got that way.

1. We are engaged in the grimmest war on the widest scale that our persistently fighting and bleeding world has ever known. We are facing the most stupendous threat to all that we hold dear that any generation has ever faced. Other despots through the centuries have stalked abroad upsetting man's cities and making the continents
to tremble. But never have the blood-thirsty gangsters of any generation been so powerful as today. There is absolutely no value that we of the United Nations possess that is not threatened by the despotic powers that are now arrayed against us.

What are these powers seeking to do? They are seeking to enslave all mankind. They have been clear-eyed enough to see that our world has now become one world. It is no longer merely so many isolated scraps called nations; it is a single globe. Germany and Japan are seeking to make this world one in its slavery to themselves. And lest I should forget to say it later, what they are seeking to do through the exercise of despotic power we must seek to do through the exercise of democratic powers. We are to make this world a federation of free nations, or it will become little more than a horde of slaves.

Now it was to avoid this tragedy of enslavement and the loss of all we hold dear that we entered this war. It was to avert this tragedy that you have given your sons and daughters. It was to avert this tragedy that these gallant sons and daughters have given and are giving themselves. None of us made the gift gleefully. We have sung few songs in praise of this war. We have not been able to gird ourselves with any of the bracing slogans of a quarter of a century ago. Instead we have gone grimly about the task, because we have no delight in war. On the contrary, we hate it with every fiber of our being. We are fighting, therefore, because, though we know war for a deadly evil, we regard it in this instance as the lesser of two evils.

When we fought the last war, our attitude was far different. We had great, ringing words on our lips then that made war look almost beautiful. We were fighting a war to end war. We were fighting to make the world safe for democracy. We were going to usher in a new and better day. The needy people of Europe were calling to us and we responded with high-hearted enthusiasm. Listen to the call:
"In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe;
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields."

Listen to our gallant answer. It was given, I think, in sober sincerity.

"Rest ye in peace, ye Flanders dead,
The fight that ye so bravely led
We have taken up, and we will keep
To our faith with you who lie asleep,
With each a cross to mark his bed,
And poppies blowing overhead
Where once his own life's blood ran red.
So let your sleep be sweet and deep
In Flanders fields.

Fear not that ye have died for naught,
The flag ye threw to us we caught,
Ten million hands will hold it high,
And Freedom's light will never die.
We have learned the lesson that you taught
In Flanders fields.

What came of our gallant response? Very much came of it. By our help the three great democracies, the United States, England, and France, won the war. For this reason they had the making of the peace. But the supreme opportunity belonged to us of America. We came out of the war honored and respected as no other nation has ever been. For this reason no other nation has ever had so big a chance to serve and save the world. To add to our opportunity, we had as our President that great world citizen, Woodrow Wilson. This man sought earnestly to keep faith with the past and with the future by proposing the League of Nations. With multitudes of others I believe that if we had entered wholeheartedly into this League, in spite of its imperfections, we could have conserved the peace of
the world and saved ourselves and our fellows from plunging into the abyss of blood and tears in which we now find ourselves.

What defeated this great and hopeful dream? It was not the enlightened judgment of mankind. When the League was first proposed, the idea met with an almost universal welcome from a war-weary world. Practically everybody recognized the need of it and the sanity of it. How, I repeat, was it defeated? It was defeated by a stupid selfishness, a selfishness that refused to think. Of course, a complete selfishness is always stupid. But there is such a thing as an enlightened self-interest. But we failed to attain even this. First, it was attacked by certain self-seeking politicians. These appealed to what is basest and blindest in us. They set us to talking of the absurdity of our obligating ourselves to fight the battles of Europe. Under their influence we began to give utterance to that devil's cry of "America first!" We became isolationists, eager to let the remainder of the world go to hell in its own way.

Thus, we missed our big chance to help the world and to save ourselves. Of course, I am not implying that ours is the only guilt. England and France played perhaps a more pathetic part than we, for which they have paid a terrible price. But even theirs is not the supreme guilt. The supreme guilt belongs to the gangster nations that attacked us. Yet, we need to remember that it was our blindness and selfishness that helped to make their attack possible. Thus, today we reap according to our own sowing.

III

Now the question is what are we going to do with our next opportunity? There are a few reasonable certainties that we may face together that ought to give us hope.

1. I think we can now be sure beyond a peradventure that we are going to win the war. That in itself will be a great achievement. Of course, there is that in the totalitarian state, such as the Germany of Hitler, that would have wrought
its own destruction sooner or later. The same is true of Japan. But it might have taken decades, even a century. But these outlaw nations that have wrought so much wreckage are even now on their way out. It seems now that they are headed for a certain and early defeat.

2. A second fact to which we may look forward with hope and joy is that when the victory is won the big majority of our boys and girls are coming home. That will be a red-letter day. But let us bear in mind that they are not coming just as they went away. They went away young—young in body and young in heart. Some of them are coming back old, at least old in their look-out on life. The terrible experiences through which they have passed will have aged them. They have known suffering. They have faced death. They have been through experiences that have tried their souls. Some of them will never be young any more. Some will be changed in other ways. Those possessed of a vital faith will likely come back with one that is more vital. Some of those who carried with them to the fight no real religion will probably come back hardened and embittered, soured on the church, for not having prevented the hell through which they have passed. Some will be wounded in body; others will be wounded in soul. Many will feel that life has cheated them, that they have been robbed of a priceless treasure that the world can never fully restore. But with all their changes, this is our joy—they are coming back.

3. In the third place, when the war is over and the boys come home, in the providence of God, we are going to have another chance to build a secure world. If we fail, perhaps the next generation will get a chance to remedy our failure. But many of our wisest men doubt this. The present war is on a far vaster scale than the first world war. With the new inventions that science will develop in the next quarter of a century, it is easy to believe that a third world war would absolutely devastate the earth. This chance, therefore, that we are soon to face is one that is supremely important. Can we take advantage of it? Are we wise enough to learn from our mistakes? Are we humble enough and trustful enough to
give God a chance to do for us and through us what we cannot do for ourselves? If not, our Lord will have to say to us what he said through his prophet to those bunglers of the long ago, "My people doth not consider."

How are we to go about the building of a secure world?

1. We must realize that we are a part of the world. There was a time in the great west when every man was a sovereign individual. He was a law to himself. He carried his own-six-shooter, stood on his own feet, and defended himself. At least he tried to defend himself, but often he filled an untimely grave because his enemy beat him to the draw. Then, for the sake of his own safety and for the safety of others, this rugged individualist gave up his six-shooter and began to look to the courts to give him the protection he needed. Thus, he and all his fellow citizens had a safer world in which to live. He did this, I say, largely for his own safety.

Now just as the sovereign individualist passed, so must the sovereign state. The nation that is absolutely independent is as completely outmoded as the individual. We must form a federation with other nations, not simply for their protection, as important as that is, but for our own. I passed a terrapin on the highway the other day. He was an isolationist. So when the world about him seemed to be growing dangerous, he drew in every foot, he drew in his head, he shut out everybody but himself. But the rest of the world refused to take notice; a passing car ended his career. Even so, nations in our modern world cannot possibly stand alone. Between the wars some of us tried again and again to get across this word of warning: Either America is going to help the world make peace or it is going to help the world make war. That was as true as the law of gravitation then. It is equally true today.

2. Not only must we assume our responsibility as a part of the world, but we must realize that peace is a positive something. It means far more than a mere
cessation of war. When Rome had conquered the world, she enforced a certain kind of peace, but it was the peace of death rather than the peace of life. Jesus pronounced a blessing upon the peace-makers. But the peace-makers that he counted blessed were not those who merely refused to fight, but those who helped to displace war with a positive peace. That is, those are blessed who seek the destruction of those evils that made war all but a certainty.

Therefore, if we are to be peace-makers we must seek to displace ill will with good will, unbrotherliness with brotherliness. We must, so far as in us lies, see that the freedoms for which we have fought become the possession of our fellows everywhere. They must be the possession of the minority groups within our own borders. We cannot wrong or rob the weakest among us without unspeakable peril to ourselves. We must also seek to share these freedoms with those in the uttermost parts of the earth. The nation that tries in any fashion to exploit a weaker nation in any part of the world must not be allowed to get away with it. There must be a federation of nations with power to enforce justice and peace.

3. I realize that to many of us this task seems great beyond our powers. Of course, it is too great for any individual or any single group of individuals. But we can help to bring it about if we work together. But there is something closer home that we can do. When our boys return they are going to need as they have never needed before the undergirding of a warm, realistic religious faith. That need we can help to meet by the Christianizing of our own homes and by the enriching of the spiritual life of our own church. There are certain things that we as Christians can do that can be done by no others.

First, we can create an atmosphere of sympathy and understanding within our church that will do much to hearten and help our returning soldiers. Do you remember how heroes of the long ago who had been sorely wounded in the battle of life were said to go to Avalon for rest and healing? Our boys should be able to find their Avalon in our church. For them to do this we need a church that is so warm with the presence of our living Lord that to enter its doors will be to be greeted
by his own gracious invitation: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Second, if we are to render the largest service through our church to our returning soldiers, we must have a church roomy enough in its faith to inspire and challenge men who have been fighting a world war. These men have been in the uttermost parts of the earth. They have heard men sing the songs of Zion in a strange land. I think of that letter that came from a soldier boy in Guadalcanal. "A group of natives came down from the hills," he writes. "We gathered about to hear them sing their native songs. But instead, they sang the old hymns that we used to hear back home." No wonder their hearts were strangely warmed! Men who have received a world view are not likely to be gripped by any religion that has a smaller ambition than the conquest of the hearts of all mankind.

Third, and most important of all, if we as Christians are to render the best possible service to our returning sons and daughters, we must have a church sacrificial enough to command the respect and allegiance of those who have been willing to dare all for their flag. In order to be victoriously Christian, it is not necessary that we have vast talents to give. It is absolutely necessary that we give what we have. If when our boys come home they find us willing to learn from the tragic mistakes of yesterday; if they find us glad to go forward sacrificially to the building of a better world for all men; then they will go forward with us to our common task, in the fellowship of our common Lord. God grant "that we fail not man nor Thee!"
THE ARISTOCRATIC PROPHET—ISAIAH

"Then said I, Here am I; send me." Isaiah 6:8

It is good to be at this scene. Here the greatest statesman of his day and the greatest of the writing prophets is giving his testimony. He is telling how life for him took on a new departure. He is telling how he came to be the man that he was and to render the service that he rendered. He is telling how he became for his own nation and for the nations of the world "as a hiding place from the wind and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as a shadow of a great rock in a barren land." Here is the beginning of it all; "Then said I, Here am I, send me."

You can see that the "Then" of our text is a backward looking word. It is an index finger pointing at something that took place in the yesterdays. The prophet giving the varied steps that lead to his volunteering for the role of a prophet.

1. The first event to which this then points is to a great sorrow and a great sense of loss that had come to Isaiah through the death of his king, Uzziah. This king had had the most successful reign since the days of David and Solomon. He had been upon the throne for more than a half of a century. Only the oldest of the people could remember a day when there was another king. Naturally this great leader had come to occupy a peculiar place in the hearts of his people. Naturally he had become for young men, like Isaiah the bulwark of their confidence.

But now this great king is dead. He had not died fighting victoriously on the field of battle. He had not even died in his palace. He had died in a
pest house, the victim of a loathsome disease. To the sensitive soul of youthful Isaiah, it was a terrible blow. He was amazed and stunned. As he turned his eyes toward the future, there seemed little for which to hope. The one on whom his confidence had rested was dead.

What did this brilliant youth do? Where did he turn when life's blackest hour came upon him? In what did he hope, when hope seemed dead? Under such circumstances, some grow bitter and wail in self-pity with Hamlet, "The world is out of joint, Oh cursed plight that I was ever born to set it right." Where do you turn when things go desperately wrong? Others watch to see where we take shelter when the storm breaks upon us. When Isaiah came to his blackest hour he went to church.

Now that sounds trite I know. The Pharisee also went to church. But he was no better for going. Perhaps he was a little more hopeless, a little more satisfied with himself. But look at this young man. He is just out of his teens. He is a blue-blood. He is at home in kings' palaces. But he is turning his steps toward God's house. It is good to see a man turn his steps in that direction regardless of his age, but it is doubly good to see one do so who is in life's green spring.

Young Isaiah went to church. Then what? He gives us the answer in his own words "I saw the Lord." The church of his day was not perfect, neither is the church of our day. But with all of its faults, it is the one institution whose supreme purpose is to help men find God. It was at church that this youthful genius came to an awareness of that God, whose searching hand is always feeling for yours and mine, both in the daylight and in the dark. He came away with this great confession upon his lips, "I saw the Lord."

Of course, this experience does not come to all of us who attend church. But the fact that it does not is not the fault of our Lord, but of ourselves. Isaiah saw the Lord because he was seeking Him. He saw the Lord because he had
come to the end of himself. Realizing that he could no longer hope in a king, he was in earnest quest of the King. Perhaps the most difficult barrier that God has to overcome in revealing Himself to you and me, is our self-confidence. Isaiah found God in this desperate hour because he had come to realize that nothing less than God would do.

How long are you and I going to be without a sense of God in our lives? Just as long as we are content to be without Him. It was only when that embarrassed host, in Jesus' immortal story, found that his larder was empty, that he dared appeal to his friend, declaring—"A friend of mine has come and I have nothing to set before him." Even so, we find ourselves inadequate, individually and nationally, unless we have God. It is only when the heavy hands of a great need grip our shoulders and crush us to our knees that we really seek in such a fashion as to find. Youthful Isaiah was face to face with veils through which he could not see and doors to which he had no key, hence he sought the Lord and found Him.

II

What was the outcome of this vision of God?

1. First it brought a vision of himself. When this choice young man became aware of God, he did not shout for joy, he rather sobbed. We dare not pray for a vision of God unless we are willing to have the littleness and meanness burned out of us. Isaiah was perhaps as clean and upright young man as was alive at that time. Yet in the presence of God, he cried, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips."

Sometime ago one of our most brilliant ministers wrote an article on The Vanishing Sinner. He undertook to explain why we do not feel a vivid sense of sin such as our fathers felt. He gave some very same reasons, but I think he left out the supreme and inclusive reason. We have lost our sense of sin because we have lost our sense of God. It may be easy for us to feel quite comfortable in the presence of each other. We are quite as tall as our neighbor, perhaps taller.
But such is not the case when we come to realize the presence of the holy God.
It is then we cry with Isaiah, "Unclean."

That is what happened to that great revolutionary who died beside Jesus long ago. He was an ardent patriot. He had begun his career with a high purpose—the liberation of his people. He had lived sacrifically and courageously, even if he had become an outlaw. As he looked upon the religious leaders that were gathered about him, he towered above them morally and spiritually as a mountain above a molehill. Yet we hear him confessing that though he is suffering the very pangs of hell, he is suffering justly. What has happened to him? He sees himself not against the background of the scribes and Pharisees, but against the background of the dying Man at his side who has just prayed, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Always to have a sense of God is to have a sense of sin.

This accounts for the fact that the most bitter confessions of sin are always made, not by the worst of men, but by the best. Any of us can confess easily that we are not all that we ought to be. But when we hear those confessions that burst from tortured hearts and agonized lips, confessions hot with shame and wet with tears, they generally come from the lips of the saints.

It is saintly Job who cries in the presence of God, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eyes seeth Thee, and mine ears have heard Thy voice. Lo, I am a dust and ashes."

Now having become conscious of his sin, this gifted young man poured out his prayer of confession. Then what? "That happened which always happens. He was forgiven. He was re-made. He tells his story in dramatic fashion; "Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; and he laid it upon my mouth and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin purged." This was his experience because it was true then as it is
true today—"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness."

It was after this experience that he heard the voice of the Lord saying: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" This gives us an insight into the real meaning of forgiveness. What is it to be forgiven? Again and again Jesus said to men and women in His own day, "Thy sins are forgiven." What did He mean? Such forgiveness means far more than the remission of a penalty. It means far more than the rubbing out of a record that is black. It means the restoration of a fellowship. It means that God takes us back into His confidence. Isaiah had no sooner confessed his uncleanness than he was forgiven and trusted with a great mission. Just how God called him we are not told. From the context, it would seem that He called him through the realization of the needs of others. His own need had been for the forgiving love of God. That, he realized, was the need of his fellows.

Then came the final step. In the realization of what God had done for him, in the realization of the need of his fellows, he made the great decision.—"Here am I, send me." Having thus put himself in God's hands, God accepted and used him. The road upon which he sent this youthful volunteer was a hard and lonely road, but he did not have to walk it alone, nor did he walk it in vain. More than once this courageous prophet stood between his nation and its ruin. Since that far off day he has not ceased to speak both to individuals and nations. He has a word that is vital for you and me and for our needy day.

III

Now, of course there is that about Isaiah's story that is unique. His is the experience of a young aristocrat who lived in the eighth century before Christ. Yet while there is that about his experience that is unique, there is also that about it that is abiding and universal. As a result of his experience Isaiah has at least three definite words to say to us:
1. First he declares joyfully that as he experienced the forgiving grace of God, so may we. For what really happened to Isaiah was that he was born anew. That experience is a universal privilege. It is also a universal necessity. There is no substitute for it. No amount of decency, no amount of giving, no amount of working can take the place of it. We can arrive in another way. It is the one answer to that longing that every man feels at some time if not all the time, "Oh for the man to arise in me, that the man I am may cease to be."

Naturally we do not all come to this experience in the same way. For this reason, some are discouraged at not having a dramatic and revolutionary experience such as this of Isaiah or that of Paul in the New Testament. But these were both mature men. Boys and girls can be so trained as that they will come into the knowledge of God in a less revolutionary fashion. I am told that there is a certain flower in the tropics that bursts into bloom with a report like the cracking of a rifle. But that is not the way the roses bloom in my garden. At evening there is a bud. That night the dew weeps its tears upon that bud. The next morning the sun kisses the tears away and that rose blooms so quietly that not even the bee that was gathering nectar at the heart of it heard the slightest noise. Yet my flower is as really open as that one that proclaims its opening by a loud noise.

In every congregation there are those who can tell the day and the hour when they passed out of death into life. But always there are others who find it impossible to fix the date of their spiritual birth. Yet often those who could not tell you the day when they first met the Lord are living in greater intimacy with Him than some who have experienced a sudden conversion. Remember, the significant fact is, not how and when you entered into a knowledge of God, but have you really come to know Him?

2. To all men, as to Isaiah, comes this question: "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" It comes whether we through Isaiah's experience
or not. God gives to every man his work. If any man, anywhere, anytime, responds affirmatively to God's appeal, God accepts that man, transforms him and uses him for His glory. No man is condemned in any day to be a part of the disease, every man is called upon to be a part of the remedy.

Many of our churches are now engaged in a Crusade for Christ. You know what a crusader is. He is not one who is fighting a defensive war but an offensive. He is out in the fellowship of his God to get something done that simply will not get done without him. Who is to take part in this crusade? Answer - Everybody, every man, every woman, every boy, every girl. God's call is for you personally as if you were the only individual alive. It is to you personally as if you were God's one hope for a better world.

3. The final abiding fact about this experience is that to this call that comes to every man, every man must make some kind of response. Perhaps there will be those who respond conditionally. They will say "yes" to God provided those about them make a like response. But this is not enough. When by the lakeside Jesus called to Simon Peter, "Follow me" Simon turned and looked at John. These two had been together for a long time. They had been partners in the fishing business before Jesus had come their way. They had entered His service together. Therefore, Simon asked, "What shall this man do?" "What is that to thee?" was the stern response of the Master, "Follow thou me". Your obedience must not be conditioned on the obedience of others.

Then there are others who will hear with longing eyes at this appeal of our Lord and yet will hesitate to respond because the task looks so hopeless. Scores of nations in our world today are tortured wrecks. Our whole world has by been set upon brigands who have wounded and stripped it and left it half dead. Of course, we would like to get this tortured world on its feet once more. But the task is so big. Therefore, because we can't do everything, some of us will refuse to do anything.
But what really is God asking at your hands and mine? He is asking something that is within reach of the weakest as well as the strongest. It is within the reach of the unsoiled hands of little children. It is within reach of old age. It is within reach of the busy hands of those in the stress of middle life. We can all say, "Here am I, send me". That is the least that any man can say and be a Christian at all. That is the most that any man can say in time or eternity. To say that is not to do all perhaps that we should like to do, but it is to do the will of God and that is enough. For all men to say that, would make a new world in a single day. That fine consummation may be many centuries in the future, but each of us can help toward it this day by saying "Here am I, send me."
HOW TO STAY YOUNG

"Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:
"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."  

Isaiah 40:30-31

The Bible is a plain-spoken book. At times it seems that it is almost brutal in its frankness. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary." This is the case, if for no other reason, because the youth will cease to be young after a while and will become feeble and old. In speaking to you then on how to stay young, I frankly face the fact that there is no way to stay young physically. Old age may be delayed, but if you live long enough, it is absolutely inevitable.

But I am convinced that this is not really a calamity. The only old age that is really tragic is that of the inner-life. Some people are older at twenty than others at eighty. In fact some of the oldest people I have met have been on the sunny side of thirty. While some of the youngest I have known have passed three score years and ten. Walter Lipmann speaks of those who are old and world weary at twenty-two. Such old age is tragic indeed. But merely to have had a good number of birthdays is nothing over which to fret.

I think our poets have misled us here. So often they have implied or declared that childhood and youth are the only periods of life that are really worth living. Of course, this frankly is not true. I had a joyful childhood and youth, but I am living more richly now than then. I have no desire whatever to turn
back the clock. I think we talk more sentimental rubbish about
the happiness of childhood and youth and the unhappiness of
other periods of life than almost anything else.

"O talk not to me of a name great in story
The days of our youth are the days of our glory.
The flowers that blossom at sweet two and twenty
Are worth all your laurels tho ever so plenty.

"What are laurels and wreathes to the brow that is wrinkled?
T'is but as dead flowers with May dew besprinkled,
Then away with all such for the brow that is hoary!
What care I for wreaths that can oly give glory!

Even Wordsworth falls into the same blunder:

"Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison house begin to close
Upon the growing boy;
But He beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The Youth who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day."

Thus life begins beautifully, but soon grows drab and gray
and ends in an ugly climax. So convinced is one cynic of this
that he regrets that instead of being born lovely little babies
and growing into withered old men and women, we might be born
withered and old and grow back to infancy. Of course, if that
should happen, we would end in utter nothingness. Now the
fact about this pessimistic view is that it is not true unless
we consent to make it so. We can remain young in heart regardless
of the almanac.

Here is a classic example. One day when John Quincy Adams
was past eighty, a friend met him on the streets of Boston and
said, "Good morning, Mr. Adams. How is John Quincy Adams this
morning?"
"John Quincy Adams is quite well, I thank you." the venerable gentleman answered with a twinkle in his eyes. "Of course the house in which he now lives is quite dilapidated. The walls are tottering and the roof is worn. Soon he is going to have to move out of it into another, not made with hands. But John Quincy Adams is quite all right."

What can the almanac do to a heart like that?

A few years ago a certain minister told that story to his radio audience. The following week he received a letter from one of his feminine listeners that read somewhat as follows: "The house in which I live is eighty-two years of age. I confess that it is not as beautiful as it was fifty years ago. Indeed, I have not kept it painted as is the case of many today. But I have been giving a great deal of time to interior decorating. Then too, I am happy to say that I have a very reliable tenant on the top floor." Here again the almanac must throw up its hands in surrender.

- II -

What are some of the marks of old age? That is, how old are you? I am not going to consult the family record. I am going to consult you. I am going to consult you in the light of one of the best discursive passages of old age in all literature, the twelfth chapter of Ecclesiastes. There are two marks of old age that this chapter mentions to which I wish to call your attention. There is a third mark that this writer failed to mention, but which I am sure he would accept.

1. The first mark of old age is staggering under trifles. The author of this great chapter puts it in these words. "The
grasshopper shall be a burden." If a grasshopper were to light on your shoulder, you would not know he was there unless someone call him to your attention. He is too light to register. But if you are old enough, this grasshopper will make you totter as if Atlas had just dumped the world upon your week shoulders.

Now if you totter under trifles, if you make mountains out of molehills, you are old whether you are nineteen or ninety. Magnifying tribles is not confined to any one age. It may intrude both in first and second childhood. But whenever you begin to get excited over petty things, to magnify the insignificant, then you are so old that you are in the way. You are so old that you are a source of endless trouble. This making mountains out of molehills is one of the worst possible foes to domestic happiness as to happiness anywhere else.

The other day a busy young husband went home and greeted his wife in the usual fashion. But her greeting was about as warm as an icicle and thrilling as a wet blanket. He struggled through the conversation at dinner to be greeted with the groans of a martyr. He finally came out bluntly and said, "What is the matter?" She refused to tell him. Then after she had made him miserable for the whole night and herself far more so, she told him that it was her birthday and that he had not even thought of it. I have never understood why some people want to keep their loved ones on needles and pins for fear they will forget something. Those who do so are either babies or in their old age.

2. A second mark of old age that this author mentions is timidity, an increasing fear. "They shall be afraid of that
which is high." is the way he puts it. If we do not guard
against it, life and the passing years will quinch the fire of
our enthusiasm. "For the wettest of wet blankets" said Lord
Morley, "give me the man who was most enthusiastic in his youth."
But this need not be the case.

One of the most charming men in the Old Testament was Caleb.
When a young man, he was one of the twelve that went to spy out
the Land of Promise. Ten of his fellows saw God through their
difficulties and were overcome by fear. Caleb with Joshua saw
his difficulties in the light of God and was unafraid. Therefore,

the two brought in a minority report, declaring that they were
well able to take the land. But they were voted down and the
task had to be postponed for half a lifetime. But now at last they
have crossed the Jordan and much of the land is in their

possession. But there was one mountain fastness that seemed
impregnable. Their invading armies had not made a dent upon it.
Who was the volunteer for this impossible task? It was this man
Caleb. He was then eighty-five years old, but he was exceedingly
young. He was still not afraid of that which is high.

3. The final mark of old age that I mention is despairing
of the present and the future while we look mournfully back to
the past. Nothing will save you from tragic old age if your gaze
is turned backwards. Nobody can do anything to change yesterday.
Here is a poem. Shakespeare did not write it, but it is quite as
true as if he had.

"The lightening bug is brilliant
But he hasn't any mind.
He blunders through existence
With his headlight on behind."

When the exiles returned to rebuild their ruined city and
temple, they had to undergo many hardships. At last they succeeded in laying the foundation of the temple. When this was done, a great shout went up that echoed from house to house and was reverberated from the hills in the background. But it was a mingled shout. Some were shouting from joy; others were wailing in their sorrow. Who were doing the wailing? Those who looked at the foundation of the new temple and said, "It is not going to be anything like the old temple." Those who were shouting for joy were those who looked at the new temple and saw in it a new and better today. Those who wailed were old and those who shouted for joy were young. If you despair of the present and future and look mournfully back at the past, then you are old whether you are seventeen or seventy.

- III -

What are some of the antidotes to old age? Of course, proper living, proper eating and exercising will help, but that is not enough. My barber said to me sometime ago, "I can put something on that gray hair of yours that will keep it from being gray."

"Never mind", I answered. "I am not afraid of gray hair. All I am afraid of is not having any hair to get gray."

Here are a few simple directions that will keep you young.

1. Be willing to be your age. If you are thirty, act that way, if seventy, act that way. Do not quarrel with the calendar. If you try to be kittenish at seventy-five, you will not deceive anybody but yourself. Getting old is a part of God's plan. It is something that you cannot avoid. Therefore, the sensible and religious thing to do is to accept it.

Now there are those who are not willing to do this. As they slip down the further side of the hill, they claw at the embankment
with frantic futility. They refuse ever to look at the family record, forgetting that they are carrying a record in every line of their bodies. In their pathetic effort to stay young, they get old the faster. Relax and be your age.

2. If you desire to stay young, keep learning. There are pupils in high school who look forward to graduation with joy because they feel that they will then not have to learn anything else. There are those in college that feel they will be through with learning when they get their diplomas.

Here is an old man in a prison cell. Death is so close that he can almost feel its chilled breath upon his face. He is writing a letter to an absent friend, "Dear Timothy," he writes, "when you come, bring my cloak with you. Do your best to come before winter else I will suffer." Then fearing he might have too much baggage to bring the books and cloak too, he adds this word, "Bring the books and especially my parchments." He seems to say, "I can afford to be cold, but I cannot afford to be without my books." He was standing at the door of death, but he was determined to meet his Lord intellectually alert and alive.

3. Keep up your interest in others, in your church, in your community, and in your work. We are all in danger of being too narrow in our interests. That danger increases when we cannot be as active as we once were. But to lose interest is deadly. We can live youthfully and well on very little. But we cannot live youthfully unless we have something to live for. Whenever our chief concern gets to be our own pains and pills, then we are old regardless of the calendar. There are tens of thousands today who are sick and who would surely recover if they would
get their minds off themselves.

Dr. Grenfel tells of organizing a society of women to write to orphan sailor boys with the British Navy. Among those enlisted was an old woman who was making herself a medicine chest while she was being a burden to her family. But having written to one sailor, she wrote to another and another. He tells of seeing this old invalid a few years later as she stood on the warf. She was surrounded by a bunch of noisy, laughing sailors, and she was laughing loudest of all. Her health had come back and she had taken a half score years off her age.

There is a story in mythology of a certain wishing vest that having been put on the wearer could wish for anything he chose and his wish would come true. But everytime he wished a selfish wish the vest would draw up a bit. If he kept on wishing selfishly, it would finally choke him to death. Jesus was teaching the same truth when he said, "He that seeketh to save his life shall lose it, but he that loseth his life shall find it." If you want to stay young, keep up your interest in others.

4. Finally, if you want to stay young, keep in touch with God. Make a habit of prayer. As you pray, the tides of divine life will flow in to fill your depleted energies. You will be able to say with John, "Of His fullness have all we received."

"Even the youths shall faint and be weary and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

When I was pastor in Memphis, I had the wisdom to secure an old superannuate who was then past eighty as my assistant. He did not preach, he visited. He also sat with us in the pulpit at
every service. His presence was an unfailing benediction. When he died, I think his was the largest funeral I have ever known. I am confident that the most fruitful years of his life were the years between eighty and his homegoing. I am also sure that these were his happiest years. Keeping an active interest in others, he moved about the eventide of life like a rich and rare perfume. He knew how to love and pray, so he never grew old.

When Edwin Markham reached his eightieth birthday, they celebrated the event at Madison Square Garden. A poem was written by Mr. Markham for the occasion. The last lines ran as follows:

"I look to the future for wine and bread
I have bidden the past adieu.
So I laugh and wave hands to the years ahead,
Come on, I am ready for you."

So may it be for all of us.
"Even the youth shall faint and be weary, and the young man shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

PART I.

The text brings us at once face to face with the grim certainty, that even the youth shall faint and be weary. To this truth every one of us must say, "Amen! Often a keen and crushing realization of it comes to us even in the springtime of life. But if it does not come in youth, then it comes with absolute certainty later on. There is nothing more sure for the natural man than just this, that the youth shall faint, and be weary, and the young man shall utterly fall.

This is a fact. This is a sob that sings thru much of the poetry of the world.

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may, Old time is still a flying, And the same flower that blooms today, Tomorrow will be dying.

Thine—has been a kindred wait, My life is in the yellow leaf, The flowers are fruits of hopes having gone, The worm, the canker, and the griefs are mine alone.

The same thought is in that tender song,

Sweet day, so calm, so clear, so bright, The bridal of the earth and sky, The dew weep thy fall tonight, For thou must die.

This weariness comes to all sorts and conditions of men whose lives are not fed on the Divine sources.

1. It is true to the pleasure seeker. When the prodigal
left home, he was in search of a good time. But how tired he got of doing as he pleased. He spent much upon his adventure, in fact he spent all that he had, and what was the outcome. He tells us in one tearful sentence. "I perish with hunger." He was not an old man, but even in his youth he had fainted and grown weary.

Did you read of that young girl who was the pride and beauty of Paris. She was taking her vacation on board a lovely yacht. She was sailing the beautiful and romantic Rhine. But one night after the dance, with her ball room dress yet upon her, she stole over the side of the vessel and dropped into the dark bosom of the water, and into the darker bosom of death. What was the matter? She was clean worn out. She had discovered the truth of that statement that says, "She that weary in pleasure is dead while she liveth:"

2. But this is not true simply of the pleasure seeker. It is also true of the serious and earnest worker. So often he is wearied by his failure. So often his prize seems to vanish at his approach. So often he seems to be pursuing the end of the rainbow. But even if he attains, he is usually disappointed. The prize is not the satisfying something that he dreamed it would be when it lured him from a distance.

How tired was Dean Swift. He missed the prize. Those who knew him said he was the most miserable in England. How doubtfully tired was Solomon. He won the prize, held it for a moment in bitterness then dashed it from him in disgust saying, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity."

3. The youth faint and grow weary, if for no other reason than that they soon cease to be young. What are the bodies of twenty-five years ago. What will Miss America be in about a quarter of a
century from today. However fair you are, however strong you are, you will not take many more steps down the road before a highwayman meets you. He will rob you of all your physical charms. He will steal the plumpness from your figure. He will steal the elasticity from your step. He will steal the sparkle from your eye. He will steal the music from your laughter.

That sounds very ugly to say of you, I know. It is pitiful how hard some people try to conceal the ravages of the years, even from themselves. Now I do not believe in making an effort to grow old. I believe in the best possible care of this physical house we live in, but I believe also in a candid facing of the facts. Louis XV would not allow death to be mentioned in his presence. But it did him no good, death walked in on him one day without even sending his calling card. He announced his own presence. So, old age will do for you and me, however hard we may try to shut our eyes to the fact.

PART II.

But over against this grim certainty, the prophet sets a most winsome possibility. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary," That is true, every one knows that it is true, "but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." That also is true. Therefore, there is a way that our failing energies may be replenished. There is a way by which our decaying strength may be perpetually renewed. Life is an anticlimax for many, but it may not be so. It may be a glorious climax. It may be a something made winsome by unfailing springtime. Browning found it so, therefore he sings to us -
Grow old along with me,
The best is yet to be;
The last of life,
For which the first was made,
Youth shows but half-
Trust God, see all,
Nor be afraid.

PART III.

What is the secret need. It is not a secret that has
to do with these physical bodies of ours. By wise and right living
we can postpone that decay, and that we ought to do, but there is
absolutely no way to abide the avoided. If there were, I think such
would be a colossal calamity. If surgery ever gets to the place,
as some believe it will, that it can by certain operations fence off
old age, it will not be a blessing, but a curse.

There is a fountain of youth, but it is not for these
bodies of ours. Some think that they cut off a number of years, by
cutting off their hair. Some grow young by taking off a few inches
of their skirts, though I am persuaded that this remedy has reached
the limit. Some buy spring time and morning tide at the beauty
parlor. Though against this I have no tirade to utter. Help your-
selves as much as you can. Some of you need it. But the tragedy
of it all is that it is futile. Youth is not a physical something,
merely, it is a thing of the heart. That is the reason the wise man
said "Keep thine heart with all diligence, for out of it are the
issues of life." Whether you are young or old, does not depend upon
how many years you have lived, it depends upon what you are in your
inner life. Some of the oldest people I have ever known have not
yet reached a score. On the other hand, some of the youngest and
most radiant I have ever known have been those who have passed the three score years and ten.

How then, are we to find the secret of abiding youth? It is not by having your face lifted. It is by lifting your own face toward God. It is by opening the windows of your soul out toward the heavenly Jerusalem. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." That means prayer. That means silent communion. That means to linger in His presence until He becomes a reality. That means clinging to Him as the branch clings to the vine. Such a man can never grow old. He cannot; because his life if fed by inexhaustible resources.

It is easy to understand how this is true. It is said that the personal presence of Napoleon could make the most timid soldier into a hero. Courage thrown out from his own heart into the heart of his soldiers, thru-personal-contact. One dark night when Scotland was undergoing religious persecution, a man whispered into his ear, John Knox is here, and that friend whispered that same message into the ear of another. In a few hours, all Scotland was alive with a new hope and a new courage and high enthusiasm, because of the personal presence of this one heroic heart.

Our God is infinite in his energies. "Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?" How can that light shine on without weariness? By keeping in touch with the dynamo. How can the brook sing its way to the sea? By keeping in touch with the eternal springs. How can the fire keep burning in Bunyon's immortal story? By keeping constantly fed by secret supplies of oil. And there is no other secret for you and me. We
must be kept in constant contact with God.

How strikingly this truth is illustrated in the life of Moses. One day he struck a blow in the interest of his people. After that day he left the country. He forgot the great dreams that had been his in other years. He compelled himself to be content to tend the sheep of his father-in-law. But one day he saw a burning bush. The wonder of this bush was not that it burned, but that it continued to burn. It was not consumed. Moses discovered that the secret of the persistence of the flames was that God was in it. He learned further that if he were to continue to burn with the fine enthusiasm of his youth, he must have God flaming within his own life.

"They that wait upon the Lord." What untold resources this opens to us. What springtime it would bring into our hearts. With what abiding morning tide it would lighten our darkened souls. But we are too feverish. We are anxious and worried about many things. We haven't time to pray. We haven't time to hear the wise words of the Psalmist, "Be still and know that I am God." Even the best of us have a great tendency to get so busy about holy things that we lose a sense of the presence of the holy Lord. Thus our energies become exhausted. Thus the fountains of our youth dry up.
But, I remine you that it need not be so. It is not the will of God that it should be so, and there are those here present who have found that this text is literally true. They have waited on God and they have lived their lives in the warmth and beauty and perfume of spring. It would be easy to find some here who have not yet reached twenty, who are far less youthful in the best and most winsome sense than others who would be burdened with four score years upon their shoulders, who are nearing the golden glow of the stame of life.

PART IV.

What is the outcome of this unfailing strength in youth, that is born of consistent contact with God. The prophet mentions three. "They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint." That is they shall soar, they shall run, they shall walk. It sounds like a rather pathetic anticlimax, but in reality it is the very opposite. It is the most majestic climax.

1. They shall soar. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. This they shall do, not because the law of gravitation has been done away with, but because wings have been supplied. They shall soar, not because their burdens have been lightened, but because their powers have been increased. That is God's best gift to us. He might save us by keeping us out of the furnace altogether, but it is a far greater salvation to save us in the midst of the furnace. It might get us off the earth by doing away with the laws of gravitation, but that would be no gain, we would be the same weaklings we were before. He gives us larger power.
And what is signified by this soaring. It means those periods of visions, those transfiguration: moments of life when we get new understandings of God, and therefore new comprehensions of life. To mount up with wings as eagles, is to become in closer contact with heaven. It is to have a firmer grasp on spiritual things. It is to have a keener eye for the unseed and eternal.

It is also to get a saner and truer view of the world that now is. We cannot tell much about a city by merely standing in the midst of it. To know the city, you need what is called the birds eye view. You may get one building so close to you as to shut out the 10,000 vaster buildings that are all about you. The true view is the birds eye view.

We need to see the world from the heavenly side. That is we need to look on life from the heights. If we could see the lives that we are living as they look to those who have passed into presence of the King how foolish and paltry many of them would look. If we had the eagle view, we could see the cheapness of the things for which we are squandering ourselves. We could also see the priceless­ness of the things we are throwing away. We would realize the far­ness of near things, and the nearness of far things. We would have a new understanding of the unseen. And for that reason, we would be less in bondage to the seen.

2. "They shall run and not be weary". Running. That is strenuous work. It is harder to do than flying. It refers, I take it, to our periods of great success or of great testing. Peter was running when he so preached, that one sermon resulted in the con-
version of three thousand souls. It is not so hard to run in this sense. It means that we are getting somewhere. We are winning the race, which means that we are conquering in our own lives. It means that we are conquering in the bringing in of the Kingdom.

This running also refers to those periods of peculiar testing. We shall have strength for the great temptations of life, its keen disappointment, its great heart aches. Some years ago, I stood by a frail little woman, as her husband lay dying. She loved him with passionate devotion, and yet she was enabled even in that hour to praise God with joy unspeakable and full of glory. That is, God was fulfilling his promise to her. She could run and not be weary.

3. The final result of this unfailing youth is that it will enable us to walk and not faint. Walk. That means plodding. That means patient endurance when we seem to be getting nowhere, when our plans go awry, when we meet opposition, and when our very lives seem falling about us in ruins. Many a man who can soar and who can run, finds walking next to an impossibility. Not long ago I was talking to one of the most gifted preachers in America. He was conscious that old age was slipping upon him, and he said, it is hard for one who has lived in the thick of things as I have to be put on the side track. It was so hard that God in His mercy took him home before that hour came.

Yet God does enable His saints to plod with joyous enthusiasm, but this is the very highest test of the powers of unfailing youth. Some years ago a man told me of an acquaintance of his, whose purpose it was to study for the ministry. One day before
he was to leave for school, he happened to an accident that made him cripple for life. After a long period of invalidism, his hopes broken, he became a ferryman on the Osage River. About his only opportunity to preach was while he was ferrying his passengers over the river. Yet, this man told me that he knew personally of seventy men who had been won to Christ by this cripple ferryman. He had waited on God. Therefore, he was able to run and not faint. God grant that we may learn the secret.
HOW TO STAY YOUNG

"Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

—Isaiah 40:30, 31

The Bible is always a plain speaking Book. That is one of its chief charms. With engaging candor it faces the worst that life can do as well as the best. That is one of the chief sources of power possessed by Mr. Churchill. There are those who doubt his ability as a military strategist, but none doubt his courage. He holds the respect and confidence of his people and of the world by a frank facing of facts however gloomy and distasteful those facts may be to himself and others.

I

Here then we are brought face to face with forbidding certainty. "Even a youth shall faint and be weary." None of us can deny that. None need shut our eyes to it. "Youth often faints and grows weary while it is yet youth. Some of the most tired, disillusioned and fed up folks that I know are on the springtime side of twenty. There is no mistaking the fact that there are vast numbers that faint and grow weary while they are yet young. One such took his own life the other day, declaring that it was his right to quit before the whistle blows.

But even if we refuse to faint while we are young, this fact remains that youth slips away from us. The passing years do rob us of much treasure that we should be glad to keep. Sooner or later the elasticity goes out of our step. Sooner or later our right hand loses its cunning. The Miss America
of today will not be the Miss America of tomorrow. You and I are growing old. That is a fact to which if we are wise, we will not try to shut our eyes.

II

How shall we face this fixed certainty? Some I regret to say look at it with utter horror. There is nothing of which certain people are more afraid than of getting old. The thought of the passing of the years is a skeleton at every feast. They seek by every possible dodge to disguise this grim fact from themselves. They erase their names from the family record and refuse to tell their ages even to the census-taker. They go on the assumption that life begins at a climax and ends in a tragic anti-climax.

Our poets have misled us here. So often they sing their songs on the assumption that youth is the only part of life that is worth living.

"Gather ye rosebuds while ye may;  
Old time is still a-flying,  
And this same flower that blooms today  
Tomorrow may be dying."

Here is another:

"Oh talk not of a name great in story,  
The days of our youth are the days of our glory;  
The myrtle and ivy of sweet two-and-twenty  
Are worth all your laurels though ever so plenty;  
All our garlands and leaves to the brow that is wrinkled—  
'Tis but as dead flowers with May-dew besprinkled;  
Then away with all such from the brow that is hoary,  
What care I for wreaths that can only give glory?"

Here is another to the same purpose:

"I remember, I remember  
The house where I was born,  
The little window where the sun  
Came peeping in at morn;  
He never came a wink too soon  
Nor brought too long a day.  

I remember, I remember  
The fir-trees dark and high;  
I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky:
It was a childish ignorance,
But now 'tis little joy
To know I'm farther off from heaven
Then when I was a boy."

And even Wordsworth who was at his best a great saint sings the same strain:

"Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day."

So we might go on endlessly. Life seems a bit like that stream that gushes songfully from a great spring in the Himalaya Mountains on to be choked in hot sand a few yards away. No wonder a certain writer asks peevishly, "Why should it be like this? Why could not we be born old and withered men, charred and wrinkled women, and gradually grow back to the strength of middle life, then to the zest of youth, then become babies as we fade out of this world?"

These belong with that company that sing with Omar Khayam:

"Could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!"

But life does not move on toward an anti-climax but to a climax.

Browning thought so when he bids us:

"Grow old along with me,
The best is yet to be."

This is the case because old age is not a matter of the calendar. It is a matter of the inner life. As proof of this, some of the oldest people I
have ever known were yet in their teens, whereas some of the youngest I have ever known had passed three score years and ten. To tell your real age, therefore, I am not going to ask you how many birthdays you have had. I am not going to consult the family record. I am going to see what you are in your inner life, for we do live "in thoughts not years, in deeds not in figures on a dial."

Here for instance is a classical example. A friend met John Quincy Adams one day on the streets of Boston. Adams was then getting very old.

"Good morning, Mr. Adams," he greeted him. "How are you?" "John Quincy Adams is quite well, thank you." Of course, the house he is living in is getting somewhat dilapidated. Its walls are tottering on their foundations. The roof is greatly in need of repair. In fact, I think it is going to be necessary for us to move out soon into another house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. But John Quincy Adams is quite well, thank you."

I submit to you that the passing years are powerless to do anything with a soul like that.

Sometime ago a minister told that story to his radio audience. A few days later he received a letter from an old lady who was eighty-two. She wrote somewhat as follows: "The house in which I live is eighty-two years of age. I confess it is not beautiful as it was fifty years ago, but then I have not kept it painted on the outside as is the custom. But I have given a great deal of time to interior decorating. Then, I still have a very reliable tenant on the top floor." Here again time is utterly baffled. However many times December has been to visit these two people he has knocked in vain because they have kept June-tide in their hearts.

III

What then are some of the marks of old age? I pass over a few honest wrinkles. I pass over that gray hair that in the way of righteousness is
that his readers might find. He said, "Remember that in answering the question I do not desire to be heroic. I just desire to be comfortable."

There you have old age at its ugly worst. Life has tamed this man. Character no longer makes any appeal. All he cares for is his comfort.

You remember how some of the companions of Ulysses went to the palace of the Enchantress of Circe where they were changed into hogs. By and by their leader found them, and he had the Enchantress to change them back again into men. But there were a few of them that did not want to be heroic. They simply wanted to be comfortable, and so they requested the Enchantress to change them back into hogs again. When the prodigal found himself among the swine, he could not share their comfort. They were not haunted by any dreams of a better life. But the prodigals are still youthful enough to put character above comfort. If you have reached the place where you no longer dare, where you no longer are willing to venture, then you are old whether you are nine or ninety.

One of the most charming characters in the Old Testament is Caleb. Caleb, as you remember, was one of the twelve spies. He with his friend Joshua brought back the minority report. They were voted down, and the capture of the promised land was postponed for forty years. But after forty years Caleb went over to share in his conquest. Then after the Israelites had taken possession of most of the land, there remained one strong-hold that they had failed to capture. Caleb at the age of eighty-five came asking that he might be given the hardest task that had ever been given him. That means that however old he had grown outwardly, he had eternal springtime in his heart. One mark of old age is the fear of the heights.

3. The final mark of old age I mention is the glorifying of the past. Of course, as we get older there are delightful memories to which we enjoy
looking back. But whenever we decide that our Golden Age is behind us instead of ahead of us, then we have grown old. How prone we are to look back to the good old days of fifty years ago. Jerome declares that man has been doing that every since Adam's fifty-first birthday. But the tragedy of it is that when we begin looking backward, we cease to go forward. When we begin to look backward, we cease to be of any use or to make any progress. Here is a poem that Shakespeare did not write but it is just as wise as anything he said:

"The lightning-bug is brilliant,  
But he hasn't any mind;  
He blunders through existence  
With his headlight on behind."

Of course, as soon as we begin to glorify the past, we tend in just that proportion to despise the present and despair of the future. We begin straightway to tell how the youth of today are the worst that the world has ever known. We begin to look with evil forebodings toward tomorrow. In fact, we do not see how the Lord is possibly going to run the world when He no longer has us to help out with our groans and our criticisms and our sorrows. If you are living in the past, you are old even if you have not learned to walk.

IV

How shall we guard against old age? Let me say frankly that there is no safeguard against the aging of the physical bodies. Of course, by observance of the laws of health we can keep them young longer than some of us do. No type of exercise, no amount of face-lifting, no sort of operation will enable any of us to hoodwink the laws of nature and defeat the passing of the years. It is a testimonial to our stupidity that one certain quack made over a million dollars in a single year in Little Rock, Arkansas, offering a fountain of youth to old men.
But how shall we avoid the old age that is really tragic?

1. Accept yourself. Be willing to be the age that you are. That is not my advice simply but the advice of many of the best physicians and psychologists. If you are forty act like you are forty, not like you are fifteen. If you are seventy, be willing to be seventy. There is something unspeakably pathetic in seeing some old body trying to act kittenish and telling us how they are as strong as they ever were when you know they are deceiving nobody but themselves. I even knew a minister who married a girl young enough to be his grand-daughter. He was much in love, and she said she was in love with his soul. I suppose so. That was all he had left. It is a terrible strain to try to be young when you are old. Relax, and you will feel much better.

2. Keep interested in the present and the future. That does not mean that we are to shut our eyes to the fact that we have come upon dark and desperate days. But it does mean this—that we are to face the fact that this is our day. We are here at the call of God. We have come to the Kingdom for such a time as this. We ought to esteem it an honor that God has set us to man the wall at a time when the city is being hard-pressed, and when civilization itself threatens to collapse. Keep up your interest. Otherwise, you will die of sheer boredom.

Here, for instance, are two men who have to give up working so strenuously as they once did. One of them becomes an introvert. He scorns the present and despairs of tomorrow. He no longer has any interests. He ages rapidly and soon dies. But here is another who recognizing the fact that he cannot do as much as he used to do knows that he can still do something. He can still pray. He can still confront each day with poise and courage. He can sing with another aged adventurer.
"Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world,
My purpose holds to sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulf will wash us down;
It may be that we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Though much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

3. Finally, and most important of all, learn to wait on God. "They
that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." This waiting means
far more than the idle folding of the hands. It means prayer. It means the
opening of the windows of the soul out toward the heavenly Jerusalem until
the light of the glory of God floods your life. It means to be related to
Jesus Christ as the branch is related to vine. It means the constant holding
up of your emptiness for God's fullness.

You remember the fire that became so burning bright beside a wall. A
man came by and dashed a bucket of water upon it and then another and then
another but it burned only the brighter. He marvelled at it until he went
on the other side of the wall and saw that the fire was being fed by secret
supplies of oil. Passing years with their tears over losses and over
graves and tears over broken dreams and broken hopes will put out your fire.
It will quench your enthusiasm unless you are fed by secret supplies of oil.
"Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard that the Lord the Creator of the
ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary." It is only as we have
our hand in the hands of the unfainting and unfailing Christ that we shall
maintain our youth.

Here is an illustration of that fact in the life of the greatest man
of the Old Testament. One day Moses went out to visit his people. Here
he saw a Hebrew being imposed upon by an Egyptian taskmaster. In hot anger
Moses struck the bully. Doubtless he did not mean to kill him. But the blow was harder than he realized. Thus, he had a dead man on his hands. This blow struck in the heat of passion caused him to have to flee the country. He made his way to the desert of Midian where little by little he forgot his high quest, his high dreams, and became the contented keeper of another man's sheep.

But one day as he led his sheep to the backside of the desert he saw a little bush ablaze. He watched to see it fall into gray ashes, but it burned on. That was what made him curious. "I will now turn aside and see this great sight why the bush is not consumed." You see he was curious not because the bush was burning but because it kept on burning. Why did it keep on? Because God was in it. Why had he himself flared up long enough to strike one blow and then give over the fight? He had gone in his own strength. Therefore, though eighty years of age he went back to accomplish what he could not accomplish in the days of his youth because God was with him. And the writer accounts for his strength and power in this word: "He endured as seeing Him Who is invisible."

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. Then what? In the power of that strength they shall mount up with wings as eagles. There shall be even in old age periods of vision. Not only shall young men see visions, but old men shall dream dreams. "They shall run and not be weary. There shall be times of victorious crises. But the climax of it all is that they shall walk and not faint. It is comparatively easy to soar. It is harder to run. It is hardest of all to walk, to plod day by day and keep serene and hopeful and joyous. Yet that is God's gift to us and we are never too old to experience it.

While I was pastor in Memphis, I had the good sense to go one day to
call on an old superannuated minister who was between eighty and ninety years of age. "Would you be willing," I asked, "to be my associate and visit among my people?" His face lighted with an almost heavenly radiance. He accepted with a gratitude that almost embarrassed me. Every service he would sit with me in the pulpit and I would be the stronger for his presence. On weak days he would move among my people like rich and rare perfume.

After I had gone to Houston Lew was hit by a car and I was called back to Memphis for the funeral. It was the largest funeral that I have ever known. I doubt if any minister in our state ever had one so large. This man had had a fruitful ministry through the years but his most fruitful period I daresay was between eighty and ninety. "Even the youth shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint."
KEEPING YOUR YOUTH

Isaiah 40:30-31

"Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

The text brings us at once face to face with what to some is a forbidding certainty. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary." This is a frank facing of the fact that the passing years impair our physical powers. However strong you are at this moment, you may depend upon losing that strength in large measure as you grow older. However beautiful you are, the years will rob you of much of your physical charm. These bodies of ours cannot keep their youth. We do well to look this fact in the face and accept it cheerfully.

But sad to say we often do not. There are those who resist and resent growing old. They look upon the coming of age as one of life's supreme calamities. Too often our poets have misled us with this view.

"Gather ye rosebuds while ye may, Old Time is still a-flying, And the same flower that blooms today Tomorrow will be dying."

That is, he seems to feel that youth has all the joy that is. Byron was even more pessimistic.

"O, talk not to me of a name great in story, The days of our youth are the days of our glory. The flowers that blossom at sweet two and twenty Are worth all your laurels, though ever so plenty.
"What are laurels and wreaths to a brow that is wrinkled? It is but as dead flowers with May dew besprinkled. Then away with all such from the brow that is hoary, What care I for wreaths that can only give glory?"

But to right thinking folks the passing of youth is by no means a calamity. Vast multitudes find life far fuller after they have past forty or fifty than they did before. Multitudes of woman are far more attractive after they have passed out of life's springtime. Personally I find myself in life's middle passage, but never once have I been tempted to sing, "Backward, turn backward, O time in your flight." If such were to happen I should suffer quite a collapse. I should only be a tow-headed boy with the nickname of "Muttonhead," having to milk four or five crumplly-horned cows night and morning. The passing of youth, therefore, is not in my opinion a calamity.

There is a tragedy, however, that is too bitter for tears, and that is to get old in heart. That is the only old age that is really to be dreaded, and that does not necessarily depend upon the passing of the years at all. Some of the oldest folks I have ever known were hardly out of their teens. Some of the youngest that I have ever known had passed four score. Whether you are old or young, therefore, does not depend upon how many birthdays you have had. Whether you are old or young is a matter of your inner life. It is a quality of the spirit.

Because this is the case no one need ever come to an old age that is bitter and tragic. It is altogether possible, in spite of everything that the years can do to the contrary, for us to remain
abidingly youthful. We find a classic illustration of this in the case of John Quincy Adams. One day a friend met him, as you remember, and asked how he was. "John Quincy Adams is well, I thank you," was the answer, "but the house in which he lives is very dilapidated. It is tottering upon its foundation. Its walls are shaky and its roof worn. I think he is going to have to move out of it very soon. But he himself is quite well." Time has no weapon against such a dauntless soul as that.

A certain preacher told that story to his radio audience a few years ago. The following week he had a letter from a woman of a like youthful spirit. "The House in which I live," she wrote, "is eighty-two years old. I must confess that it does not look as well as it did fifty years ago. For one reason I have not kept it painted as is the custom with so many women today. I have given my time to interior decorating. Then, too, I have a very reliable tenant upon the top floor." Here again the almanac and the calendar stand in utter defeat and embarrassment. They shoot their darts in vain at such a youthful and courageous heart. If we grow old, therefore, it is not of necessity. It is our own fault.

II

But oftentimes weathering and blighting old age slips upon us unawares. It steals on us like a thief in the night. There was a tradition years ago about the vampire bat. The bat was said to be a blood-sucker. If it came upon one sleeping in the open it would fan its victim so gently with its wings that the poor unfortunate only sank into deeper slumber while the ugly creature sucked his life blood. So old age sometimes drinks up the well springs of our youth without our being aware of it. What are some of the marks that ought to indicate to us that we are getting old?
1. One sure mark of old age is staggering under trifles. It is "much ado about nothing." In one of the most marvellously beautiful descriptive passages in the literature of the world we find this as an infallible mark of old age: "The grasshopper shall be a burden." Here is one who has a weight upon his shoulders that is so trifling that it is no heavier than a grasshopper. But he goes staggering and tottering and grumbling along as if he had an elephant on his shoulders. Such a one, says the author of Ecclesiastes, is old whether he is seventeen or seventy.

Measured by that test, how old are you? Do you raise a howl over the least inconvenience? Do you go about your friends and neighbors displaying every little pin scratch that comes to you as if you were wounded to the death? Do you go moaning under your little ounce of disappointment or opposition, and complain as if you were carrying a ton? If you are forever threatening to quit, if you are bemoaning your sad fate and making mountains out of mole hills, then believe me you are getting old, regardless of how few birthdays you have had.

2. The second mark of old age is timidity. This same keen writer says that one mark of old age that is deadly is this: "He shall be afraid of that which is high." He no longer ventures. He no longer dares to gather himself together and hurl himself for life or death into any great enterprise. He has lost his enthusiasm. He has lost his daring. He has lost his winsome madness.

One day a man young in years came to Jesus all enthusiasm. "Lord," he said with glowing cheeks and sparkling eyes, "I will follow Thee wherever Thou goest." And the heart of Jesus warmed to him. But He saw he had no adequate understanding of what was involved. And then Jesus said to him, "Do you dare? Have you the recklessness and madness to venture everything for me? I may have to go supperless to bed. I
may have to sleep on the mountain side. Foxes have holes and the
birds of the air have nests. But the Son of man hath not where to
lay his head. In spite of these grim facts, dare you make the
adventure?" And the young man slunk away because, though youthful
in body, he was old and infirm in heart.

Here is another man, one of the most charming and bracing
characters of the Old Testament. Long ago he had been one of the
spies that had gone to spy out the Land of Promise. He had urged
upon those of that generation the importance of going at once to
possess the land. But he and his friend Joshua were voted down.
But Caleb never grew sour. He never lost his daring. He at last
entered the land and helped to conquer it in part. But there was
one stronghold that had not been captured. And Caleb comes at the
age of eighty-five to ask the privilege of doing the most difficult
thing he had ever done in his life. We never grow old till we lose
our courage. But when we lose it we are old regardless of what
the calendar may have to say.

3. A third sure mark of old age is the disparaging of the
present and the future and a mournful looking back to the past. When
the exiles returned to Jerusalem to rebuild their sacred city and
temple they had to face great difficulties and hardships. At last
the foundation was laid and there went up a great shout. But the
shout was a bewildering mixture. Some were weeping bitter tears of
regret. Others were weeping tears of sheer joy. The tears of regret
were shed by the old folks. As they looked at the temple they said,
"It is nothing like so large and wonderful as the one where we used
to worship when we were young." But youth shouted over it. It was
the only temple they had ever seen and to them it was full of fine
hopes and possibilities.
Now I am not urging upon you the necessity of shutting your eyes to the evils of our present day. We have them and they are many. There is a species of optimism that is silly because it is blind. The young generation with which you and I have to do is not perfect. But neither were we in our day. The progress of the world has not moved in one straight line upward. There have been ebb and flows. I used to stand on the banks of the Buffalo River and see water actually flow up stream. But I did not for that reason despair of its ever reaching the sea. There are ebb tides in the history of our race, but the main trend is upward. And all our hope certainly lies in the future and not in the past.

If your face is toward yesterday, then your days of usefulness are over. You are too old to be of service. Whatever may be wrong with the present, it is your day and mine. We have got to seek to understand it and to appreciate it and to believe in it. I think I realize keenly how dreadfully easy it is in such times as these to get discouraged and to throw up your hand and to allow yourself to become convinced that this whole generation is headed for the rocks. But that has been fairly easy in every day of the history of the world.

"My grandpa notes the world's worn dogs
And says "We are going to the dogs."
His grandpa in a hut of logs
Vowed "Things are going to the dogs."
His grandpa in the Irish bogs
Swore, "We are going to the dogs."
His grandpa, dressed in cave man's togs
Moaned "Things are going to the dogs."
But this is all I have to state,
The dogs have had an awful wait

Have you lost hope? Are you constantly bewailing the fact that everything has gone or is going to the dogs? If so that is no indication that you are right in your prophecy. It only indicates that you are old, too old to venture, too old to hope, too old to
believe either in today or tomorrow. How far finer is the wonderful challenge of Ulysses, battered as he is with the cruel fists of the years:

"Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.

..................
My purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be the gulf will wash us down;
It may be we shall touch the happy isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Though much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

III

Now if we find ourselves growing old, how shall we cure it? Or if we are yet young, what is the antidote against old age?

We have already hinted that there are certain remedies that do not work. We cannot stay young by merely ignoring the calendar. You may keep your age a profound secret, but it has no such reticence. Hide the family record ever so cleverly, you keep one of your own. One trouble with not telling your age is that folks go ahead and guess at it and usually over guess it.

Then what is more pathetic still, some of us try to keep up the same routine and live just as we did when we were really young in years. To see some old granddaddy marry a young wife and take in all the social functions and dance till the small hours of the night and claim that he feels just as fit at sixty as he did at six, is to burst into loud laughter were the spectacle not so pathetic. There is
no fountain of youth. The beauty parlor may help for a little while but only for a little while. And having your face lifted while your soul is bowed down is an utter failure.

1. The first step toward remaining young, and this suggestion is not original, is to accept your age, whatever it is, without fret. Those who fight against getting old the hardest, usually get old the fastest. I do not mean by that that we are not to take the best possible care of ourselves. I am warning you against that fret and worry that refuses to accept the inevitable gracefully. I have seen a drunk man fall from a horse without receiving any hurt. Had a sober man got the same fall it would doubtless have broken some of his bones, possibly his neck. The fall was less of a shock with the drunk man because he was relaxed. And if we learn to relax as we fall against the years, they will not hurt us half so much.

2. We keep our youth by waiting on God. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." There is no magic about this. It is the most natural and common sense thing in the world. Those that wait on God, which means those that pray, those that keep open the window of their soul, those that enter into fellowship with God, renew their youth because they are set at liberty from themselves. Many aged folks would find themselves growing young if they would take their minds off of their own gray hairs and wrinkles and seek to heal the world's wounded and disordered heart. Here the words of Jesus are sublimely true, "He that seeketh to save his life shall lose it and he that loseth his life shall find it."

Then those who wait on the Lord renew their strength and keep their youth because they keep their interest in this present world. In the opening of the Book of Joshua we have this sentence, "Now it came to pass after the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, that the Lord spake unto Joshua." Moses belonged to another
generation. God was deeply interested in Moses, but when the

generation of which Moses was a part had passed God did not lose
his interest. He has not lost His interest in this generation.
Folks wither up and grow old the minute they lose interest. God
never loses interest, and those that walk with God never lose
interest. Therefore they never grow old.

Then waiting on God keeps us young because it keeps us
full of hope. He is the God of hope. He is the Christ that teaches
us to pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is
in heaven." I believe that this prayer is one day going to be
answered. Those who walk with Him share the same bracing and
youthful faith. They believe that the golden age is not in yesterday
but in tomorrow. Therefore they stand with sunny faces amidst the
struggling and blundering generation that now is and say, "Look not
mournfully into the past, but improve the present. It is thine. Go forth to meet the future without
fear and with a manly heart."

Finally they that wait on God keep their youth because into
our emptiness, constantly flowing, His fullness. God Himself is blessed
with immortal youth. "Hast thou not heard that the Lord, the Creator
of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is He weary?" In our
own strength we faint. Our energies become exhausted. But as we
wait on the Lord there flows into our lives a power beyond the human.
As the sap rises in the winter-stripped apple tree and decks it in
colors beautiful as a June bride, so there come into our wasting
energies, tides of divine life that make it impossible for us to
ever grow old.
IV

The outcome of this abiding youth enables us to make of life a climax rather than an anti-climax as it so often is. Those thus young "shall mount up before us as eagles." That is, they shall be seers of visions and dreamers of dreams. "They shall run and not be weary." That is, they shall meet life's tests and life's crises with a strength that will enable them to triumph. Last of all "they shall walk and not faint." It is easier to fly than it is to run. It is far easiere to run than it is to walk. Walking is so prosaic, so slow, so monotonous. And yet with the possession of this spirit of immortal youth, when life slows down with us and we can only plod, we shall do so joyfully and without fainting.

And this dear heart is not simply a theory, It is what I have actually seen take place in more lives than one. I have a man in mind now who enjoyed a long fruitful ministry. By and by, at the age of four score, he found it necessary to superannuate. He was not able to preach any more. But he was always in his place at prayer meeting and the preaching services. Where there was sorrow he was present as a comforter. Where there was joy he was present to share it. And when he went home to God his funeral was possibly the largest that his city had ever seen. And the most fruitful days of his ministry were not those when he mounted up with wings as eagles. They were those when he walked and by the grace of God did not faint. The older he grew the more winsome he became. That is the secret of unfailing youth.

"Let me grow lovely growing old
So many fine things do,
Laces, ivory and gold
And silks need not be new.

There is healing in old trees
Old age a glamor hold
Why should not we, as these
Grow lovely growing old."

HELP
Isaiah 41:13

"I will help thee."

It is not my purpose to use this text. I only came upon it yesterday in my devotional reading. But it spoke so definitely and personally to my own need that I could not pass it by. Therefore, I bring it to you. It is a promise filled to over-flowing with genuine comfort. If you are proud and self-sufficient you will not like it, but if you feel your own deep need as some of us do it will be just the message for which your heart longs.

I.

What is implied in this promise? "I will help thee." What does God mean by uttering such a word.

1. He implies that we need help. And I for one am not ashamed to acknowledge my need. In making such acknowledgment there is nothing of the cringing spirit of the beggar. There is nothing of the whine of the persistent sponge. There are some folks that are always asking for something. If they do not ask for it openly the make broad hints which is far worse. May the Lord deliver us from the type of character whose one question is, what are you going to give me. Such a soul is very needy but his chief need is for a fresh baptism of self-respect. But when God confronts me personally and says, "I will help thee," He says it because he knows that I need help and from my heart I can respond with a hearty "Amen." I do need help, I cannot carry on alone. Life's seas are far too stormy for me to navigate them in my own strength. The battle is all
too difficult for me to come thru with honor without help. I need assistance. I need it at this very moment. I shall need it every moment thru the endless ages.

And what is true of me is true of you and is true of every man that lives. It is true of every man that has lived. It is true of every man that will live in the coming tomorrow. Look at the pages of history. Read the lives of the world's strong men. Every one of them was in desperate need of help. Every one who failed to get such help made shipwreck. For instance, Saul was a promising man, clean and youthful and strong. But he rejected the help that was offered and fell on his own sword and went out into the dark.

Jesus tells the story of a man who was wonderfully self-sufficient. Thoroughly successful was he. Yet, somehow there was a lack. There was a need that had not yet been met. But he said I can meet it in my own strength. I will do it by pulling down these small barns and building greater. But his self-sufficiency stamped his brow with the marks of eternal imbecility, and he went out to meet God an empty handed fool.

Napoleon made a similar experiment. He declared that God was on the side of the strongest battalion. He did not need God at all. "Then God took a snow flake and a drop of water and a ditch and an onion and defeated him."

If you are weak you need help. If you are strong you need help. Every human soul shares this desperate need.

II

Now who is it that in our desperate hours comes forward with an offer of help? Who is it that never fails to do so? Who is it that may be
Help

absolutely counted upon today and forever?

It is not some human friend. Let us thankfully acknowledge that often they do come. How much they help us! There is no estimating the value of a friend. When Charles Kingsley was asked for the secret of his radiant life, he answered, "I had a friend." I am confident that the reason I am here tonight under God is because of the friends He has given me along the way. When I was sick in a strange land there came a friend. When I was struggling thru the first year of my ministry, my work was made possible largely by a friend. Many a man has been saved from death physically and spiritually by the hand clasp of a friend. But the help offered here is not one as frail and weak as that of a human friend.

Neither does the promise of help come from great strong men. Henry Ford is strong in the realm of money. Were he to send for me and tell me that he would help me to the limit of his ability, that would be a comfort so far as financial matters are concerned. Were the President to inform me that he would undertake to further me in all my enterprises some would count me fortunate. They would congratulate me upon my prospects. But this promise is far greater than that.

Who is it then that in my weakness tell me eagerly, "I will help thee." It is none other than God Himself. He puts Himself at my disposal as He puts Himself at yours. That fact ought to bring a burst of springtime to every heart. It ought to bring a shimmering sunrise to every darkened life. It ought to let loose a flock of skylarks in every troubled soul. Whatever may be the attitude of the world, whether it smile or frown, whether it pelts us with stones or smothers us with roses. He declares clearly.
"I will help you. I will see you thru."

One glory of this promise at least is that our Lord knows how to help. He knows our needs. He knows just what our weakness is. He knows when we ache. Sometimes the physician that we love and trust makes a wrong diagnosis. Jesus never does. As you toss half maddening by life's fitful fever, there is one at your very side that is able to touch you into a great and blessed peace.

Not only does Jesus know what is wrong, not only is He willing to help us, but He is abundantly able. There are times when our hearts fairly break with sympathy, but there is so little that we can do. I shall never forget the September morning that my father went home. It was the first time that I had ever come face to face with death. But after the first shock of it passed away, it was more of my mother that I thought than of myself. I had life before me. I would find other loves. Her's was behind her. How I should have liked to have helped, but how little I could do. But He is always able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all that we ask or think. He looks at you with eyes tender and full of understanding and says, "I will help you." Have your friends failed you? Have your own loved ones forgotten you? Has the church seemed to turn its back upon you? Then all the more reason why you should listen to Him for this promise is to every one of us individually.

III

How does God propose to help us? That is, what is the nature of the help that he gives. He gives us any help that we really need.

1. He helps us to be other than we are. Few, I take it, are satis-
Help

fied with themselves.

"0 that the man would arise in me,
That the man I am may cease to be."

That is practically a universal longing. It was that longing that sent that white haired ruler of the Jews to call one night on Jesus. He was not satisfied with Himself. And Jesus told him how he might be different. He said, "You must be born again." Nicodemus is dumbfounded. He sees the desirability of what Jesus says but has no idea how to reach it. "How can these things be," he answers. "I will help you," is the reply of Jesus. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that who so ever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

2. I will help you in your fight with temptation. Temptation is ahead of you. Old habits must be broken, old sins conquered. You will never win in your own strength. Here is one who promises to be at your side. He promises to see you thru. He does not promise exemption from conflict, but he does promise that he will enable you to fight the battle bravely and bring you out of it with honor.

3. I will help you find your place in life. Many here present are young. You know that God meant you for something, but you are at a loss to know what that something is. You have a life to invest but you do not know just where to invest it. He will help you to fit yourself in your place. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy path."

4. Not only will He help you to find your place, but He will help you to do your work when you find it. He will fill life full of richness and meaning. He will crowd it with noble purposes. He proposes to give you beauty for ashes. There are so many who have little but ashes.
Help

Their dreams and hopes and ambitions have been burned up. He can change these dead and withered and burned up things into life and beauty. He can give you something deep for which to live.

I read a rather strange and fascinating story the other day. There was a certain man in a distant city who lost his grip. Life changed from a zestful purposeful something into a meaningless drab monotony. At last in sheer desperation he went to the river and threw himself in to end it all. But a man passed by who had a brother's heart. When he saw that here was one who was drowning he forgot that he himself could not swim. He wrecklessly threw himself into the water with the drowning man.

The wouldbe suicide not wanted to be interrupted swam out of his way. When he looked back he saw that the one who had come to his rescue was drowning. He realized that he could not swim and was in desperate need of help. Here was something that he could do, worthless and useless as he was, so he postponed his death long enough to save the man who had tried to befriend him. And having brought him safe to land he had to see him home, and having seen him home he had to nurse him, and as he served life became beautiful and rich and worthwhile. It never fails to do so when we give ourselves to another's need.

5. I will help you bear your sorrow. That familiar song that we sing has this word, "O what needless pain we bear." It is passing strange how few of those who are burdened really avail themselves of the offered help of Jesus. And yet if there is any particular in which Jesus has shown Himself Lord and Master above others, it is in this, His power to help those who suffer. He is the Christ of the bruised reed. Standing in the presence of your life with its wreckage, with its hopes gone to
Help

waste, with its dreams unrealized, he says "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

And now for the supreme question. What are we going to do with this offered help. We are going to do one of two things.

1. Some of us are going to reject it. That is strange. It would be unbelievable if we did not know its truth in our own tragic experience. But in spite of the fact that Christ really does break thru, that he really comes with tender sympathy and yearning to offer us help, we look sadly at Him with incredulous eyes, shake our heads and walk away. Sometimes we go flippantly, sometimes we go sneeringly, sometimes we go sadly as did the rich young ruler. We look wistfully back over our shoulders now and then wondering if we have not made a mistake, and yet we go.

Do you remember Beauty Steele in "The Right of Way". He is one of the most clearly drawn characters in modern literature. A keenly disappointed man whose disappointment had made him cynical and bitter. He was a man of ability and of wreckless courage. Those who knew him admired him but did not love him. Out at the saloon one night when the building was crowded by lumbermen, French Catholics, he sang. "There is rest for the weary." The crowd joined in the song for they were fanatically religious.

But when the song was over, Beauty Steele made a speech. He ridiculed the idea of heaven. And those drunk and half-drunk lumbermen began to rage. Everybody could see that the speaker was signing his own death warrant, but he went quietly on. Then the most witty man in
all the lumber camp made his way thru the crowd, stepped to the side of the speaker and said quietly. "I will stand by you." This he did because he admired Steele's cold courage. And what did Steele do. He fixed his monocle in his eye, stared at him clearly. "Beg your pardon, but have I been introduced to you." No wonder they found Steele floating down the river the next day with a cracked skull.

Some months ago a man seemed struggling in the waters of the Hudson river. An officer rushed out on a pier and threw him a rope. It fell right at the man's hand. In cool presence of mind he took the end of the rope and flung it from him and shouted back, "To hell with the rope, I am through." He went to the bottom because he refused the proffered help. And there are such mad men all about us virtually saying what he said but saying it to Jesus Christ, flinging the Cross, flinging the church, flinging the gospel from them, even pushing away the hand that was torn by the nails. Yes, men refuse the help Jesus offers. That is the only reason that their life is not radiant with His presence.

.2. Then there are others that accept his offered help. Some do so with misgivings. Some do so harshly. But there are others who fling themselves with abandon into His arms and who make possible the working of His will in their lives. Paul was a proud man, but when Jesus offered his help he was not too proud to take it. The Pharisee said, I can get on some how, and so he swaggered off without Jesus. The publican said I can't, so he went down to his house justified.

When Jesus was going out to calvary. He fell under the weight of His own cross, and there was a man there, a colored man so it seems, and
he took the cross of Jesus on his own shoulders and Jesus was not too proud
to let him carry it for him. He will accept your help. He yearns for it.
He feels that He cannot run His world aright without it. Surely you ought
not to be too proud to accept His. "I will help you." If you will accept
His help that soul garden of yours that has been the home of despair will
become a veritable garden of nightingales. Your own heart will be made
unspeakably glad and you will also gladden Him whose help you have accepted.
He is love and love is never so happy as when it can serve and is never
so miserable as when its offers of help are brushed aside.
"Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money."

Isaiah 43:24

I.

What is this strange charge that the Prophet is bringing against his people? It certainly sounds as if he is majoring on minors. It would seem as if he has lost a proper sense of values. What is this sweet cane that the Israelites have refused to buy? It was one of the ingredients that went into the holy anointing oil that was used in their worship in the temple. All the other ingredients were home-grown. They were quite inexpensive. But such was not the case with this sweet cane. It had to be brought from abroad. Jeremiah tells us that it came from a far country. It was for this and other reasons quite expensive. It was the one genuinely costly something that went into this oil.

Now because this sweet cane was costly it was being left out. This was the case not because it was no longer needed. Its presence was divinely commanded. It was left out because the people were unwilling to pay for it. Maybe times were a bit hard. Perhaps there was a depression. Possibly the people felt that it was necessary to economize. When therefore they began to cut down expenses, where did they turn first? They did not turn to their luxuries or to the necessities of life, they began to economize on religion. It is an old and familiar story. They were still religious, but their's was a cheap religion. The devil that was threatening
them was the devil of the bargain counter.

This bargain counter devil is one of the most deadly with which we have to deal. A highly successful man lays it down as a law that if we miss the prizes of which we set our hearts we really did not really desire them. Or we did not desire them deeply enough to be willing to pay the price. While this is not universally true, it is true more often than some would like to acknowledge. Of course this does not mean that we can do anything that might strike our fancy. But if we are serious we can find and fill the place for which we are most fit. But cheapness works greater disaster nowhere than it does in religion. But that is just the charge that might be brought against much of the religion of today.

II.

What is wrong with a cheap religion?

1. A cheap religion is one that satisfies neither God nor man. It is one that always ends in partial or total failure. We need not be surprised at this. All cheap things are likely to be of little worth. We are forever thronging the bargain counter in life. But generally we are cheated. We love to read those advertisements that begin by saying, "Free." But if you take them seriously you find that nothing is free that is really worth having. Other things being equal we get what we pay for in this world and we get no more. This is true in every realm.

First, take these physical bodies for instance. All of us would like to have strong, healthful bodies. Often in youth we do not appreciate the importance of this as much as we should. This body is the house in which I live. If it is weak, if it is threatening any day to fall to pieces, however good may be my mind, however athletic may be my soul, both of these are greatly handicapped. Of course good health is not possible to everybody. Some of us are born with heavy handicaps, but it is possible for a vastly larger number than ever attain it. Many have begun life
with physical weaknesses, but have attained strength by sheer grit and determination. How many have looked at their weakness and then at their possible good health, and have said to themselves with dogged determination, "That is what I desire and that is what I am going to have, cost what it may." That was a high resolve of Theodore Roosevelt. He began life a weakling, but he hated weakness and loved strength. He was so eager to be strong that he was willing to pay the price. He said, "Whatever it may cost I am going to have a strong, healthful body." And he attained it.

The other day I read a story that filled me with admiration. There was a certain young woman in New York City who weighed 470 pounds. But she rebelled against this prison house of fat, put herself under a physician and lost 300 pounds. That is a real triumph. But it costs more than most over-heavy folks are willing to pay. For instance, I have in mind a lovely friend a little more than five feet in height who tips the scales at 240. When she stands she has a figure for all the world like a raised umbrella. Naturally she constantly acknowledges her manifold sins and transgressions, but once she goes to the table she eats like a little bird, that is by the peck." She would like to lose weight, but she is not willing to pay the price.

Then there is intellectual attainment. I used to teach school. I found a few pupils that did not care to know anything. I found a few others that already knew. They were born educated. But the vast majority would have been glad to have known provided it had not cost anything. Who would not know his lesson if nothing was to be done about it except to rub a book on the side of his head just before going to bed? But since to know was expensive, since it required some hard prosaic work, though they coveted the prize they did not covet it enough to pay the price.

The same is true in the pursuit of our vocations. How many of us achieve only a fraction of our usefulness because we insist on the easy way? I know ministers better than I know any other group. It is my conviction that, take them all in all, they are about the finest body of men in the world. But the cheap and easy way appeals to us as it does to the rest. I said to a group of ministers sometime ago this seem-
ingly ugly word,—"Ninety-five percent of us do not preach half as well as we could."

This, I think, is true. I had a request from a brother over in Atlanta this week for a sermon especially for him, that I was to dash off in my spare moments. His idea seemed to be that dashing off sermons was as easy as falling asleep. But no worthwhile work of any kind is done without a bit of sweat and agony. Even genius has been described as an infinite capacity to take pains.

This same law holds in religion. The greater the prize as a rule, the greater the price we must pay to attain it. It doesn't take long to grow a toadstool but it takes a century to grow a giant oak. It is easy to be a weakling, it takes wrestling with conflict to be a man. Jesus never once hinted that to be a Christian was the easiest way to get through life. Always with that engaging frankness of his he told his would-be disciples that it was expensive. This is not denying that salvation is free. Physical strength is also free, intellectual development is free, character is free, but it only comes at the price of conflict.

The South Sea Islanders have a theory that when a man slays an enemy the strength of that enemy enters into himself. Thenceforth he is strong not simply with his own strength, but with the strength of his fallen foe. That is certainly true in the realm of character. Every conflict we meet and overcome adds to our strength. Every surrender we make to our own softness and laziness adds to our weakness. When Samson slew the lion he came back days later to find honey in his carcass, hence he propounded that riddle, "Out of the eater came forth meat and out of the strong came forth sweetness." To take the difficult way is to come to our best. To take the easy way is to rot down.

III.

Why is the soft and easy religion a failure?

1. It is a failure because the man who makes ease the test never enters the Kingdom at all. Jesus emphasizes this fact over and over again. One day his dis-
principles came asking him, "Are there few that be saved?" That was a purely speculative question. Jesus refused to say whether there were few or many. Instead he gave this answer,—"Strive to enter in at the straight gate." Whether anybody enters or not depends upon whether that one is willing to pay the price of striving. Now this word, strive, is a strong, athletic word. It means to strive as athletics strive in the athletic field. It means to strive as soldiers strive on the field of battle. It means to strive as Jesus did in the garden of Gethsemane. It means struggle, desperate and earnest to the point of parting with life.

It is this unwillingness to pay the price that perhaps shuts more people out of the Kingdom than any other one cause. The appeal of Jesus is universal. Nobody can look at him and not have some desire to be like him. The prizes that he offers are the most fascinating. Yet many of us miss them. Some of us look and see that the prize costs more than we are willing to pay and turn away without even an effort. Others of us cannot say a flat and final "no." We make a feeble effort. But being unwilling to go all the way in our efforts, we achieve only a pitiful fraction of our possibilities. The pages of the Bible and of life are full of such characters.

Take for instance the Ten Spies. These were a part of a great adventure. Under the leadership of Moses they had left the land of bondage to journey to the land of promise. Arrived upon the border of this land of their dreams they were chosen along with two others to spy out the land. It was a great honor. They must have gone eagerly. But arrived in the land of their hopes they found themselves confronted by difficulties that made them afraid. They saw that the undertaking was going to demand conflict and struggle to which their gallantry was not equal. Therefore they brought back an evil report of the land. They might have gone back and said frankly, "It is a great country, but we are too soft to take it." But instead they rationalized as we so often do. They had a good reason for their failure. But the tragedy of it all was that they missed the prize that might have been theirs if they had
only dared to take it.

There is a story of a preaching service in the Book of Acts that never fails to grip me. Felix with his paramour Drucilla has decided to expose his clay soul to Paul, the flaming evangelist. "As Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and of judgement, Felix was terrified." He was moved to the depths of his being. But what was the outcome? He said, "Go thy way for this time." What was the matter? It was not that he did not care for the wares that Paul had to offer. It was not that this amazing gospel made no appeal to him. Why then did he miss the prize? Why when he might have been free did he remain a slave? Why when he might have mounted upon wings as eagles did he grovel like a pig? There is only one reason. He knew that if he became a Christian he would have to give up this woman. He was simply unwilling to pay the price.

Here is another man that is almost as far ahead of Felix as a sunrise is ahead of a glow-worm. He represents the best in the society of that day. We know him as the Rich Young Ruler. He was rich in things, rich in youth, rich in position. He was also rich in cleanliness. He had kept himself without spot morally. He was rich in a high and holy discontent. He could be satisfied with nothing less than the best. He was rich in courage and enthusiasm. He dared to run down the road in the face of the crowd and kneel in the presence of Jesus. He was rich in reverence. As he thus kneeled he asked the great question that we all ask in one way or another. It is the one supreme question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" How can I get hold of life that is good today and will be good tomorrow? How can I get hold of life that will thrill me in youth and in eventide? How can I find life that will be with me through the valley of the shadow of death, that will be mine in ever-growing fullness when I reach the other side? "Go thy way," said Jesus, "sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and come and follow me." But we read of him this tragic sentence,—"He went away." Why did he go away? Not because Jesus made no appeal. He went away because he was not willing to pay the price.
2. Then to seek the cheap and easy way ends in failure even though we have made a successful beginning. To enter the Kingdom demands surrender. To remain in the Kingdom demands a continuous surrender. This is the reason that so many professing Christians are dissatisfied with their Christian experience,—they are half-hearted. They make it impossible for God to do for them what he longs with infinite longing to do. However rich your religious experience may be, begin to make ease rather than right the test of what you do and the light will go out of your sky.

IV.

Here then are certain palpable facts we all need to face.

1. Jesus has wares to offer for which everybody longs and which everybody needs. The psychologists tell us that there are certain evils that lay waste life, that destroy personality. It names these evils under four heads. First, enmity. If you hate somebody, your hate may not wrong that individual, but it will destroy you. Second, worry. Third, guilt. Fourth, self-centeredness. For all these Jesus has a remedy. This is not theory this is fact. If you will give him a chance he will give you victory over your foes in the here and now.

He will change your hate to love. There is no way of loving folks as we ought except we let Christ in our lives and allow him to love through us. He will take away our sense of guilt. He will forgive us. And mark you, forgiveness means not simply the remission of a penalty, but the restoration of a friendship. He will give us inward peace. This he will do regardless of our circumstances. However harshly life may deal with us, we shall find that "the peace of God that passeth all understanding will keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Finally, he will become the center of our world. If self is the center we can be pushed about very easily. But if God is the center, nothing can move you. He offers you a rich and wholesome personality. That is something for which everybody longs.
2. But while this is a prize to be coveted, while it is a gift, you must realize that it is a conditional gift. God cannot give it except through our cooperation. You may long to give your son an education. But whether you really give him one or not depends not simply upon yourself, not simply upon his teachers, but upon the boy. God's gifts are not arbitrary. He can only give as we give. If we are too soft and cheap and spiritually lazy to give all, then we make it impossible for him to give all.

3. Finally, let us bear in mind that however decent and respectable we may be, if we continually cater to our own softness, the end is certain disaster. Petty failures that we make day by day will one day issue in a colossal failure. One of the best illustrations of this is Tito Melima in George Elliot's "Romola." When Tito comes upon the scene he is as charming and winsome as springtime. It is almost impossible to resist him. He is kind and wonderfully handsome. But he has this fatal defect.—He always takes the easy road. This leads him day after day into petty disloyalties and petty betrayals. By and by without a qualm of conscience he betrays the man who loves him with beautiful devotion. He leaves this friend to die in the chains of slavery. But the wronged man wins his freedom. At last Tito dies with the fingers of his betrayer clutching his throat. But his own softness and moral cheapness have strangled his soul long before this dark and evil hour.

On the other hand it matters not how far gone we may be, if we are willing to pay the price, sainthood at its beautiful best is possible. The greatest character, I think in all fiction is Jean Valjean in Hugo's immortal story. He was sent to the galleys for stealing a loaf of bread for his hungry brothers and sisters. He was a great giant of a fellow and succeeded in making his escape only to have his sentence prolonged. When he at last came out of prison he was imbittered by the injustices and brutalities of nineteen long years of punishment. He was a beast of a man, a hater, eager to make others suffer as he had suffered. But a certain kindly bishop was foolish enough to receive him as his guest. That night Jean Valjean robbed the
bishop and made his escape. The police caught him and brought him back to the preacher's door. But the kindly old man informed the officers that he had given the stolen property to him. Jean Valjean was not used to such kindness. He was softened by it. That night past midnight he came back to kneel on the stones in front of the bishop's house and there he resolved at all costs to be like the kindly man that had saved him from punishment worse than death.

To this resolve he clung through the years. He became a prosperous manufacturer. He also became the mayor of his city. Then one day a police officer came in. "Mr. Mayor," he said, "I want you to dismiss me from the service." "You want to be dismissed from the service, why?" "Because I have misjudged you." "You have misjudged me, in what way?" "I have been thinking that you were Jean Valjean, the exconvict." The mayor looked searchingly into the eyes of the officer. "You thought I was Jean Valjean, how do you know that I am not?" "I have discovered the Jean Valjean in another city where he is being tried for life. Therefore I want you to dismiss me from the service."

"No," said the mayor, "I will not do that, not just yet. You may go now." And when he had gone the mayor sighed with relief, "At last, at last, that name that has been a threat for all these years is gone. I am free." But he could not purchase freedom at that price. Through the long night he drove to the town where the man supposed to be Jean Valjean was being tried. He entered the court the next morning to confess his identity. This he did because he preferred a ball and chain round his ankle than to have one round his soul. He took the hard way, the way of the cross. No wonder he is the greatest saint in all fiction. This I say then to my own heart and to yours. You can have a cheap religion if you will, but if you do, you will have a religion that will satisfy neither yourself nor God. You can also have the religion of the Cross. That means life abundant here and life abundant yonder. And remember that there is no other way.
CHEAP

Isaiah 43-24

"Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money."

The text is an indictment. The charge seems at first a trivial one, but there is far more here than meets the eye. These people have failed in a duty that was so important that God saw fit to send his prophet to rebuke them for their sin. And the prophet came with these words: "Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money."

Sweet cane was one of the ingredients that entered into the Holy anointing oil that was used in connection with the worship of the Temple. This oil was used to anoint the altar and the Holy vessels and especially the Priests that ministered before the altar. It was a compound of a number of ingredients but all of these were grown at home except one. That was the sweet cane of our text. This had to be bought from abroad. It came as Isaiah said from far country. It was therefore costly. But it was bought because God commanded its use in this Holy anointing oil.

But there came a day when if you had spoken to a rich member of the Church he would have said: "Business is very dull, money is tight. We must cut down expenses. I do not know what the world is coming to." So these people began economizing, and the first thing that they economized on was the church. They began cutting down expenses and the first item they slashed was that which had to do with the worship of God.
You are not to understand by this that they withheld their gifts altogether. They went on making and using this holy oil. It was just the same kind that they had used in other days with one exception. They left out the most expensive part. They made their offerings to the Lord, but they were cheap offerings. They were willing to go on giving, just so their giving was not expensive. Thus it was that they cheapened their religion and brought dishonor to God and disaster to themselves.

Now it seldom pays to buy anything just because it is cheap. Bargain counter goods are usually disappointing. When I was a boy I used to wear brogan shoes. Sometimes when things were at their worst financially, I even wore brogan shoes that were made out of split leather. Some of you remember that. After a few days of wear among briars and weeds they became almost as furry as a mole. They needed shearing. They were about the cheapest of shoes, but they were never worth what they cost. But if cheap things in general are a mistake, the supreme mistake is to have a cheap religion. Whenever a religion becomes cheap it satisfies neither God nor man.

II

Now I am to speak to you as pointedly and as persuasively as I can about the needs of our own Church. For the same temptations that came to these saints of the long ago come to us today. We are in danger of cheapening our church. This by the grace of God we must avoid. To fail to do so is to forfeit our crown and to be untrue to our Lord, and be recreant to the trust that he has put in our hands.

First Methodist Church has a great past. For a whole century it has stood at the heart of this growing city with her gospel of light and hope. I think this morning of that great company of men
and women who have once knelt at her altars who are now in that
blessed country where they need neither candles nor light of the
sun. It is upon their foundation that we have builded and it is
by virtue of their sacrifices that we are what we are.

But great as was the yesterday of our Church, it ought to be
far greater tomorrow. We have a plant that is the equal if not
the superior for all practical purposes of any to be found in the
South. We have builded not only for today but for tomorrow. The
wisdom of those who so builded is seen in the fact that our Sunday
School is almost twice as large as it was two years ago. I do not
know of another church in any city that occupies so commanding a
position in that city as does our own church.

But in the building of an institution such as ours, there has
been an outlay of money. Our church was repaired and seating capa-
city doubled. A commodious plant was built to take care of our Sun-
day School. This was done almost entirely on a credit. Those re-
sponsible calculated that it could be paid for by certain annual pay-
ments, but that to pay for it all at once would be next to impossible.
I think their judgment was wise. It ought not to surprise you, there-
fore, when I tell you that you are expected to pay the present year
the sum of $31,320.00 for our indebtedness on Church property. Fur-
thermore, it ought to be your pleasure to have a part in the paying
of this debt. It is a permanent investment. It gives you the privilege
to have a part in the instructing of children and the building up of
men and women in Christ. It gives you the privilege of making a con-
tribution that will be doing business for God in this city when you
have been dead for many years.

In addition to the above amount we are spending the present year
$13,439.00 on benevolences. This includes our contribution to the missionary enterprises of the church. It also looks to the doing of needy and necessary missionary work in our own city. Both these calls ought to lie heavily upon our hearts. The command of Christ to preach the gospel to every creature is just as binding today as it was when it was uttered. The man who declares he believes in home missions and not in foreign is only having the audacity to differ with Christ himself. Then we are spending this year the sum of $35,806.00 for the maintenance of our church. To this is added something over $4000.00 of back dues. Now those of you who are acquainted with other churches will realize that the maintenance fund that we are paying is by no means unreasonable or heavy. In fact it would be hard to find any church that is being run on a more economic basis.

I go into this in some detail, in order that every member may know exactly what we are doing. This church is yours not mine. It will be doing business here and you will doubtless belong to it after I am gone. I state this for a reason, and that is to stop so far as possible the mouths of those few who have a tendency to complain. There is always one here and there who is eager to find some excuse for his stinginess. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that First Church is altogether free from these.

There are those for instance who do not pay because of a bad business method of those in authority. My answer to that is that from henceforth the business policy of our church is to be shaped by Mr. Storey, who is an expert in his field, and a man who commands universal respect and confidence.

Then there are those who complain for the high salaries paid certain employees. Our salary budget is $23,000.00. There are ten
employees being paid out of this amount. The majority of it is being paid to the Business Manager, the Choir Director, and Pastor. They appreciate the liberality of the Board, but we feel it only fair to say that as large as the salaries may seem, there is not one of these who has not refused a raise from 25 to 50% that they could make by going elsewhere.

III

How are we to meet this budget of more than $85,000.00? It can be met. It can be met with an ease and with a joy that will be a surprise to all of us. Only one thing is necessary to bring this happy consummation to pass. That is this, that be scriptural in giving.

We are met here as Christians. We are Orthodox. We claim to believe the Bible from cover to cover. Let us prove our faith by what we do. The Bible has instructions about the matter of giving. It does not hesitate to speak out on money matters. We read that on one occasion Christ sat over against the Treasurer. He is always there. He is always profoundly interested in what we do with our money. Every opportunity to give is a kind of judgment day. Christ is present this day, infinitely interested in the pledges that we make to His Church. How are we to give?

1. Individually. That is the Bible rule. "Let every one of you lay by him in store on the first day of the week as the Lord hath prospered him." That is, giving is an individual business. It is a universal obligation. It is a privilege that is open to everybody. Even if you are kept up by charity, you ought to give some part of your income for the up building of the Kingdom of God.
I say this in the first place because I know the tendency we have to give nothing simply because we can give only a small sum. But it is not the amount that counts with God. It is the spirit. "He that is unfaithful in that which is least, is unfaithful also in much." The largest offering ever made was only two fifths of a cent. There is not a member in First Church that cannot give more than that every Sunday. So giving is a task and a privilege to every one.

2. We are to give proportionately. The New Testament direction is this, "As the Lord has prospered you." That is, give according to your ability. According to what the Lord hath given you. The proportion required of the Jews was one tenth. I think that is the minimum for today. If that is not the present quotient then the Lord has left us without a plan, because none other is ever mentioned.

The plan is fair and just. Give as you have prospered. Nothing could be more reasonable. It is fair to the poorest, it is also fair to the richest. We have been accustomed to excuse our financial embarrassment by bewailing our poverty, but it is far easier to get the poor to tithe than it is the rich. As our wealth begins to increase, our tithe tends to get so large that we cannot tear ourselves loose from it.

3. We are to give systematically. To be systematic in your giving is scriptural. It is also good business. It is only by systematic giving that people who live on salaries can pay with any degree of ease what they ought to pay. It is only by giving systematically that we can render our best services to the Kingdom of God and receive from Him the richest results of our giving.
4. We are to give promptly. That is when due. It is a great thing to meet your obligations when they come due. Most of you take pride in meeting your obligations to the grocer and the butcher and to the dry-goods men when they come due. How about God's bills? Do you give them the same consideration or do you keep God waiting to the very last?

What is His commandment? "Honor the Lord with thy substance and with the first fruits of thine increase." That is, bills are to paid first. That is only right and natural. What right have you to embarrass the church and run it into debt? What right have you to withhold your money for missions and force your Mission Board to borrow money on interest? When you could save that by paying it when due.

5. We are to give cheerfully. "Grudgingly, nor necessity of a ready mind, for the Lord loveth a cheerful giver." So do we. We do not love any other kind. Who appreciates a present that is given unwillingly? Who appreciates one that is given in expectation of receiving an adequate return? The Lord longs that we give willingly, gladly, hilariously.

6. We are to give sacrificially. That was what made the gift of Mary so beautiful. That is what made the gift of the widow greater than all the gifts that were cast into the treasury. The shadow of the crow was upon it. Of all the gifts that our Lord receives there is none that is so fragrant and brings such joy to his heart as those gifts we make that are stained with the sweat and the blood of sacrifice.
What would be the outcome of such giving? First, by so doing, we will save ourselves from those sins born of too great love of money. Such giving will set us free from the bondage of covetousness. It will save us from the sin of lying. When we entered the church we promised that we would support its institutions. When we fail to do so, we have broken our vow to Almighty God. Amen! was struck dead for lying about money matters. And if every guilty man were to be over taken off like fate today, there would be many a funeral.

2. Such giving would bring to us a new conscientiousness of our Lord and a new love for His church. The reason many of us don't love the church any more is because we put so little into it. It is a thing for which we sacrifice that we love. That is one of the secrets of a mother's love for her child. She has to stoop down into the very valley of the shadow of death to lift that little life into the light. If you want to enjoy your church, if you want to feel for it and for your Lord, a love that you have never felt, give sacrificially.

3. Such giving would enable us to go forward with our program. It would make possible the fellowship of Christ in a fuller and more wonderful way. Not only would our church be spiritually enriched but from her revived and replenished life there would flow streams of living water. Such consecration would indeed be "fair as the morning and bright as the sun and terrible as an army with banners."
"LISTEN TO ME"
Isaiah 55:3

"Incline your ear." Moffatt translates this text, "Listen to me." Thus it becomes an expression that is very common in the language of today. Some of us use it habitually. Others of us use it when we wish to give emphasis. It is an expression that carries at once an appeal and also authority. "Now you listen to me," a mother says to her daughter who tends to be a little too flapperish for comfort. "I know whereof I speak. I have traveled the road that you are traveling. I can save you a bit of heartache if you will allow me." "Listen to me." Thus it is that our Lord condescends to speak our language to appeal to us for our attention.

PART I.

Now there are certain good reasons why every one of us should make it his purpose to listen to God.

1. We ought to listen to Him because of who He is. If one were to tell the President of the United States tonight that I was calling him over long-distance he might stop to inquire as to who I am, and I would doubtless have some difficulty in getting his ear. But if word were to come that he were seeking to establish communication between himself and myself, I should probably respond very readily. I should do so because of who he is, because of his position of chief executive commands consideration and respect. But the one who is undertaking to get into communication with you is an eternal God in whose hand your breath is and whose are all your ways.

People of culture and good training listen while another is
"LISTEN TO ME"

speaking out of courtesy if for no other reason. If you and I were engaged in conversation you would listen to what I say even though you do not find me very interesting. There is only one time when we have the right to talk when some one else is speaking. That is when we are in a heated argument. People who argue often get angry, and getting angry it becomes a contest as to who can speak the louder and the more rapidly. But every one who listens out of courtesy, how much more should we show this courtesy to Him who has created us and redeemed us by His own precious blood.

2. We ought to listen to God because if we do not listen we are not likely to hear. To truly hear anything you must give attention. That is the reason that at least one of the most important tasks of the preacher is to get the attention of his audience. The most worthwhile sermon ever preached is absolutely worthless to the man who does not hear. What I say tonight may be as true as the Truth but if I do not get your attention both your time and mine is wasted. Any speaker who helps his audience must first get the attention of his audience, and God is no exception to that rule. He must get your attention or He cannot speak to you in such a way as to help.

Now getting the attention in a busy and hurried and rushing day like ours is not altogether easy. Many of us are tired. Many of us have shocked ourselves with this sensation and that till we have in a large measure lost our capacity to thrill. Some have lost their taste for anything that does not smack of the sensational. It is difficult for God to get our attention because we are so hurried, we are so restless, we are so absorbed. Our time is so taken up with a thousand and
one useful or useless things that we have little ear often times either for the voice of God or God's messenger.

Then it is easy for some of us to fail to hear God's voice because of His manner of speech. God does not shreek at us. He does not shout. "He shall not strive nor cry." said the prophet of old.

You remember how Elijah stood in the mouth of the cave to hear the voice of God. First there was a mighty wind. Then the stern prophet of iron felt that surely God was speaking in this power that was uprooting the giants of the forrest. But God was not in the wind. Then there was an earthquake and the mountains reeled and staggered like drunken men. This too chimed with the prophet's conception of God, but God was not in the earthquake. Then the lightning leaped from crag to crag and from bowlder to bowlder. Surely this is God's voice thought the prophet, but God was not in the fire. Then there came a voice of gentle stillness and lo, it was God's voice.

It is so that God speaks today. It is as a still small voice. The mighty forces are ever the quiet forces. What a power is the power of growth! But it never shreeks. How strong is gravitation! It holds the planets in its strong fingers. But it never shouts or cries aloud. God speaks softly. If you are waiting for a thunderous noise before you give attention, then you will doubtless wait forever. God speaks softly. If you do not give attention you might fail to fully understand.

Then we need to listen in order to recognize the voice that speaks to us. There are times when we mistake a voice that is of the earth earthly for the voice divine. We seldom do this, however, unless we have trifled with our oracles and tampered with our conscience. We mistake because the lower voice counsels us to do the thing that we
really want to do. There is a queer story in the Old Testament, of a young prophet that was commanded to prophesy against Jerobeam. He was to utter his prophesy and return home at once by a different road from that by which he had come. He was well on his way back home when an older prophet invited him to eat bread at his house. And when the younger man told him of his orders from the Lord, the older prophet said that the Lord had given him contrary orders. So the young man went back and in doing so he wrought his ruin.

But while we may mistake the voice of our selfish inclinations for the voice of the Highest, our more common blunder is to mistake the voice of God for some common-place voice of lower origin. Why did you feel so miserable and mean when you were guilty of some ugly piece of behavior? You explained it as a result of the strict teaching that you had had at home, and that is true in some measure, but it is truer still to say that God was speaking to you thru your outraged conscience. God was reproving you and seeking to win you back from a pathway that could only mean ruin.

Why do you find yourself restless and discontent in spite of the fact that you attend the gayest parties? Why in spite of the fact that you have made a fortune do you still feel that there is a lack, a hidden want that you have not yet derived? That was God speaking to you. That is the infinite Christ saying, "O heart I have need of you for myself and you will never find rest until you have found it in me."

What lies back of that unuttered prayer that was in your heart as you came to God's house tonight? Why do you find yourself in an hour like this, despising the man that you are and dreaming of the better
and bigger man that you might be? You are being disturbed by the whisperings of the infinite God. Do not mistake His voice. You remember that voice that came to Jesus in answer to His prayer, "Glorify thou me," and God answered, "I have glorified thee and will glorify thee again." But those that heard never dreamed that they had heard the voice of God. The best of them said it an angel. The crowd only shrugged and said it thundered. Only the attentive ear of Jesus recognized it as the voice of God.

3. Finally we ought to listen to the voice of God because he is speaking especially to ourselves. Those to whom he is speaking here are people just such as we are. Who are they?

(1) They were thirsty people. O that every one were thirsty. That includes every one present. That includes every soul in the world. There is not one of us who is not thirsty. When the Psalmist said, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God," he was speaking the language that is absolutely universal. This is certainly the longing of the saints. It is also the longing of those who are not saints. The only difference between the saints and the sinner in this respect is that the saint knows that for which he thirsts and the sinner often times fail to understand, but they are both thirsting for God.

(2) God is speaking to the hungry. To those who have some how missed that which is needed to nourish life. He is speaking to people who lack the bare necessities, bread and milk. They were spending for these things, but somehow the commodities they paid for were never delivered. They were people also for whom life had lost its thrill.
"LISTEN TO ME"

The wine had given out. The glow had gone out of the sky. The song had gone out of the heart. They had famished for food. They were starving for that which could bring the sparkle and the song and the thrill and the life.

(3) He was speaking to the poverty stricken. To those who had no money. And I suppose it would be needless for me to enter into an argument to prove that you and I are bankrupt so far as our possession of any moral wealth. We haven't a thing of worth to offer for the purchase of our pardon. It matters not how decent we are, how moral and respectable, this is a song that befits all of our lips.

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come."

A message for the penniless, for the moral impoverished, that is a message for you and me. And thank God, that is the message of this whole chapter and this whole book. It is said that a little chap once looked eagerly and hungrily at some grapes that were growing in the royal hot houses of Sweden. His mother was sick and was eager for some fruit. He asked thekeeper to sell him a bunch of grapes, offering him all that he had, but the keeper rebuffed him. But it so happened that the Prince overheard. He cut him the choicest cluster and put them into his eager hands and when the lad offered to pay, he said kindly, "No, my father is not a merchant who sells, he is the King who gives." And that is the gospel for you and me.

PART II.

Now what is it that God is saying to this thirsty and hungry and
I' i

penniless crowd of which you and I are a part?

1. He tells us very frankly and to our faces that we are being
dubbed. He tells us that we are being cheated. There is amazement not
unmixed with heartache and disappointment in his question. "Wherefore
do you spend money for that which is not bread and your labor for that
which satisfieth not." Why, indeed? The only answer seems to be that
of the showman, "We love to be humbugged." We seem to delight in being
cheated. People all over the land today are spending endless money
and what is infinitely more tragic they are spending the best years of
their lives and the very treasure of their soul. And what are they
getting in return? Fleeting and unsatisfying laughter, disillusioned
hearts and tear-wet faces.

2. But he does more than rebuke. He gives us the way out of our
difficulty. "Listen to me." "Come unto me." If you will come He
promises life. He promises life that really satisfies. He promises
life that has a real tang in it. "Thrill," He says, "offer the first
fruit." Everybody wants a thrill. There is a God-given hatred of
monotony in every heart. We do not want a treadmill life. We do not
wish to travel the whole road on a dull, drab, monotonous level. We want
to dip down into the cool waters of the canyons depths. We want the
thrill of the mountain climb. How are we to realize this longing? Not
by spending our money for that which is not bread. Not in a way that
leaves us with ill head and an aching heart. "Be not drunk with wine
wherein is riot but be filled with the spirit." That is God's way and
is a way open to every one of us.
"LISTEN TO ME"

PART III

But it is not only needful that we listen to God's voice. It is not only necessary that we understand that He is speaking to us and what He is speaking to us. There is another step. If we are to come to our best and if He is to realize the great dream that He has dreamed for us, having listened and having understood we must respond. If we fail to take this final step then all His efforts on our behalf have gone for naked nothing.

Now it is altogether possible to hear God's voice and recognize it as God's voice and refuse to obey. Millions have been guilty of that tragic folly. Nay, it is safe to say that every one of us has at times been guilty. It is safe to say that all of us at times have been guilty. Some have been guilty so often and so long that the voice has grown dim and distant. The message that once was clear and disturbing is hardly recognizable now. I know of nothing that is more soaked in the tears of utter tragedy than to have disregarded the voice of God till it has grown silent because we have lost our capacity to hear. I know of no finer word that we could take upon our lips than those of the great apostle that said, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."

To those who yet have ears to hear, God is speaking now. This is His appeal. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." There is a time when He may be found. There is a time when He may not be found.
"LISTEN TO ME"

There is a time when He is near. There is a time when, so far as your own powers to perceive Him are concerned, He is far away. The time that He may be found is now, the place where He may be found is here. "Now is the accepted time, today is the day of salvation."
"My watchmen --- are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark."

The Bible is one of the plain speaking books. At times it seems shockingly and offensively so. It uses language that we tend to resent. Without hesitation we read on even though we feel offended and affronted and positively insulted. Here, for instance, it compares a certain group of individuals with dogs and they are not a high class type of dogs at that. They are dumb dogs. Dogs fit for nothing but eating and sleeping and serving in the place of a child to some family to whom children are objectionable.

PART I.

Who are these that are thus harshly rebuked? They are God's watchmen. They are folks set to do sentinel duty. There are people whose business it is to salt the earth. There are those who have been called to stand in the gap. There are men whose high office it is to be as a shelter from the wind and a covering from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shelter of a great rock in a weary land. They are to render a service to the individual and to society comparable to that rendered by a faithful and courageous watch dog.

And who are these who have upon their shoulders this high and weighty responsibility.

1. God is here speaking especially of his servants, the prophets. They are in a peculiar sense watchmen. They have been called, in the language of Ezekiel, to hear the words at the lips of God and warn men
Dumb Dogs/

from Him. They are sentinels upon the walls whose duty it is to watch for the approach of the enemy. They are to have a sharp eye for anything that will hurt. They are to speak pointedly and plainly of the enemy's approach once he has been discovered.

This, as I understand it, has been the function of God's ministers thru the centuries. It is their function today. The preachers of the gospel have upon their shoulders responsibilities of moral and spiritual leadership. It is not theirs to follow the crowd. It is not theirs to be swayed by public opinion. It is not theirs to look to men for guidance and direction. It is not theirs to take orders from men. It is theirs to be God's spokesmen. They are to defend the right as God gives them to see the right, in utter scorn of consequence.

2. But this responsibility does not belong exclusively to the preacher. It is shared by all who know the Lord. It is the duty of parents. It is your solemn responsibility to be the protector of your home. You are to see to it that nothing passes its threshold that would mar and blight and destroy. You are to be the protectors of your children. They came to you as pure as the dewdrop on the lip of the rose. You are to seek to keep them pure by the grace of God.

And this, mark you, is a responsibility that is personal and that is individual. You cannot shirk your own child. You cannot put your responsibility on others shoulders. There are thousands trying to do that today to the great hurt both of themselves and of their children. David tried the same tragic experiment. He convinced himself that Absolom would be safe in the hands of his favorite general. But listen to that wild heartrending cry that comes to us across the far
Dumb Dogs.

spaces of the years. "Oh Absolom, my son, would God I had died for thee." It is the wail of a man who shirked his own responsibility.

It is the duty that belongs also to every Sunday School teacher. Those that come to your classes are entitled to leadership and teaching at the hands of one faithful to the Lord Jesus. You especially who teach boys and girls have them at the most impressionable period of their lives. Remember there is no substitute for winning them to Jesus Christ. You are their watchman. You are to warn them of the saving not only of their souls but of their lives. It is possible that their best chance at God will come thru you. If you throw away your opportunity it may mean utter loss.

This is the duty of every office bearer of the Church. It is the duty of every member of the Church. Nay more, it is the duty of every man and woman born into the world. God has given to every one his work. Believe me, He has not sent any of us to despoil. We are not here to tear down. We are not here to lower the moral temperature of the world. It is every man's duty to help. It is every man's duty to act as saving salt for the world of which he is a part.

PART II.

Now what was wrong with these watchmen? What harm were they doing? Answer, no positive harm at all. They are not compared to vicious dogs. They are not dogs that snap and snarl. They haven't seized anybody by the throat. The whole fault lies not in what they have done, but in what they have failed to do. The duty of the dog is to guard his master and his master's household. The duty of these prophets was to do guard duty for God and for the individual and for
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The society. They had done no positive wrong. They had said nothing they ought not to be said. The tragedy of it is that they had not said anything at all.

There is an old story. The secret of the failure of most of us does not grow out of the fact that we are living lives that are positively vicious and wicked, it is rather in the fact that we are failing in our duty to God and man. Almost every warning that our Lord ever uttered was against the sins not of commission but of omission. And all His parables of judgment and condemnation are pronounced upon men not for some glaring sin committed but for duties neglected. His sentence is not "Inasmuch as you have done this, unto you shall go away," but rather, "Inasmuch as you did it not."

What must I do to be saved? There is something to be done. I must commit my life to Jesus Christ. Having enlisted, I must fight the fight to the end of the journey. But what must I do to be lost? Answer, nothing. All that is necessary for me to do in order to be lost today and tomorrow and forever is just to do nothing. Bear, naked nothing.

PART III.

Why were these prophets silent? Why were they like dogs that could not bark? I am going to mention four reasons. They were reasons that were pressing then as they are pressing today. They are reasons that have kept me silent many times. They are reasons that have struck you with dumbness. There is not a man listening to me that has not one time or another been brought under that influence.
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1. Discouragement. Sometimes we lapse into silence because to speak seems so utterly useless. There are individuals in every community that are regarded by good people as hopeless. Possibly some of them are. We never know. We meet them day by day and pass them by without even a word of invitation or of warning simply because we have despaired of them. We say, "it will do no good." Or we stand in the face of a moral issue where the crowd seems against us. Again we say, "to protest is hopeless."

But it is well to bear in mind that it is not your duty to win out in every conflict into which you enter. It is not your duty to win every man to whom you speak. "If you see the sword coming," said the prophet, "give warning and the man whom you warn perishes by the sword, his blood will be upon his own head." That is, it is not my business nor is it yours to compel any man to accept my convictions. It is not my duty to compel any man to be a Christian. My duty is this, in the fear and love of God I am to warn, I am to invite. Having done this the responsibility rests no longer upon my shoulders, but upon the shoulders of Him who has received the warning and heard the invitation. Therefore, we are to speak right on whether men hear or whether they refuse to hear.

2. The second reason why these prophets were silent was because they were spiritually asleep. "They lie," said God thru Isaiah, "adreaming in the sleep they love." A watch dog who remains sleeping is mighty useless. A burgular might pick a lock right over his sleeping body and might plunge a dagger into the heart of his master and he be all unconscious that anything had happened.
Dumb Dogs.

And sometimes Christian ministers and sometimes whole Churches seem to be asleep. They are insensible to danger. Their treasures are stolen and they know it not. Fathers and mothers allow their children to slip thru their fingers while they remain blissfully unconscious that anything is wrong. They allow themselves to lose their grip on God thru sheer spiritual drowsyness. In Bunyan's immortal allegory one of the most dangerous points on the road from the City of Destruction to Mount Zion was the enchanted ground. And the danger of the enchanted ground was that those passing thru it tended to be overcome by sleep. And because our Lord knew this tendency He said over and over again "Watch" and what I say unto you is watch. (I was asleep.)

3. The third reason for silence was indifference growing out of absorption in other things. These prophets were too much interested in other matters. There are many today, both preachers and laymen, who are so busy doing a thousand and one things that they forget to do the supreme thing.

(1) Some of them were absorbed in pleasure. They were trying so hard to amuse themselves that they did not have time to be watching. They were pleasure mad. But if Isaiah were to come back to the world in this twentieth century and into the city of Memphis, I am sure he would find the situation quite as bad as the day he witnessed in Jerusalem. No generation I think has ever tried harder to amuse itself than we have. Hence many of us have grown very bored and very tired.

(2) Then some of them were too absorbed in business. They simply
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did not have time. They got up too late for morning prayer and got home too late for evening prayer. They worked so hard during the week that they were too tired for Sunday School and Church on Sundays. The prayer meeting had never even been considered. They had no time for prayer. No time for a personal word of warning or invitation to their friends.

It is said that two ships made by rival companies were racing from Liverpool to America. A watchman on the leading vessel shouted down to her captain "a man overboard." Her captain looked in near the ship, saw nobody. "Where?" "Far to the windward." The captain looked thru his glasses and could see the man frantically waiving a bit of cloth. "Shall I order a life boat to be lowered?" said the second officer. "No," came the reply. "If we save him we will lose the race." And soon the ship moved on and the man was left to his fate.

4. The final reason for the silence of these watchmen was fear. Fear has put you and me to silence many times. The fear of being peculiar; the fear of the smile, the fear of ridicule, the fear of being called a fanatic; the fear of criticism. What a dreadful foe is fear! No wonder the wise man said, "Fear of man bringeth a snare."

I wonder how many lost men there are in Memphis tonight who would be active servants of God but for your cowardice and mine. I wonder how many of our children are away from God who would now be with us in His house but for the fact that we have let a certain timidity and a certain kind of fear stop our mouths and prevent our saying the word that ought to be said. There are times when it takes courage to speak out. It cost the braving of the fiery furnace for the Hebrew
Dumb Dogs.

children. John the Baptist might have eaten dainty food out of the dish that held his head if he had only been willing to keep his mouth shut on a touchy question. Not a few faithful dogs have received knocks instead of pats, just for barking at the wrong time. I could utter ten sentences at this moment that would cause me to be patted by ten thousand hands tomorrow as the news got out in the different newspapers in the land. But for the fact that I believe it is part of the duty of a watchman to speak.

PART IV.

What is the tragedy of this silence? It is twofold.

1. It endangers others. I cannot fail to be loyal to the gospel that I have been called to preach without endangering you. You cannot fail without endangering somebody. This gospel is a life and death matter. The prophet said, "If you give no warning those that might have been saved will die in their sin. I wonder if there is a man out in eternity without God that would have not been there but for my unfaithfulness. I wonder if there has been one that has been wrecked by your unfaithfulness. My silence and disloyalty endangers others.

2. To fail to bear my testimony, to fail to speak as God calls me to speak means certain ruin for myself. There is nothing for the barren fig tree but to be hewn down. "Every branch that beareth not fruit is taken away." When the High Sheriff of heaven sets out to arrest those that are guilty of the crime committed on the Highway that leads from Jerusalem to Jericho, he is going to bring in the ruffians that robbed him and all but murdered him, but he is also going to arrest the priest and the Levite that passed him by. You are your brother's keeper.
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You can no more dodge that responsibility than you can dodge the fact of God.

If I see you go down the road where a charge of dynamite is to be exploded and do not warn you and you are killed, I am guilty of your blood. If I see you exposed to a danger from which I might save you and you are lost, I am also guilty. When the Titanic went down one man, Bruce Ismay, escaped in the life boat with a bunch of women. He was part owner of the great vessel. It was his right in a way, but when he went back to New York every man despised him. Today he lives in a castle in a rural section of Ireland and I am told that the peasants as they pass by spit on his gate in contempt.

I do not want to go up to life's other side like that. I am not asking to go up unmarked and unscared. At the World's Fair in Chicago there were a number of life boats. They were beautiful for the most part. One was ugly and battered yet it drew more attention than all the others put together. It was the one in which Grace Darling went to the rescue of a little handful of ship-wrecked sailors. She went at the risk of her own life. And so must we go for to save our lives is to lose them, but to lose them is to keep them unto life eternal.