HER DANGERS

"You shall not surely die, you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

-- Genesis 3:4.


Doubtless it will seem very strange to turn back to this old story to find a text for a sermon on "The New Woman." Yet there is not a more modern character upon all the pages of the Bible than is this that we find upon the first page in the Book of Genesis. Here is a story that has an immortal usefulness about it over which the years simply have no power. What a proof of the inspiration of this ancient author that he could write a story that would be equally at home among primitive peoples and among those far more advanced that belong to this scientific age. But such is the case. This story is as new as the last best seller. It is as new as your last heart beat. One could not conceive of a story that is more up to the minute than this.

I

The first fact that impresses us about this primitive woman is that she had to face temptation. This was true in spite of the fact that she has no poisoned blood in her veins. She is represented as coming direct from the hand of God. It is a great privilege to be well-born. It is a great advantage to have flowing in our veins the moral momentum of a pious ancestry. It is tragic beyond words for parents to stand at the upstairs window of life and pour scourging acid upon the children who are to come after them.
For the sins of the father are visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation." But so is the righteousness visited also. Clean living parentage may be a great help to us in our fight with temptation, but it cannot exempt us altogether.

Then, this woman was tempted in spite of the fact that she had a wholesome environment. She began life in a garden. She was far removed from the world's temptations that make life so hard for many today. How infinitely increased are the temptations of these boys and girls that are condemned to live in miserable tenements in the filthy slums of our city. It is a great privilege to have a clean and wholesome environment. But environment, however clean, cannot altogether shut the door in the fact of temptation. Whoever we are, however well born we are, wherever we live, all of us face the fact of temptation.

Therefore, we read on this first page of human history that the serpent said, "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Of course we have changed regarding this personality, but the Bible believed that there is a genius back of evil. It believes in the personality of the devil. There are a few today who share this conviction. I am not saying whether they are the richer or the poorer for it. It is probable that Martin Luther, slinging his ink bottle at the devil, is likely to be a bit more on his guard than if he had spilled that much ink trying to prove that he does not exist. But whether we look upon him as a personality or not, there is a voice that speaks to every human heart and there is a voice that calls us to take the wrong road; there is a voice that calls unto the dust.
But on this same page God speaks. He spoke before the serpent. He speaks through all human history. There was never a man born into the world that did not hear his voice. Of course we may discount it. Of course we may listen to it, and refuse to obey till we become all but deaf to it, but God is always speaking. Before our mother's lips had kissed us, God was there. And through all our wandering ways he pursues us like the hound of Heaven, and His call is always a call to the highest.

God speaks, and the devil speaks. God calls one way, and the devil calls another. That means temptation. There are those who resent the fact that we are being tempted. There are those who are full of rebellion that God did not create us so that we could not fall. Yet, when we consider the matter, if the choice were left to us, I think most of us would choose to have life as it is. It is a great danger to be born into a world like this. But it is also a great privilege. If we have the capacity to make the wrong turning, that is compensated by our capacity to take the right turn. Our power of choice is what makes us men and women. Without that power we might forever be innocent, but we could never achieve Christ-like character. Innocence may be born with us, but character must be won in the realm of choices.

II

It is arresting to notice how temptation is represented as coming to this woman - It came in the guise of a serpent. Temptation doesn't sound a trumpet before it. It glides into life. It takes us by surprise. It is serpent-
like. A serpent is a wily creature. As Ruskin tells us, it sleeps for half the year, but when it awakens, it can out-swim the fish. It can outclimb the monkey. It can outlead the zebra. It can outwrestle the athlete, and crush the tiger. Temptation is tricky. It is deceptive. Look how it begins here:

1. It begins with an exaggeration, a falsifying of the facts. "Forbath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden." The serpent is here exaggerating God's provisions. "Do you mean to tell me that all these things are forbidden", is the language of many today. They feel that religion is a thing of "don'ts", that every really pleasurable thing is forbidden. They think that "God has come to take all the color and the sunshine out of life. "Pale Gallilean, Thou hast conquered", they whine, "and the world has grown gray at Thy birth." But of course that is a lie. No pleasure is prohibited except sinful pleasure.

2. Eve at first sees clearly enough to answer that question. "Every tree is not forbidden", she said, "only one, and that is forbidden for our good." She begins to see with faith enough to believe that what is forbidden is not to cheat and rob, but to enrich. But the devil raises the question as to whether this is true or not. He declares that God's prohibitions are meant to hem in life and impoverish it. Many feel so still. Yet every law of God is made for man, and is his protection and none of them is made for God.

3. Having raised doubts in the mind of Eve, he passes on to a flat contradiction of God. "Ye shall not surely die", he declares boldly. Sin is not dangerous. Rebellion against God is not a killing and destroying thing, it is a way to a fuller and a richer life. It is not the roadway to slavery,
as the preachers would have you believe, it is the roadway
to freedom. If you want to be free, says this Book, you will
find freedom in the place of obedience. If the Son of God
shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. If you want
to be free, says the world and the flesh and the devil, do as
you please. These are the voices that spoke to Eve. They are
the voices that speak to us, both men and women. They are
speaking with peculiar emphasis to the women of today.

III

What was the outcome. Eve made the mistake of
believing that the way of freedom and of a richer life was in
the violation of law. Of course this was a fatal blunder. No
creature or thing can be free except in proportion to the
watchfulness of its obedience to the law of its being. A
fish may be at home in any one of the seven seas, but it
cannot be at home in the air. It must observe the law of
its being. To undertake to be free to make a cross-country
run is to lose his life. A train is free so long as it remains
on its narrow track. A ship is free so long as it obeys its
compass. Man is free only so long as he obeys the law of his
being, which is the law of God.

Now, these days have brought peculiar dangers
to women because of her larger freedom. Many safeguards that
protected your mothers have passed away. The restraints of the
home are nothing like so strict as they used to be. The
restraints born of economic necessity have passed, to a great
extent. The restraints of public opinion have been greatly
weakened. Women can go and come at their pleasure today with-
out being questioned. They can do scores of things that would have meant estracism to their mothers. This, of course, has increased their temptation.

One great peril of the modern woman is being captured by false ideals. Too many women today are imitators of men rather than women. Now, when we begin to imitate we always invariably imitate the idiosyncracies of our heroes rather than those virtues that made them what they are. How many preachers make themselves ridiculous by trying to imitate Sam Jones or Billy Sunday. Schumann Heink said that she was called upon to sing a rôle that she had never sung before. She encouraged herself, however, by remembering that she had heard five or six of the greatest living artists sing it. With this in her mind she undertook the task. What was the result? Her critic said that she reproduced all the greatest faults of all of the great artists. Now, too many women today, by imitating men, are imitating their vices rather than their virtues. Take the cigarette habit, for instance. Now, do not get excited. I am not going to tell you that you have less right to smoke than men. I am not going to tell you that it is a vicious habit. But there are certain bare facts that we need to bear in mind—they never made any woman more attractive. Chas. Mayo says that since the mucous membrane of her mouth is more tender than that of men, it increases her susceptibility to cancer. Cancer is already the most deadly scourge of womanhood. It seems to me rather silly to incur reckless risk for next to naked nothing.

Then, the cigarette-smoking woman is at a disadvantage when it comes to being a mother. A great London physician declared some time ago that his only investigation
revealed the fact that the mortality rate among babies born of non-cigarette-smoking mothers was 153 per thousand. The mortality rate among the babies among cigarette-smoking mothers was 270 per thousand. That is, for every thousand mothers to smoke it cost the lives of 74 babies. That, it seems to me, is worth considering. It does not strike me as good sportsmanship to take on a needless habit that might rob somebody else for whom you are most responsible of the opportunity to live.

Then, drinking among women is on the increase. That fact is obvious. There are many young women today who would be greatly embarrassed to refuse a cocktail. Of course that same girl would not be embarrassed in the least to refuse to eat onions out in society. Though her breath, saturated by liquor and cigarettes, is more offensive than onions. But we are afraid to refuse for fear we might be thought to have convictions.

While in Atlanta a few weeks ago, I was forced to hear a conversation in a room next to mine. There were some young people staging a party. There was a girl who was insisting upon drinking moderately. Her companions wanted her to drink to drunkenness. And when she tried to evade it, they accused her of being a sissy, and she resented it with "ohs". I thought it was a bit significant. Of course no man wants to be a woman, but no woman ought to want to be anything else.

Then, there is the ever present sex question. Social purity has been made war upon in these days. On many battle fronts it has been bombarded with a new psychology. The modern dance has played its part. Salacious literature has fired its guns. The movies have often been a menace. Under these influences, Dr. Beatrice Hinkle says that the ideal of
virginity is losing its grip upon the modern girl. Of course in these things, woman has a right to the same freedom that man has.

But allow me to be old-fashioned enough to get away from the discussion of your rights. Right is a term of the law court. There is something finer than claiming your rights, and that is the giving up of those rights to gain your privileges. You have a right to do all that man does, but wrong is wrong for both of you. And while moral wrong is just as deadly for the man as it is for the woman, I think you need to bear in mind that you are the keeper of the door of life. As such, you are the maker of the home, and the shaper of tomorrow, as no other human soul is. The Bible here made the destiny of the home to turn on a woman's decision, and whether we resent it or accept it, that has been the case through all the centuries. Eve claimed a right to live her own life, and she made a wreck of her home, and changed her garden into a briar patch.

IV

But that is not the whole of the story. She, with her husband, no sooner lost God than God came in search of them. You would have thought that they would have gone up and down the aisles of Eden saying, "Oh, my God, where art Thou?" But it was God that came in search of them, and through all the centuries He keeps up that search, and He never lets us rest till we find rest in Him.

Through their disobedience to God, this man and woman lost their innocence. That, they could never have back.
But God put them on the roadway to a new triumph, a triumph through victory over themselves, and through victory over sin. And the new demands that these days have brought, if yielded to, may work your undoing; but if met in the strength of Christ, they may bring you to a richer victory and to a larger freedom.

That, please God, I believe is going to be the result for vast multitudes. You remember the old story of how Samson went courting one day, and a lion reared out against him. Now, Samson was young, and the lion was young. They each claimed right of way. There was a battle, and the lion was slain. When Samson came back along that trail and went to look for the body of his dead enemy, he found that the bees had built their nest in its carcass, and he got his hands full of honey and proffered the riddle: "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." And as you meet the lion that roars in the way, if the spirit of the Lord comes mightily upon you, as in the case of Samson, you shall be only the stronger for having come to the Kingdom in these desperate days. May God grant that such may be the case!
THE EVASIVE FACE

"The woman said, The serpent tempted me and I did eat."

Genesis 3:13

Here is a story of which our western minds tend to make a sorry mess. To read it in a literal fashion is to find nothing but the crude and the grotesque. But when we see in it what the author meant us to see we find truth that is so fresh and abiding that it fills us with amazed admiration. Whoever wrote this story was profoundly learned in the ways of the human heart. In fact it is almost unbelievable that a story so old should be so very new. I can only account for the writer's profound insight by the conviction that he had not only lived much and thought much, but that he was speaking as he was moved by the Holy Spirit. This graphic story is fresh and fragrant with the breath of inspiration. What are some of the jewels of truth that we find in this queer casket?

I.

The first fact that the author makes clear is the universality of temptation. In his story he makes this thrilling declaration, "God said." This woman and this man were God's children. It was to be expected, therefore, that God their father should speak to them. Naturally he sought to enter into fellowship with the objects of his creative love and care. The first voice in time, as the first voice in eternity, is God's voice. The author begins his book with this majestic sentence, "In the beginning God." As God spoke on the first page of human history, so he has spoken through all the centuries. Some
times we have refused to listen. Almost always our ears have been dull at
hearing. But our God who will not fail nor be discouraged has continued to
speak. He is speaking in the here and now. His call is always the upward
call. He is trying to tempt us into fellowship with himself.

But this wise seer recognizes the fact that while God speaks to men,
there is another voice that makes itself heard. He calls this voice the
voice of the serpent. Many today would call it the voice of our baser self.
But whether the voice comes from without or from within is not fundamental.
What is fundamental is that this voice is very real and very compelling. As
the voice of God constantly calls us to take the upper road, so this voice con-
stantly calls us to take the lower. We have all heard both these voices. They
come in a multitude of ways. We hear them in the difference between the ugly
actual and the beautiful ideal, in the difference between what is and what ought
both to be. The Psalmist was listening to these voices when he uttered this prayer:
"My soul cleaveth unto the dust, quicken thou me." Paul was listening to these
when he declared that he found himself fumbling the task that he longed to do,
and putting through the mean deed with which he had vowed to break forever. Eve
then was a tempted woman, even as you and I.

This was the case in spite of the fact that she was well born. She had no
poisoned blood in her veins. She is represented as coming fresh from the hand
of God. By this the author is telling us that however well born we may be we
cannot for that reason escape temptation. But, of course, we are not to conclude
from this that he is seeking to minimize the importance of being well born. It
is a great privilege to be born of clean and upright parentage. Certainly it is
a tremendous help to have the moral momentum of a pious ancestry flowing in one's
veins. Certainly just as the sins of the father are visited upon the children to the
third and fourth generation, so is his goodness, his uprightness, his integrity.
But even so, no privilege of birth can altogether save us from the ordeal of temptation.

Eve was tempted in spite of the fact that she had a clean and wholesome environment. She was living in Eden. Her home was so close to heaven that God could walk in it during the cool of the day. But even that did not exempt her from temptation. In fact there is no spot in this world where temptation will not find us. During the middle ages you remember how common it was for men possessed of high moral earnestness to hide themselves away in monasteries and in dens and caves of the earth. They were doing this in an effort to escape temptation. But their efforts were always futile. One of the first faces into which they had to look when they found themselves in their places of security was that of temptation. Jesus knew that the best way to deal with temptation was not to hide, but to face it in the strength of God. Therefore, when he prayed for his friends he used these bracing words, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

But in declaring that temptation comes to us however wholesome our environment the author is not affirming that a right environment is of no importance. He knew, as we know, that it is of vast importance. There are children that are handicapped by their birth. There are other children that are handicapped almost to the point of hopelessness by their environment. A survey of childhood delinquency in the city where I was pastor a few years ago discovered the fact that delinquency increased in proportion to the nearness of the home of the child to the slum section of that city. Even in the slums some children were growing up morally straight and clean. There were saints you remember in Caesar's household. But environment has much to do with whether we give heed to the voice of God or to the voice of the serpent.

I am speaking to some young men and women who have just come to our city from the country homes and from homes in sedate and quiet villages. Here you find yourself
in a new environment. Here you are going to make new friends. It is vastly right important that you choose the kind of friends. If you want to give yourself the best possible chance make friends of the best people, you can do this as a rule by actively identifying yourself with the Church. But if you use your new found freedom to frequent roadhouses and the night spots, you will soon find it easy to laugh at your ideals and to spit in the face of your deepest convictions. Remember that he was a very wise man who said, "The companion of fools shall be destroyed." You can surround yourself by friends who can do much to wreck you. You can also surround yourself by friends who can do much to bring you to your best possible self. If you are wise you will choose the cleanest possible environment.

Then there is a final word about temptation that we learn only in the New Testament. Here we learn that just as neither birth nor environment can save us from temptation, no more can high moral attainment. Of course, we recognize the fact that high moral attainment can be a great help. The man who loses the small daily battles of life is likely to lose the supreme battle. In George Elliott's immortal story, Ramola, there is a character named Tito Melima. When Tito first comes on the scene he is charming and gracious, but he has a way of dodging the difficult. He is constantly losing the small battles of his everyday. He dies at last with the fingers of a man that he has betrayed clutching at his throat. His last damning defeat was but the sum total of the lesser defeats that he had suffered day by day.

Just as we are weakened by the small defeats of our commonplace days, so we are strengthened by our small victories. The South Sea Islanders have a faith that whenever one of them meets an enemy and conquers that enemy, the strength of the conquered foe enters into the conqueror. There is a profound truth in this. That is the meaning of that Old Testament story of Samson's finding honey in the carcass of the lion he had slain. If we win in the small conflicts of our common-
place days, when we come to life's supreme moment we are likely to find a victory that is but the sum total of the smaller victories won day by day. But while this moral attainment can do much for us in our fight with temptation, it cannot exempt us from the conflict altogether.

To be convinced of this it is only necessary to think of the temptation of our Lord. He was perfect. He was absolutely sinless. That fact, I think, is the supreme miracle of his life. He alone could say, "Who of you convicteth me of sin?" Yet, this perfect Christ was tempted in all points like as we are. I remember a certain holiness cult, when I was a boy, whose members claimed that they had attained such absolute perfection that they no longer tempted. But, of course, they were merely deceived. Any disciple who has attained that high mark has run clean past his Lord and is looking back at him. A wholesome birth, a clean environment, moral attainment, all these help in resisting temptation, but none of them bring entire exemption. Temptation is absolutely universal.

II.

How does temptation come? The author begins his story by telling us that the serpant was more cunning than any beast that the Lord had made. By this he means that temptation is a subtle something. It steals upon us like a thief in the night. It glides into life. It takes us by surprise. It does not wave a red flag in our faces and warn us of the dangers that are ahead. It is cunning. It is an expert salesman. It is skilled in inducing the customer to buy its wares regardless of either cost or consequences. This is evidenced by the fact that we constantly hear ourselves confessing after some moral lapse, "I never thought that I would have done that." Look how cunning the tempter is in this particular story.

1. The serpant begins by asking a question. It is a question that insinuates what he dares not speak openly, at least at the beginning. A bold and open declar.
ation might have frightened his victim, so he asks a question. "Yea, hath God said that you shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" How cunning that is! "You do not mean to tell me," he seems to say, "that you cannot live your own life. Surely you are not asserting that you cannot do as you please. Why such a position is plainly absurd." Quite so. It seems even more absurd to the modern mind, I fancy, than to the ancient. We must have no inhibitions. A God that would deny us self-expression would be less than good. That you see is as new as your last rationalizing to excuse your own moral failure.

The purpose of this question was two-fold. First, it was to create a doubt in the mind of the tempted as to whether she had understood all about the fruit of a certain tree being prohibited. Maybe nothing is prohibited. Maybe everything is right. Maybe there is no sharp line between right and wrong. On misty days it is next to impossible to look at the horizon and tell where the earth leaves off and the heavens begin. So when our moral atmosphere becomes a bit murky we grow uncertain as to the difference between right and wrong. At the beginning Eve was sure that there was a difference. Now she has lost her certainty.

In the second place the tempter was seeking to create a doubt in the mind of this woman as to the goodness of God. Assuming that there is a real distinction between right and wrong, assuming that you are forbidden to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, what then? Why this for sure...that God is niggardly and mean. If he really loved you he would allow you to have your own way. Some parents act on that conviction in dealing with their children. They seem to believe that a child who is compelled to obey will not love the one who demands obedience. Of course, that is absolutely false. Parents who demand obedience of their children are, as a rule, better loved than those who do not. A God who would permit us to do as we please could not be a loving God at all. But the ser.
pant insinuates that God in demanding obedience is selfishly trying to cheat
his child out of something.

But Eve can still see clearly enough to affirm that there is a difference
between right and wrong. She affirms further that if she takes the wrong course
there will be a penalty. Every law of God has a penalty attached. A law without
a penalty is no law at all. It is merely advice good or bad. "We are permitted
to eat of every tree of the garden except one," she declares. "If we eat of the
fruit of that tree the penalty is death." "You poor, silly child," the serpent
cuckles, "You think that the way to be free is to keep the law. How absurd!
Every wise person knows that the way to be free is to break the law. You are so
stupid as to believe that the way of obedience is the way of life. But every man
of the world knows that the way of disobedience is the way of life. Enter into
the knowledge of evil as an experience, therefore, and you will find a fuller free-
dom and a more abundant life."

This declaration is as old as man and as new as the insistent voice
that is now inviting you to take the lower road. In all the centuries the serpent
has not been able to think up a single new lie. We bite at the same old bait that
the tempter dangled before the eyes of our far off ancestors. In spite of the fact
that there is no freedom except in conformity to law, in spite of the fact that
every effort of self-will tends only to dress the soul in chains, we still seek
freedom along the road of disobedience. Yet experience is constantly confirming
the words of Jesus: "Whosoever committeth sin is a slave."

Having assured Eve that sin was not only not deadly in its consequences, but
the path to a fuller life, the serpent next dares to offer sin as desirable in
itself. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was
a delight to the eyes...she took of the fruit thereof and did eat." Yes, sin
can be delightful and pleasant. Of course, that is true only of our own sin. Sin
on the part of our fellows is always ugly. It is the sin that so focuses our attention that it keeps our eyes off all else, especially its consequences, that is genuinely appealing. The author frankly recognizes that there is pleasure in sin. Sin may be very pleasant, at least at the beginning. But when it enters into life it brings with it a fatal tuberculosis of the soul. However pleasant it may be at the first, at the last "it hiteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder." Eve shut her eyes to these facts and took her fatal step.

III.

What was the result?

1. She at once lost touch with God. At once she began to fear the God she had formerly loved. Her supreme Friend came to be regarded as an enemy. We can never have a purely neutral attitude toward God. If we refuse to love him we tend to hate him. If we refuse him as our friend we accept him as our foe. That is what James meant when he said, "The love of the world is enmity against God." The man who chooses to live for the world, to do what the world does, to make self-will the supreme motive of his life; that man not only ceases to love God, but he comes to look on God as a dreaded enemy. That is the reason that the thought of God is not a source of comfort to many. Instead he is a foe of whom they seek to rid themselves.

2. Not only did Eve thus break with God, but she led her husband into the same tragic experience. I do not know why this primitive story pictures the woman as the aggressor in this tragedy. It may be because the author thought the woman inferior. Among no people of the ancient world did woman stand higher than among the Jews. Yet, she was regarded by this enlightened people as inferior to man. For this reason every Jewish boy was taught to thank God day by day that he was not born a leper, a Gentile, or a woman. Even at the time of Jesus a Jewish rabbi would not speak, even to a respectable woman in public. That is the reason
the disciples were so amazed when they returned from the village of Sychar one day to find Jesus not only in conversation with a woman, but with a woman who was an outcast. The place of the woman in the ancient world was constantly that of an inferior.

But in spite of this fact I do not think this is what the author had in mind. I believe that he wrote this story in the realization that in matters relating to the home the woman's influence is, as a rule, as great, and even greater, than that of the man. Timothy became an active and useful Christian minister in spite of the fact that his father was a pagan. He was won to Christ and the Church by a grandmother Lois, and a mother Eunice. Again and again have I seen some brave wife and mother take every chick and child into the church and into the Kingdom with her, in spite of the fact that she had a pagan for a husband. Then I have seen a man of sound character marry a morally flippant woman, and under her influence make utter shipwreck of his faith. Nobody sins alone. This is true in a peculiar sense of wives and of mothers.

3. But that which made this tragedy fatal was not the fact that Eve believed the serpent rather than God. Her fatal failure was that having sinned she became morally evasive. Many have sinned far more deeply than she and have found victory through repentence. But Eve would not face the facts. She began by hiding from God. Do not smile at the picture of this man and this woman seeking to avoid God by hiding themselves among the trees of the garden. That is a practice as old as human guilt. Men conscious of sin are constantly trying to hide from God. They do this in many ways. Sometimes by dissipation, sometimes by refusing to think, sometimes by plunging into deeper sin. Sometimes they do it by absenting themselves from the church, by refusing to open God's word, by giving up the secret place of prayer.

Now this hiding from God always has this fatal result. It leads us to hide from ourselves. Eve refused to accept the responsibility for her own choice.
Note the dimensions are wrong.
Here is a story that has excited the admiration and ridicule of countless millions. Those who have brought to it wooden minds have found little in it. But to those who read it as the author meant it to be read, those surely have been amazed at: its abiding newness and truthfulness. That a man of the long ago could have written a story that is as much at home in our scientific age as it was in that primitive day. That he could paint a picture that appeals to the civilized and the savage, to the philosophers and to the little children. It is nothing short of a miracle. Let us then look at this amazing story as if we had never read it before.

I.

What is there significant about this woman, Eve? As with her husband, she meets us in a lovely garden called Eden. All sorts of extravagant statements have been made about her. But you will discover that almost all the difficulties that are raised about the Bible are raised about something that the Bible never said. A minister remarked, sometime ago, how vastly inferior Aristotle was to Adam. Of course, that was purely out of his own head. The Bible makes no extravagant claims for this ancient pair. They were not perfect. They were not even good.

What, then, I repeat, was this woman? So far as her moral character was concerned, she was innocent. Her charm was the charm of a baby. It was the charm of a little child of three. Modern science asserts that every child repeats...
within itself, in a sense, the history of the race. This wise author shows us this woman with the innocence of a child. Not only was she innocent but her innocence was born of ignorance. She had no knowledge of either good or evil.

Now as beautiful as a child is, that beauty is lost if the child fails to grow. When God created man, He created him with a capacity to think His thoughts, to share in His very nature. He must not only be innocent but he must be good. One may be born innocent, but nobody is born good. The character is something that we must achieve. The only way it can be achieved is by the making right choices. Therefore, God put this first pair, as he puts us, in a realm of choices.

II.

This brings us to the second fact about this woman and that is that she was a tempted woman. She had the capacity of making the wrong choice. She had to have that capacity in order to make a right choice. Temptation, therefore, both upward and downward was a fact of her experience as it is a fact of your experience and mine. There are ways of lessening our own temptation and the temptation of others. There are ways which we might strengthen ourselves in order to meet temptation, but there is no way of escaping temptation altogether. This woman was tempted in spite of the fact that she had some of the best possible safeguards against temptation.

1. She was tempted in spite of the fact that she was well born. She is pictured as coming fresh from the hands of God. She had no poison blood in her veins. It is a great privilege to be well born. It is a great privilege to have flowing in our veins the moral momentum of pious ancestors. Some children are greatly robbed and weakened here. The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children to the third and fourth generations. There are
parents who stand at the upstairs window of life to pour hot ashes in the faces of their innocent children. It is a great privilege to be well born but the best of parents cannot exempt us altogether from temptation.

2. This woman was tempted in spite of the fact that she had a good environment. Her home was a garden. She was in the midst of beauty, color and sweetness of perfection. She lived where all nature reminded her of a good and gracious God. It is a great privilege to have such a wholesome environment. While I was pastor in Birmingham, we discovered that juvenile delinquency increased just in proportion to the nearness of the child to the slum section.

There are many children who are robbed of their chance in life by the surroundings in which they must live. I used to preach now and then at a certain church in the slum section of Oklahoma City. I discovered that while the city spent thirty cents per capita for the education of its children, it spent $2.70 per capita for policing that section. High rate of juvenile delinquency was born both of bad parents and of an evil environment. Thus it is well for the child who has a good environment but even the best is not exempt from temptation.

3. This woman was tempted in spite of the fact that she had something to do. She with her husband were set to tend the garden. The longer we live and the wiser we become the more, I think, we are prone to thank God for work. Work is a means of growth. It is a roadway to self respect. There is something God-like about it. Jesus said "My Father worketh even unto now, and I work." Then it is a tremendous safeguard against temptation. The devil certainly does find some task for idle hands to do but in spite of the fact that this woman was busy she was tempted.

4. Finally she was tempted in spite of the fact that she lived where God was very close. As every child who has any sort of a chance, she had at
once a sense of God. As this author puts it she "heard the voice of God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." Hood is not the only one who could sing:

"I remember, I remember
The fir trees dark and high,
It seemed to me their slender tops
Were close against the sky.

It was a childish fancy,
But, Oh! 'tis little joy
To know that I am further off
From Heaven than when I was a boy."

She lived in a lovely world where God seemed close, yet she was tempted even as you and I.

III.

Then the author tells us how this temptation came. It is represented as coming in the guise of a serpent. Naturally, he doesn't believe that a snake ever stood up and talked as you and I talk. This is the language of poetry, and very fine poetry at that. He pictures temptation coming as a serpent. He simply meant that temptation is a subtle something. It takes us by surprise. It does not give us warning. It glides into life as a serpent slips through the grass. Notice then with what fine psychology the tempter makes his approach.

He exaggerates the prohibition under which he was placed. This is his question: "Has God said that you are not to eat of any tree in the garden?"
The authorized version says "every tree" but "any tree" is correct. What the tempter is saying is this: "Do you mean to tell me that God has put you here among all these beautiful fruits and that you are not allowed to eat one of them?"

Of course that was not the case at all. The tempter was exaggerating as is his custom. Certainly one of the greatest hindrances in winning people to Christ is the fear of what they will have to give up. I have heard a petulant child say to his mother when something was forbidden. "Why, I can't do anything." There are times when we all act like petulant children and have a feeling that while
obeying God might get us to Heaven, it will certainly cheat us out of everything worthwhile here. That is one of the Devil's coming lies. Second, you will notice that this exaggeration is in the form of a question. That is quite shrewd within itself. "Hath God said that you are not to eat of any tree in the garden?" What that implies is this: "Surely, you must be wrong. God wouldn't be so unjust, so silly as that." There is also a hint that a God which would prohibit anything would be far inferior to what a God ought to be. The tempter is seeking to here insert a doubt as to just what is forbidden. He is seeking to make Eve a bit color blind.

That temptation is far more at home today than it was in the Garden. Recent years have scrutinized the fundamental integrity by which the soul lives with critical eyes. Many people have flung away from old standards. The seventh commandment is being thrown into discard by vast multitudes. Not a few are looking upon the moral law today as merely man-made morals to frighten timid souls into being good. Third, then the tempter showed his shrewdness by fixing the attention on the one thing that was forbidden. Eve knew quite well that there was a vast variety of fruits of which she might eat at her will. But these all became of no value because the tempter had fixed her mind on the one fruit she was not to eat. That is the fatal fascination of temptation, that it focuses our gaze on the one particular desire and makes us forget all else. Fourth, then the tempter made his final and daring assertion. Informed that to eat of the tree would mean death, the tempter answered "You shall not surely die, for God knows that when you eat of that tree you will become as God, knowing good and evil." In other words, "God is trying to cheat you out of something. If you really want to live you had better take your life out of His hands and manage for yourself. Naturally, he can help you in some particulars but there are at least some things in which you must insist on having your own way.
Here we come to the very sum total of all temptation: - the temptation to lean on our own understanding, to live our own lives, to do as we please, at least in some one particular, regardless of the will of God." When the prodigal left his father's house, he was not seeking to hurt his father or anyone else. He was just asserting himself. How often all of us feel that in some respects, at least, I can manage for myself far better than God can manage for me.

Having thus directed the woman's attention to the desire for the fruit, having awakened her curiosity, having made her doubt the goodness of God and the fatality of sin, she made her wrong choice. She took the wrong turn of the road.

III.

What were the results?

First, she had no sooner made the wrong choice than she induced her husband to share in that wrong choice. Did you ever wonder why that the woman is pictured as the aggressor? Everywhere in the ancient world, she was looked upon as an inferior. I have reminded you how each Jewish boy was taught to pray this prayer every day: "Than God I was not born a Gentile, a leper or a woman." When the disciples came and found Jesus talking to the woman at Sychar, they marveled, says the story, not that he talked with "the woman", as it is translated but that he talked with "a woman." No decent Rabbi would talk to a woman in public. Yet women were held in higher regard among the Jews than any other people. Why then, I repeat, is woman here pictured as the aggressor? Was it because she was pictured inferior? No. It was for the opposite reason. This wise man of the long ago had insight enough to see that in matters of morals and religion the woman has ever been the stronger of the two. We have all seen many a weak woman take every chick and child
with her when her husband was a failure, but it is rare indeed to see a man be
ture to the highest when his wife refuses to share his faith. You can
the moral and spiritual temperature of any generation by the attitude of women.
One of the greatest dangers of our time is that the modern woman has too often
become an imitator of man. Too many have felt that the man has had the better of
it. Becoming an imitator, she has imitated his vices rather than his virtues.
As in the garden story, generally speaking, when the woman goes down man goes
with her.

Second, the woman came to be possessed with a sense of guilt. That is
the meaning of that sentence, "They knew they were naked." Knowledge had come
but it had come at the price of sin. Wrong doing is ever the mother of fear.
It always turns loose anemosis on our tracks. Becoming guilty, they were afraid,
but they were most afraid of the one that they should have loved the best. They
were afraid of God. They sought to hide themselves from Him. This is simple
language, easily understood by children. It is more easily understood by those
of us who because of the sense of guilt have sought to hide ourselves. Again
and again, there are those who hide by refusing to think. They hide by refusing
to pray, by refusing to open God's word. There are multitudes who are hiding
from God.

Third, finally, it did not bring her a larger life. It brought her
death. She had won knowledge at the price of faith. Knowledge without faith
wrecked her garden. It sent her to live in a brier patch. Knowledge without
faith is what is tearing our world apart today.

Here, then, is an old story eternally new. You and I live our lives in
realms of choice. The road is forking for us every day. The primal and supreme
temptation is this: To be independent of God, at least in some particulars.
But life can only come to those richest and best when we prove in our own
experience: "What is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

All vital Christianity is summed up in this prayer: "Thy will not mine be done."

* * * * * * *
PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER

I have gotten a man from the Lord - Genesis 4:1

This evening I am beginning a series of studies from the Rogues Gallery of the Bible. I am doing this in the realization that the greatest study of man is man. Also, with the further realization that no book holds the mirror up to nature quite as effectively as the Bible. I am doing this, also, with the hope that as we look at these verses, marred and scarred by sin, we shall find some light on our own pathways, and fresh hope and inspiration for the making of our fight.

Tonight we are to study "Public Enemy No. 1." By this I do not mean some outstanding criminal now living in America. We used to call Dillinger Public Enemy No. 1, but I do not think we were correct in so doing. The modern gangster is not our greatest public enemy. I have known people who were subject to boils. These boils were not a disease in themselves, they were merely symptoms. They were indications of impure blood. The modern gangster is the boil, the running sore of our American Life. It indicates that there is poison in our very blood.

Dillinger was a real enemy, but he was less dangerous than the cultivated and skilled physician who lifted his face to prevent his being detainted. He was less dangerous than the keep criminal lawyer who sought to make it possible to let him prey upon society without paying the penalty. It is impossible to say just who is the greatest public enemy of today.
Perhaps it is the Godless and indifferent home that brings children into the world only to be neglected. Possibly it is the movie that often glorifies crime and puts the phosphorescence of romance over what is morally rotten. It may be the public press, that, while boasting of its freedom, is too often the bond slave of corrupt money. But, my subject — Public Enemy No. 1 — in the Bogues Gallery of the Bible.

You are acquainted with him. Everybody knows him. His name is Cain. He has a mark on his forehead, and through all the years we have spoken of the mark of Cain. It is the mark of a man with blood on his hands. It is the mark of a murderer. That is the one big fact we can remember about this man. We never mention his name without visualizing a brutal fellow with a club in his hand, bending over a limp form with a crushed skull.

I.

What sort of man is Cain? We cannot really know him by looking at one single act of his. You cannot judge a preacher by hearing him preach only one sermon. You cannot form a right estimate of any man by taking one glance at him. David was a murderer also. His crime was committed in cold blood. Yet when we mention his name we do not think of him merely as a criminal. We remember also that he was a warrior, a herdsman, a singer, and a saint. We refuse to judge him by one single act.

It is, therefore, obviously unsafe so to judge Cain. You look at him as he has made a mess of his life and say, "Yes, that is Cain, the murderer." Yes he was a murderer, but he was more. Some months ago two girls were touring through the Northern
I am told that they were very beautiful girls, but they tried to beat a train at a crossing, and lost, and their bodies were mangled and had to be picked up in a basket. Had I looked upon those pitiful wrecks and said, "Why, I heard that they were beautiful, but they are not beautiful, at all - they are ghastly," you would say, "Yes, but you only saw them after the wreck. You cannot judge them by that."

Some time ago I buried a certain old grandmother. As I looked at that wasted form, there was little of beauty about it. The eyes were sunken; the gums toothless, the hands lean and claw-like. "How homely!" I might have said. But to know her as she really was you would have needed to consult the men who love her. You would have needed to have asked the children who had been cradled in her arms. You would have needed to know something of how she looked in life's springtime before the thieving years and marring death had robbed her of her beauty. So it is with Cain.

We have been accustomed to think of Cain, the murderer, Cain, the monstrosity. Suppose we think of Cain, the man. How would he look to his mother? Was there ever a greater mother than Eve? When she held her first baby in her arms and looked into its innocent eyes, carressed his chubby hands and feet, and felt his soft body nestling at her breast, he was a creature so winsome and wonderful that she could not account for him except in terms of God. Had not God promised that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head? Eve felt sure that he was making good his promise in this little baby. She believed that he was the Christ-child. Therefore, she named him Cain,
which means "I have gotten a man from the Lord." Cain, therefore, was certainly not a monster to begin with. He was a lovely, normal baby with a capacity to know right, and a capacity to know wrong, even as you and I. And as we study his story we realize that his capacities were large. The soil that was sowed was fertile. It was capable of growing the finest of wheat, and also the rankest of weeds. Abel was a man of placid nature. Cain was volcanic, tempestuous, the son of thunder. We see this very plainly as we read his record.

1. God said to him, "Sin croucheth at thy door."

What a suggestive word! Did you ever watch a cat in the act of springing upon a bird? There is a defenseless creature, maybe a fledgling, that has just fallen from the nest, and the cat watches it with cold, merciless eyes. But here is a man making his way through the jungle. Now, just ahead in the tall grass is a sinister creature waiting for his coming. He flattens himself upon the ground; his long tail moves gently. It is the tiger waiting for his prey. "Sin is like that for you Cain," God tells him. Your soul is a powder magazine. Any spark is likely to set you off.

2. The fact that Cain was an aggressive and vigorous man is further shown in that he was a farmer. Abel was a shepherd, but Cain was a tiller of the soil. Now, while there is much that is beautiful about the shepherd's life, it is not to him that civilization owes its first debt. The shepherd today is very much like the shepherd of 4,000 years ago. It is to the farmer that the world largely owes its progress. Those who are doing the work of the world today came from the farm. Their children will drop out of sight, and another crop will come from
the farm to carry on tomorrow. Cain was a tiller of the soil, a vigorous, forward-looking man.

3. We read further that Cain built a city. Doubtless it was a rather poor affair, but it was more substantial than the tent of his nomadic brother. Folks who live in tents, who have no safe abiding place, never count for much. Rolling stones are providential in failing to gather moss. (Though frankly I have never felt any great need of moss. I have usually found enough on my official board.) But the fact that he was a builder, a farmer, and the fact that God pictures sin crouching like a wild beast at his door, indicates the vigor and strengthfulness of the man.

II.

This was Cain as his friends knew him. How did he come to be a murderer? He certainly did not do so of deliberate purpose. If you had said to this tempestuous, high-tempered man, "You had better control that temper. Some day it is going to get the better of you and you will dash out and kill somebody," Cain would not have believed you. The chances are that all you would have got for your pains was a sook in the jaw. He had no more thought of becoming a public enemy than any other normal man. How did he become a murderer?

1. There was a quarrel. It is highly significant, though, that this quarrel was by an altar. This honest old book is brave enough to tell us that the first crime grew out of a quarrel over matters of religion. And how many crimes have been committed for the same reason since? All men have a religion of some kind. Man is incurably religious, but his religion may
make him kind or it may make him cruel. It may save him, or it may damn him. The Spanish Inquisition was the bloody work of very religious men. The fanatical Mohammed was never so intensely religious as when he kills. Of course in these gentler times we no longer stone folks because they differ from us. We just stab their reputations to death with our tongues. The bitterest foes of Jesus were intensely religious, and some of the bitterest foes today are people who fancy themselves far on to perfection in things spiritual. But if your religion has made you cruel, if you rejoice in the defeat and failure of those that differ from you, then your religion is surely not the religion of Jesus.

How did these men come to quarrel? The story says that they both brought an offering for the Lord. Abel, being a shepherd, brought a gift from his flock. Cain, being a farmer, brought a gift from his field. Each offered what was his. That was perfectly right. There are commentators that tell us that Cain had no right to offer the fruit of the fields, because that was a thank offering, while the offering of Abel was a sin offering. But of course that is printed into the record. They are ideas of subsequent centuries. It only serves to make nonsense of this simple story. All God asks of any man is to give him what is His. That is all He can give.

But, though both these men offered what they had, the offering of Abel was accepted, while the offering of Cain was rejected. Why? Not because of their differing gifts, but because of a difference in the hearts of the givers. The writer to the Hebrews throws light on the question when he says, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain."
"Faith" here, of course, means not a belief in the reality of God. It means a belief that leads to obedience. Abel's was accepted because he not only gave what he had, but he gave what he was. Now, the man who gives only what is in his hand and fails to give himself really gives nothing. "Son, give me thine heart." The man that does that gives everything. The man that does less than that gives nothing at all.

It was here that Cain failed. It was here that we so often fail. Abel went to his worship, to a life of obedience. Cain tried to make worship a substitute for obedience. He tried to combine wickedness and worship, but the combination would not work. It would not pass in the days of Isaiah. "Who hath required this at your hands to tread my courts"? we hear God thundering indignantly. He tells those worshippers that when they spread forth their hands in prayer he will not heed them because they are full of blood. It is useless to ask forgiveness when we expect to go back to commit the same sins for which we ask forgiveness.

Notice next what this reception and rejection involves. Abel, in giving himself, was capable of being used by God. Cain, by refusing to do so, was not capable of being used. Therefore, the birthright, the spiritual leadership of the clan, that privilege that Esau regarded so lightly was taken away from Cain and given to Abel. This aroused Cain's bitter resentment. He thought it was his by virtue of the fact that he was the first born, just as the Jews thought spiritual leadership was theirs just because they were Jews. When Cain, therefore, saw his place taken by his weaker and more placid brother he felt outraged.
He became envious. What a common sin that is! His envy blazed into hot anger and before he knew it almost, he was looking at what could not be true, yet what he knew was true, the limp body of his brother. "Abel! Abel!" we hear him hiss at this bleeding piece of earth. "Oh, my God, how could I have done it?"

II.

What was the outcome of this ghastly crime?

1. Cain's sin found him out. It found him out by giving birth to other sins. He became a liar. He became hard as steel and cold as an icicle. "Where is thy brother?" God is represented as asking. "I know not", is the ready answer. It has been well said that sin has a good many tools, but a lie is a handle that fits them all. Then, follows that question that is still young with an immortality of heartlessness, "Am I my brother's keeper?" It is none of my business to look after that sissy fellow.

How many millions of times that question has been asked since then, and it always comes out of a heart that has murder in it, either real or potential. "If I want to take a drink, if I want to see life, and some weakling undertakes to follow me and goes on the rocks, it's no business of mine." So we say to ourselves. But when we do so, we lie. Your life locks with mine, and mine locks with yours, and no man liveth to himself, and what you do is my business, and what I do is your business. And the man who refuses to act accordingly is made out of the same sort of stuff as Cain.
2. But not only did Cain's sin find him out, we feel safe in saying that God also found him out. I am convinced that Cain was finally saved. By and by he was married. A little later he held his first born in his arms. He named him Enoch. That is highly significant. Enoch, Dr. Driver tells us, means dedication, a new start, a new beginning. When this hard, tortured man looked into the face of his first born, he said, "I am not fit to be the father of a pure and precious thing like this." And the little fellow put his tender hand in his big rough palm and led him to God. How marvelous! After he had made a mess of life and had thrown all his best years away, he dared make a new start.

Now, that is your hope and mine. For believe me sin crouches at our door. The stronger we are, the richer our personalities, the finer our possibilities, the greater our danger, and the more we need one who can master us. It is James Black who says that our greatest danger is in powers undedicated. In the old days before the Knight went forth to battle he laid his sword on the altar of God. The sword represented his power, whether for inflicting wrongs or for righting wrongs, he laid it on the altar, and there it was dedicated to God. So Cain laid his rich life. So I beseech you to lay yours. For every man needs a master.

"I walked life's way with a careless tread,
I followed where comfort and pleasure led,
Till at last one day in a quiet place,
I met my Master face to face."
THE MURDERER'S QUESTION

"Am I my brother's keeper?"

-- Genesis 4:9.

This is part of a very old story, scene I in the first round, and Adam and Eve have been turned out of the garden. But there was a heartening promise that kept them from utter despair. God told them that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Though they were defeated, their defeat need not prove final. They were assured that the final victory should not be with sin, but with righteousness. When, therefore, Cain was born, it was quite natural that his mother should believe that he was the child of promise. So, she gave him a name that signifies, "I have gotten a man from the Lord!"

But Cain disappointed his mother's hopes and ended by breaking his mother's heart. This he did, not of necessity, but of choice. He became utterly self-centered. He schooled himself to destroy the rights of others. At last this indifference to the rights of others grew to such an extent that he ruthlessly struck his brother dead.

But hard as Cain had become, he could not think of that bloody form lying so still without a pang. "Where is thy brother?" God is represented as asking. His own conscience, all nature in fact, was hissing that question at him, "Where is thy brother?" It is a universal question. It is a question that you and I have to face in this here and now. It is a question that we are going to face in eternity. There is no more avoiding it than there is of avoiding the fact of God. Cain answered this question as you and I must. But he answered it wrong. It is our privilege to give it a right answer.
What answer did Cain give? He answered by asking another question. "Am I my brother's keeper?" Why did he ask this? It was not because he was at a loss to know just what his obligations to his brother were, and was asking instruction. It is a question of denial. What Cain means is this: "I am not my brother's keeper. His tragedies are no concern of mine."

When Cain said this, he was lying. Not only so, but he knew he was lying. He knew that his brother had already been robbed of the privilege of living by his anger and envy. He tried to cover his murderous disloyalty by a lie. He tried to escape his obligation by refusing to face the fact that it was an obligation.

Cain's question is very old. As far as our record goes, it is the first question that man ever asks. But old as it is, it is abidingly new. It is among us today, alive with an immortality of selfishness. It comes to us at this hour black with hate and stained with murder. But in spite of all its hellish selfishness there are few of us who have not at times asked it, and some are asking it even now.

What answer are we going to give to this question? There is but one possible answer. We know, every one of us, that we are responsible for each other. Cain was wise enough to know that, through he lived so long ago. He lived before a single page of this Book was ever written. He lived before a single one of the great prophets ever prophesied. He lived long before the coming of Jesus. He did not have a millionth part of the light that we have. Yet he was wise enough to know that his life was so interlocked with the lives of those about him, that he could not live to himself, that he had to be his brother's keeper.
That is the plain teaching of the Scriptures. God is represented as saying to one of the old prophets, "I have set thee a watchman upon the walls. If this prophet should see danger and did not give the warning, then those who perished through his neglect would be a load on the conscience of him who refused to give the warning. And this duty of watching to meet another's need, to defend another from danger, is not the duty of the preacher only, but of the man in the pew. It is not the duty of the man in the pew only, but of the man outside the church.

There are some who excuse themselves by saying, "Why, I do not even belong to the Church!" But that only means that you have refused to acknowledge your obligation, and to make an earnest effort to meet it. You cannot get rid of an obligation by merely shutting your eyes to it. The big difference between those who belong to the Church and those who do not is this: that one has acknowledged his obligation, and the other has not. You would not live in a city that did not have a church. There is not one here present who does not recognize the Church as an essential to the highest welfare of the community. Therefore, it becomes every man's solemn responsibility to belong to some church, and to support it. To refuse to do so is to stand convicted of the sin of neglect.

That we are responsible each for the other is not a thing merely of the teaching of the Bible, but of common sense. I know there are those who say, "If I want to take a drink, it's nobody's business. If old George can't keep from making a hog of himself, as he does, after he takes the first swig of liquor, I'm not to blame for that. He ought to have more will." But you are to blame just the same, and you know it. If I drink, if I vote to legalize liquor, if I wink at the violation of the liquor laws, I have a personal part in the tragedy of every child that liquor
robs of its opportunity. I have a part in every wrecked home, and every blasted and blighted man and woman.

It so happens that I own a car. It is paid for. The license that it bears is paid for. Certainly I have a right to drive that car as I please. That is true within certain limits. I have no right to drive on the wrong side of the street. I have no right to exceed a certain speed limit. That young chap who killed two men and seriously wounded another doubtless felt that he had a right to drive as he pleased. But he was under obligation to be his brother's keeper. Even the law of the State recognizes that. Therefore, they lodged him in jail. Every man has an obligation to every other man that he can no more escape than he can escape the fact of life and death.

II.

But Cain refused to face this obligation. There are multitudes that are following in Cain's footsteps today. We can refuse in either one of two ways:

1. We may refuse aggressively. Cain said, "Every fellow for himself." Therefore, he took a club and knocked his brother's brains out. There are those who take that attitude still. There are 400,000 in the United States who live by crime. They are beasts of prey. They are vultures, feeding upon others.

We can do this through deeds of injustice. We can do it by destroying the lives of others economically. We can do it by destroying the rights of others before the Law. One of the darkest blots upon our American life is "Mob Violence." Such a disgraceful curse is scarcely known outside of Christian America. Those who encourage mob murder are not swept away by righteous indignation, they are only giving reign to the savagery that they keep under normally, through fear.
2. But by far the vast majority of those who walk in the way of Cain do so not by aggressively robbing others of their lives, but by merely leaving them alone. The sin that Jesus feared most of all was not that of the aggressive wrong-doer, but that of the man who failed in right-doing. Every parable of judgment that fell from His lips was in condemnation of the man who merely failed in his duty.

He told the story of a certain man who was wounded and left dying by the roadside. Two preachers came that way and saw him, and hurried to safety. But ride as hard as they might, they could not outride their obligation. And He gives us to understand that they are to sit at the final trial along beside the brigands that committed the deed.

In the picture of the Last Judgment, there are certain ones turned away. "These," He said, "shall go away into everlasting punishment." What terrible crimes have they committed? Whom have they ruthlessly destroyed? There is no single charge of wrongdoing against any of them. Their sin is this: "That they stood in the midst of human need and shrugged their shoulders and said, "It's none of my business." It was not what they did, but what they failed to do. The condemnation was that "Inasmuch as ye did it not."

How often in speaking to men personally about their obligations to be Christians I have been answered with the complacent assertion, "I don't do any harm." Neither did these who were turned out into the night. It's not a question of whether you do any harm or not. It's a question of how much good you are doing. The man who refuses to be his brother's keeper becomes for that very reason his brother's destroyer.

Some years ago I was back in Tennessee where I met a
schoolmate of my boyhood. As he had grown in years, he had grown in waywardness and dissipation. He had a boon companion who looked up to him and who followed him in his debauchery. "Where is Jess?" I asked him. And his face became sober. "Jess is dying", he answered. I was amazed. "What is the matter?" I asked. "He is dying because he tried to keep up with me", was the answer. "We got drunk together, spent a night out in a cold rain. I was strong enough to stand it, but not Jess. He took T. B." And even Jim was conscious that he had his friend's blood on his hands, though he would never have thought of lifting his hand against him. He killed him by just refusing to play a brother's part toward him.

III.

But I take it there are many of you here present who are really eager to meet your obligations. You desire to be useful. You want to make the world better, by your having lived in it, if only a little better. I am only going to offer you two suggestions:

1. If you desire to make the richest possible contribution to the world, the first step toward that is being a genuinely good man or genuinely good woman. Think of the lives that you have touched along the way. To whom do you owe the most? Who holds the warmest place in your hearts and the tenderest place in your memories? Such place in all probability is not held by the most gifted and clever people that you have known. They have been held by the most Christ-like. I owe it to my family, to my friends, to my church, to my community, to my world, to be my best possible self. And I can only do this if I give my life to Jesus Christ.

2. If I would be my brother's keeper, I must give myself unselfishly to the service of my fellows. I must make my
brother's needs my own. I must be willing to share his weakness, to lighten his load. I must put myself in his place. It is the folks that have forgotten themselves in the service of others that have done most for the world.

A few years ago, there was a brilliant young Englishman who was rising rapidly in the House of Lords. Everybody prophesied great things for him. But he rose one day, after a night of struggle, and gave himself to the service of London's poor. He made their needs and their woes his own. He lived among them, sharing their sorrows and their privations. One day there was a hall filled with people, every one of whom was a thief. A man had to prove that he had stolen something before he was allowed to enter. And when the house was full, they sent for this man. And he did not in turn send for the police, as another has said, but he told them of Jesus Christ. And when this man died, hundreds of thousands lined the streets to see the funeral procession going by. And the world is better today for the life of Lord Shaftesbury.

Here is the other side - A few years ago, two rival Ship Companies each made a new vessel. These vessels were to race from Liverpool to New York. And a handsome prize was offered for the winner. When the leading vessel was more than half way across the Atlantic, the man on lookout shouted, "Man overboard!" The captain looked to the right and left of the vessel and saw no one; "Far to the windward", was the direction. And the captain looked through his glasses and saw a man clinging to a bit of wreckage and waving his shirt. "Shall I order a life-boat to be lowered?" asked the second officer in command. And the captain shook his head, saying, "If we go to get him, we will lose the race." He won the race. But the man went down. But he won it at the price of his brother's life.
And God said, "Where is Abel thy brother?" And he answered "I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?"

These are among the most familiar words of the Old Testament. They come to us aflame with anger and red with blood. They seem among the most heartless words ever spoken. They are the words of Cain, the murderer. This man Cain is one of the best known and one of the least known characters of the Bible. All we know is Cain, the murderer; we know little of Cain, the man.

I

Let us look then, at Cain, the man.

In looking at him, we are not forgetting that he committed a crime. We are not forgetting that he committed the worst of crimes. But if we see him with any accuracy, we must realize that he was not always a criminal. We must realize that murder was not his business. He lived a long life; therefore, he did a great many things except murder Abel. But we judge him purely by this one act. That, of course, is unfair.

In the thorniest of gardens we might find one little flower, but that would not give us an accurate picture of the garden. Jesse James helped a widow to save her house from being sold for debt but that one good deed does not give an accurate picture of Jesse James.

On the other hand, you might be unable to find one weed in the most beautiful of gardens, but you would not judge that garden, with its roses and the violets, by that one weed. Nor can you judge Cain by one single ugly act of his life. We see him after he has stained his hands with blood. Did you ever think of him when his hands were clean? I saw a woman some time ago whose face had been so horribly burned that it was little more than an ugly scar. But it had not always been so. I saw her after the tragedy. Before the tragedy, I am told she had a face of charm and beauty.
Let us, then, glance at Cain before the murder. How did he look to his mother? His name indicates that he was such a beautiful baby that she could not account for him except in terms of God. So she named him Cain, which means "I have gotten a man from the Lord." Eve had just heard the promise of the Lord that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." Therefore, the poet hints that she took this baby for the Christ child.

2. He was a man of great vigor. He was a son of Thunder. He was a man of strength and tempestuous passion. Being thus strong, he had a great capacity to go right and a great capacity to go wrong.

This is indicated by the fact that God said to him, "Sin croucheth at thy door." He was made of combustible material. Because of his violent temper, sin was crouching for him as a panther croucheth in the jungle before it springs upon its prey. There are some for whom a dedicated life is far more easy than for others. We can see from his nature that Cain was one for whom such a life was not easy.

But if it is not easy, it is possible, for if sin was crouching in the door, there was an adversary of sin that was even stronger. Even in that day God was but saying as he says now "Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

3. This strong and adventurous man led a new departure in civilization. He became a farmer. Shepherds have made little or no progress; they are just like they were in the days of Abraham. All the progress has come to us from men that knew how to plant.

4. From learning to plant, he took the next step. He became a builder. He built a city. It was, perhaps, just a few rude huts.

5. He was a religious man. He was greatly interested in his birthright. He was as intensely interested in his as Esau was indifferent. We blame Esau for his indifference. We blame Cain even more for his intense interest.

II

How did Cain come to be a murderer? A mere glance at the story does not
get the sense of it. It portrays a bloody man who killed for no reason at all. But there was a reason back of the crime. What was it?

1. First, the quarrel started beside the altar. This Bible is a book of rebukes but it does not disguise the fact that rebuke has often led to dissention. The first crime ever committed, according to this record, was over a rebuke.

2. How did it come about? Cain and Abel both brought offerings. The story said God had respect for the offering of Abel but of the offering of Cain, he had no respect. Why so? The writer to the Hebrews gives the real reason. "By faith Abel's offering unto God was a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain's.

This faith was more than belief in the reality of God. It was more than a faith that obeyed. Abel, with his offering, gave himself. Cain gave only his offering. He thought he could mingle wickedness and worship. There is an old fallacy that is true today "Though I bestow all my gifts to feed the poor and though I give myself to be burned and have not love, that is love that obeys, it profits me nothing."

3. Since Abel gave himself, God accepted him. Since Cain did not give himself, God could not accept him. God is sure to use what we give Him. Therefore, Cain was chosen for the leadership of the clan while Cain was neglected.

Now, this loss of his birthright was a heavy blow to Cain. It filled him with utter rage.

Who was to blame? Nobody but Cain. When he thought it over, he knew his brother Abel was not to blame in the least. But he merely took his anger out on his brother. All of us do that more or less. We get inwardly upset and slam the door or kick the dog or rail out at the children or lambast our husband or wife.

Cain became a murderer because he lost his temper and took his anger out on somebody else. No wonder Jesus went back beyond the deadly blow to the cause of it and said "whosoever is angry with his brother is a murderer."
Now, having struck in a fit of passion, Cain found himself a moment later looking at a limp form, realizing that something had happened that he never dreamed would happen. He realized that that crunching beast had pounced upon him to despoil his life.

III

What is the outcome? 

1. First, Cain became a liar. Questioned about his brother, he told two lies. First he declares he does not know where he is and second, he declares, being questioned, that his brother's situation was no affair of his. Whenever we say "it is none of my business what you do and it is none of your business what I do" we ought to face the fact that we lie.

Cain soon began to find out what it means to lie. It has been well said that sin has a great many tools but a lie is a handle that fits them all.

2. Cain became a wanderer. The ground was cursed for his wheat. We are told that it would not yield him harvest. Why? Not because the wheat that he planted did not grow, it was rather because in his fear and torture, he ran before the wheat fields grew into gold and before the corn was ripe.

3. He became a great sufferer. "My punishment", he declares, desperately, "is heavier than I can bear." Sin inflicts pain on others but it also inflicts pain on the sinner.

4. The final outcome of this tragic story, in my opinion, is Cain's repentance. He fled to the land of Nod, which means Wanderland. Here he married XXXX. Here, a little later, he held his first born in his arms, whom he named Enoch. That word, Dr. Driver tells us, means dedicated.

Why did he name his boy dedicated? He wanted him to be God's child from his youth. He wanted to save him from the terrible hell through which he himself had passed. When he dedicated his child, he loved to believe that he dedicated himself. Isn't it amazing that the man whose story is told in this one
sentence "Enoch walked with God" was the son of a man of whom we think only as a murderer. I think Cain became a good man.

IV

What, then, do we learn from this tragic story? There are three facts that we need to bear in mind. First, the danger of temper. We are accustomed to regard our capacity to fly off the handle and unsheathe the sword of our tongue as being the victim of ugliness, but I think Drummond was right in saying that more tears and heartache were caused by loss of temper than from any other cause.

2. This shows, as Dr. Black points out, the danger, as Dr. Black points out, of undedicated powers. A temptestuous disposition is all right provided it is dedicated. In the Olden days, before a young knight went out to battle, he laid his sword upon the altar and spent the night in prayer. That sword represented his power. He dedicated his power to God. That was where Cain went wrong. That is where many of us go wrong. There is no greater danger than that of power that we refuse to dedicate to God.

3. Finally, this shows the amazing power of God to forgive and remake even the worst of us. Cain the murderer became Cain the missionary, at least to his own home. (Steve Holcomb)
The Killer

"And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?"

Genesis 4:9

I

In studying Cain we are studying one of the best-known characters in the Bible. We are also studying one of the least-known. Everybody knows one single fact about Cain. Any Sunday School pupil can tell you that. What is the sum of popular knowledge regarding him? One fact—he was a killer. We only get one view of his face. That view shows us a face angry and brutal. We see a man with a club in his hand, bending over a still form. We know Cain, the murderer. Most of us have never taken time to meet Cain, the man.

Naturally, it is very unfair to judge anybody by one single act of their lives. The worst of men have something decent about them. The vilest renegade has at least one decent deed to his credit. To judge such by this one decent deed would obviously not be the truth. It would be equally untrue to judge a good man by the worst and most shameful thing he ever did. Cain was not a good man. He was guilty of murder. Yet we can never understand Cain by assuming, as we do assume, that the only thing he ever did was to murder.

By this I mean that, though Cain was a murderer, he was something else. But about that something else we seldom think. David was a murderer. He committed murder under circumstances even more inexcusable than Cain. Cain killed in the heat of passion. David killed in cold blood. Yet we do not think of David simply as a murderer. We think of him as a warrior, a statesman, a poet. We think of him as a penitent sinner. We think of him clutching at God's skirts in the consciousness of his sin, saying, "Have mercy upon me." We think of him as a great
saint. But Cain is a murderer and nothing more.

Sometime ago I saw the face of a woman who had been horribly burned. The face was pathetically and hideously scarred. To say that she was a homely woman would seemingly be sober truth, but to assume that she was always that homely would not be the truth. There was a time when her face was without a scar.

That was before the terrible accident happened. Cain's face is hardened with hate. It is flecked with blood, his brother's blood. But it was not always so. There was a time when nobody thought of Cain as a murderer. They thought of him as a man.

A few years ago a father and mother with their two daughters from my home state were touring in the North. One day the father tried to beat a train to the crossing. He and his wife escaped with minor injuries. But the two daughters were not only killed but the bodies were mangled. Suppose I had attended the funeral and brought back a report of this kind, "I heard that those two creatures were of unusual beauty. But when I saw them in the casket, they were anything but beautiful." Such a judgment would have been obviously unfair. You would have said, "You ought to have seen them before the wreck." When you look at Cain, you say, "He has a murderer's face." But you ought to have seen him before the wreck.

What, for instance, did his mother think of him? He was not born a murderer. When she held him in her arms, he was as tender a bit of innocence as any mother ever cradled and held close to her heart. So winsome was he, that she could not account for him except in terms of God. She gave him the name of Cain, a name that has come to signify to us the brutal and horrible. But it signified to her, "I have got a man from the Lord." This baby was a creature so utterly winsome that only God could make his coming possible. Naturally, she thought of him as the Christ-child. God had promised to see that the woman should bruise the serpent's head. And Eve believed not without reason that this sweet and innocent baby might be the promised Christ. So he was not always a
4. A fourth fact about Cain was that he was religious. This amazing Book we call the Bible is a book of religion. But it is honest enough to picture the first quarrel in human history as taking place by an altar. How easy it is for us to hate each other in discussing the love of God! Many people will fight over religion who have no religion at all. These two brothers had their quarrel at an altar of worship.

Look at the picture. The story tells us that both the brothers offered gifts. Abel offered a gift from the flock while Cain offered a gift from the fields. There are those who argue that Cain had no right to make such a gift, but that is to read into the story what is not there at all. They both brought what they had. That is the only kind of gift anybody can make. To give God what you have is perfect, regardless of what that gift is. Therefore, in bringing his gift from the flock, Cain was just as right as Able.

But in spite of this fact, the story said that God had respect to Able and his gift, while to Cain and his gift He had no respect. That is, He accepted Abel and his gift, while He rejected Cain and his gift. Why? Does God play favorites? Not a bit of it! God always accepts what we give Him. What then was the difference in these two offerings. The writer to the Hebrews gives the only sane explanation. "By faith," he says, "Abel offered unto God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain." That is, the gift of Abel was a gift of faith, while the gift of Cain was not.

What does this mean? Faith here means more than an intellectual assent. Abel no more believed in the reality of God than did Cain. But belief of this kind is not enough. The devil believes, James tells us, but his faith does not get him anywhere. It only makes him to shudder. The faith of which this writer is speaking is the faith that leads to obedience. When Cain brought his offering, he brought also himself. He trusted in God enough to obey Him. Cain, on the other hand, was willing to give something of what he had, but he
was not willing to give what he was. He refused to give himself.

This refusal was fatal. It always is. The Bible teaches the necessity of the giving of our substance. But the gift of money comes to nothing if it is not backed by a right life. Prayer is a necessity for every man who would be vitally Christian. But prayer is worthless if it is not backed by consecration. What is more futile than to ask God's forgiveness when you expect to repeat that same sin the moment you get up from your knees? What is more futile than to try to combine wickedness and worship? "When you spread forth your hands," God is represented as saying, "I will hide my face because your hands are full of blood." The giving of offerings is good, but it is futile unless it means the dedication of self. That is where Cain went wrong.

Now since God takes what we give him, He accepted Abel because Abel gave himself. He did not accept Cain because Cain did not give himself. Cain was therefore rejected not by God but by himself. He realized that Abel was going to inherit the birthright, the spiritual leadership of the clan, because God is always shut up to using the best in sight. He saw himself rejected because of his own lack of self-giving. But instead of getting angry at his sin, he got angry at God and his brother. Instead of hating the disease, he hated the physician.

Here is the real explanation of Cain's crime. He saw himself outstripped religiously by his weaker brother. That filled him with envy. Envy is different from jealousy though we often use the words interchangeably. Jealousy is a child of love. Jealousy is the emotion that love feels when it is cheated of its right. There are times when jealousy is a perfectly natural and perfectly legitimate emotion. Of course, it is dangerous in that it so often "makes the meat it feeds upon," as Shakespeare reminds us. But when the meat is furnished one is not greatly to be blamed for being jealous. But envy is a child of hate. "Love envieth not." Cain's anger grew out of the fact that his weak
brother got ahead of himself. In this fierce anger he lashed out at his brother, and when he came to himself he was looking at his still form, seeing what simply could not be, and yet what he knew to be true. He had become a murderer.

III

What was the outcome? Cain did the natural and the human thing. He tried to hide his ghastly crime even from himself. God is represented as asking him a question. It is one He is constantly asking—"Where is thy brother?" The first question of this Book is "Where art thou?" "It becomes a man's first duty," a wise old saint has said, "to save his own soul." Right. Such a course if not selfish. We must be saved in order to save others. But the second question is this—"Where is thy brother?"

What answer does Cain make? He lied. He told a twofold lie. First, he said I know not. That was false. Then he lied by implication. "Am I my brother's keeper?" By this he meant, "I am not in the least responsible for Abel." It is a question we ask still. Whenever we ask it, we ask it in utter selfishness whether we are excusing our deeds of violence or our deeds of laziness. It is a word black with selfishness and streaked with murder.

But there is no concealing the deed either from God or from himself. That is a terrible sentence. "Thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the soil." That is true of the blood we shed through violence—that is true of the blood we shed through neglect. Our sin has a strange way of finding us out. Cain, with all his hardness, with all his violent temper, with all his seeming indifference to his crime, had to suffer. He suffered until he said, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." He became a wanderer. God is represented as saying to him that the soil would not yield him its harvest. That, of course, does not mean that his very presence smote the earth with barrenness. It means that he became a fugitive, that though he planted a crop, he had to flee before he could reap the harvest. This he did until he wandered into a
land unknown—"Nod" they called it, which means "wander-land". Here he settled down to a more permanent life. Here the chastening love of God seems to have made a new man out of him.

How can we believe this? Well, it is a way God has. His is a love that will never let us go. But the story would indicate that such was the case. By and by Cain married. By and by he held his first-born in his arms. He named him Enoch. Enoch means "dedication". It means a new start. Here was this strong, tempestuous man holding a little life in his arms. He said, "I do not want this child to suffer as I have suffered. I am going to dedicate him to God. But the dedication will be futile unless I dedicate myself." Thus I am glad that Cain the murderer became Cain the saint.

What then does this blood-stained man have to say to us? He tells us first of all, "I am just as human as you are. I am not a monster. I am a man. I committed a great crime. I threw away many of the best years of my life. I lived for years in hell. This I did not because I was worse than other men. My sin was the sin of violent passions, high temper uncontrolled. My sin was the sin of powers undedicated." It has been remarked by another that the greatest tragedies of life come from this—powers and capacities that we refuse to dedicate to God. In the old days of chivalry before the knight put on his armor for battle, he laid his sword upon the altar and spent the whole night in prayer. The sword was his weapon of offense and defense. It was that with which he made his fight. This is the only safety for any of us. In the morningtide of life, therefore, before you go out to battle, before you sin as Cain sinned, dedicate your powers to God. Fling yourself away on him. He will not allow your life to go to ruin. He will use it to your joy and to the enrichment of others. You are your brother's keeper, but you can only succeed at the job if you are kept by the power of God.
IV. What Do We Learn from China
   1. Danger of energy
   2. Danger of the American standard of living
   3. Tragedy of war, death, the innocent
THE BEAUTIFUL FRIENDSHIP

By
DR. CLOVIS G. CHAPPELL
Pastor First Methodist Church
Charlotte, N. C.

February 23, 1947

A Message From
The Methodist Hour
Wesley Memorial Building
Atlanta 3, Georgia
THE METHODIST HOUR is going into an increasingly large number of homes each week with its messages of Christian hope. Outstanding Methodist leaders, both ministers and laymen, are bringing to a host of people each Sunday morning an inspirational and an informative message dealing with the fundamental principles of the Christian life. The results from the Crusade for Christ emphases show that Methodism is truly on the march. The year of Stewardship, undergirded by the year of Evangelism and the raising of twenty-six millions of dollars for the emergency missionary projects, is creating a new devotion to Christ in the lives of thousands of people. "An enlightened church means a spiritual church" is proving true to a greater degree than ever before.

An outstanding challenge of the year of Stewardship is presented through the need for ministers, missionaries, deaconesses, nurses, religious education directors, and church school officers and teachers. Recruiting five thousand ministers and five thousand missionaries and other full-time church workers is a goal of the Crusade. It is hoped that the messages of The Methodist Hour will result in the enlistment of many young people for full-time service under the direction of the church. Perhaps there is a young person in your home wanting to acknowledge his or her stewardship of life by dedicating that life to full-time Christian service.

Copies of the sermons of The Methodist Hour will be sent upon request without charge. Perhaps you have a friend, or you know a shut-in who would like to read them. Will you see that they get a copy each week, urging them to listen each Sunday to the broadcast of The Methodist Hour?

---Paul D. Womeldorf
Executive Secretary
The South Central Jurisdiction
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
I.

What was his secret? It was certainly not in his environment. He had a bad setting. His opportunities were few. He lived long before a single word of the Bible had been written. He lived before any of the great prophets had prophesied. He lived ages before Jesus had come to gather little children in his arms and bend over outcasts and thus show us what God is like. He was a part of a generation that was hurrying down the steep declivity that ended in the tragedy of the Flood.

To be convinced of the poverty of his opportunities, it is only necessary to read again the chapter of which his brief biography is a part. This chapter in the main is about as thrilling as a dust storm. It opens with the declaration that So-and-So lived so many years, begot So-and-So and died. The next verse says that another So-and-So with a little longer name, lived so many years, begot So-and-So, and died. The whole story seems to be this: There is a little row of cradles over here, and a little bunch of coffins over there. A handful of petty people are climbing out of the cradles, walking a few steps, then toppling over into the coffins. That seems all there is to it. But just as

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**The Beautiful Friendship**

*By Dr. Clovis G. Chappell*

My text is tucked away in the fifth chapter of Genesis: "Enoch walked with God: and he was not; because God took him." When the writer to the Hebrews tells this story, he puts it in this fashion, "Enoch was not found because God had translated him." That is, Enoch was the kind of man folks miss. He was one of those radiant souls that it is good to have around. If Enoch failed to come to prayer meeting, the service did not go off so well. If his pew was vacant at the hour of worship, the minister found it more difficult to preach. If he was not at the wedding, the bride and groom hardly felt that they had been properly married. If he failed to come to the funeral, the bereaved found it harder to lay their dead away. He was the kind of man we miss.

I.

What was his secret? It was certainly not in his environment. He had a bad setting. His opportunities were few. He lived long before a single word of the Bible had been written. He lived before any of the great prophets had prophesied. He lived ages before Jesus had come to gather little children in his arms and bend over outcasts and thus show us what God is like. He was a part of a generation that was hurrying down the steep declivity that ended in the tragedy of the Flood.

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**PRAYER**

"O Love Divine, that stooped to share, our sharpest pain, our bitterest tear,
On Thee we cast each earthborn care,
And smile at death if Thou art near."

We thank Thee, O Lord, that though Thou art the High and Holy One that dost inhabit eternity, yet Thou dost also dwell with men. We bless Thee that Thou art even now closer than breathing and nearer than hands and feet. Help us to be conscious of Thy nearness, may we hear Thee saying to us, even as to Thine own of the long ago, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

Grant us through wholehearted obedience so to enter into this offered friendship that Thine own beauty, the beauty of the Lord our God, shall increasingly rest upon us, as the sunshine rests upon the hills. This we ask in the Name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

—Clovis G. Chappell.
we are about to leave off reading out of sheer boredom, we come upon this exquisite bit: "Enoch walked with God."

Reading that, we pass at once from desert into garden, from bleak and barren winter into colorful spring. What happened to Enoch? For years life meant no more to him than to his fellows. He merely existed. Then one day Enoch met God. One day as he reached a hand into the encircling gloom, that Infinite hand that is always feeling for yours and mine in the daylight and in the dark, found the hand of Enoch and drew him into fellowship with Himself. Having thus met God, nothing else seemed so worthwhile as to walk with Him. Increasingly this acquaintance ripened into friendship. Therefore it has come to pass that the face of Enoch looks upon us across the far spaces of the years with peculiar winsomeness. Ask him for the secret of his radiant life, and he will answer as did Kingsley centuries later, "I had a Friend."

II.

What are some of the privileges of this friendship? Years ago I read a chapter on friendship from a British writer. I am indebted to him for some of the things I say here:

1. The first privilege of friendship I mention is that of frankness. We hardly dare be frank with everyone we meet. We do not have to speak our minds fully on every occasion. Such a course is neither necessary nor wise. I have noticed that those folks who insist upon telling us bluntly exactly what they think are generally the first to become offended if we tell them with equal bluntness what we think.

But often in our efforts to be tactful we slip into the habit of telling little white lies. We become accustomed to saying what we think we ought to say, instead of what we really think. We learn to laugh when we are not amused and to applaud when we inwardly condemn. By and by these petty insincerities tend to creep into our relationship with God. We find ourselves thanking God for mercies for which we are not really grateful and asking Him for blessings that in our hearts we do not deeply desire.

Some years ago a gentleman drove a sports model Cadillac in front of my parsonage and hurried in to say to me, "That is the car you need. You belong to the Cadillac class." That discovery was in itself a mark of genius. "We feel that it would be an honor to us for you to drive our car," he continued. "Hence, we are going to make this model to you for four thousand dollars." "But," I answered, "I do not want it." What did I mean? That the car was not desirable? Not at all. I only meant that price and upkeep taken into consideration, I did not want it. Naturally everybody who is really sane would like to live on terms of intimate friendship with God. But such an experience is costly. When price and upkeep are taken into consideration, many do not really desire it.

One of the great saints of yesterday, in discussing the fundamentals of holy living, puts this among the first: "Stop lying to God." Let us be sincere. Remember that He looks upon our hearts. In our prayers we can be our real selves. In His presence we can "unpack our hearts with words." We can tell Him all the truth. One great privilege of friendship is the privilege of frankness.

2. A second privilege of friendship is that of being understood. How good to have a friend who is possessed of an understanding heart. Sometimes we cannot even understand ourselves. Sometimes we cannot put our finger on the hurt place in our own souls. Were you ever sick and delirious? Did you ever try to tell your physician or your loved ones what was wrong, only to see them look knowingly at each other and shake their heads? You were a bit off, but you were still sane enough to know what that shaking of the head meant. They were simply saying, "Poor fellow! He is delirious. He doesn't know what he is talking about." All of which was true, but what you did know was that you were desperate and greatly in need of help.

There are times when we are spiritually sick in such a fashion. We are too bewildered to know how to pray. How heartening at such times to remember we have a Friend who knows all about us. He is at once infinite in His understanding and in His power to help. "We know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."
3. A third privilege of friendship is the privilege of silence. With a mere acquaintance we feel that we must talk however little we may have to say. As a young minister I was exceedingly timid. I have gone to make calls when I did not dare go in. I was afraid that, having arrived, I would have nothing to say. With a mere acquaintance one must talk.

But such is not the case with a friend. Sometime ago I went fishing with one whom I have known and loved across the years. When we had dropped down in our small boat to where the talkative stream was put to sleep by the peace of the blue depth, we sat and fished through the long summer afternoon, and said almost never a word. When the day was done and we went home in the gloaming, he did not turn to me and say, "Why don't you say something? What are you angry about?"

We knew each other well enough to trust and to enjoy each other in the silence.

So it was with Enoch. I have an idea that there were days not a few when he did not feel any emotional thrill. There were times when he tried to pray and the sky seemed as brass above his head. What then? He did not wring his hands in anguish and say, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall we not also with him freely give us all things." Let us look into God's roomy hand. There may be something there that we need. But bear in mind that the measure of our ability to receive is the measure of our willingness to give.

5. Friends are mutually devoted. If you and I are friends, when you are in trouble, it is not merely my duty to stand by, but my privilege. If I am in trouble, you count it a privilege to help. If that is true of ourselves, how far more true it is of our unseen Friend. We may be perfectly sure that our Lord is doing His infinite best to help every one of us. Day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment, He is yearning with a tenderness beyond our dreams to put Himself at our disposal.

We who are parents can easily understand this. How constantly we stoop to the joys and sorrows of our children! Here is a little chap who has broken his toy. That toy may be of trifling worth, but when his face grows wet with tears, it is a trifle no more. You share his grief with him. Even so God shares our grief. In all our afflictions he is afflicted. God as our friend is interested in all our interests.

Since God stoops to our interests, we must rise in some measure to His. For this reason no Christian can possibly be narrow and mean and selfish. Is God interested in our neighbors? Then we must be interested. Is He interested in white people? Then we must be interested. Is He interested in black and yellow people? Then we must be interested. We may begin being Christians with very narrow interests. But the deeper we enter friendship with God, the wider will become our interests. At last we should be able to meet our Lord with a map of the world upon our hearts.
nurse and the buggy were so beautiful that this lady felt that she must see the lovely baby also. But having gained her purpose, she discovered that this child was not the winsome baby of her expectations. He was rather a pitiful, wizened creature, ugly as a nightmare.

Knowing that the nurse was not the mother, my friend dared ask a question. "How old is the baby?" "He is thirty-six years old," came the answer. That is, thirty-six years before, a baby had come to a home in that city. His coming was the signal of the bursting of spring time on the hills of his mother's heart. But little by little all her joy was changed to sorrow. This was the case not because the baby became a rake or a gangster. It was the case rather because as the days wore into weeks, the weeks into months, and the months into years, the baby failed to grow. There is no sadder tragedy than that of arrested development.

Walking with God, Enoch grew. In fact he made such progress that one day when he went away and returned no more, his friends laid his absence on the One with whom he had been last seen. That One was God. What exquisite poetry and what utter sanity! If you and your friend were to go away together and you should come back and your friend never did, they would doubtless arrest you and say, "Where is he? The last time we saw him, he was with you." Thus God and Enoch went walking together. God came back and Enoch never did. So rightly they laid his absence on God.

### III.

How was Enoch able to enjoy this beautiful friendship in spite of his environment? We have the answer in a single sentence: "Before his translation, he had this testimony, that he pleased God." He did not always please his neighbors; he did not always please himself. He made it his one business to please God. Let us bring every question of our lives up before this high tribunal—will it please God? If we do that, then our life for us will rise out of the drabness of mere existence onto the high tableland of friendship with God.

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*James W. Sells, Director*
THE METHODIST HOUR NETWORK
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"Let us build for ourselves a city with a tower whose top shall reach the heavens, thus making a name for ourselves, so that we may not be scattered all over the earth." Genesis 11:4 (Goodspeed)

Here is a story that had its birth in a very distant day but it does not belong to that far off age, it belongs to the ages. There are stories that can live in one day but cannot live in another. A change in climate works their death. But this story can thrive in every climate. Then Beethoven composed some of his great symphonies. I am told that he wrote music for instruments that had not yet been invented. Therefore the music of this great master can be interpreted today better than it could in his own time. So it is with the tragic music of this story. It speaks to us in graver and more emphatic accents than it spoke to the generation in which it was born.

I.

The first fact that impresses us about this story is that it tells of a great dream that failed to come true. These primitive people realized that they were not living so richly and fully as they desired. They believed that a more abundant life was possible. Therefore, they said: "Come, let us build for ourselves a city with a tower whose top shall reach to the heavens". That was a very ambitious undertaking. By building their city with its tower, they were seeking contact with heaven. That means they were seeking to enjoy the life of heaven. It was their way of entering into the heavenly life, not in some distant future but in the here and now.

Not only did they dream of building a heaven in the here and now but they made plans for maintaining that heaven once it had been created.
This city with its marvelous sky scraper was not only to connect them with heaven but it was to keep them in contact with heaven by keeping them united with each other. Listen to their purpose: Let us build for ourselves a city with a tower whose top shall reach the heavens—that we may not be scattered all over the earth. The world was thinly populated on wide plains surrounding their city. The shepherd of the tribe might get lost. In case he did, he was to look to this heaven reaching tower and thus find his way back home.

Not only did these people dream a great dream but they set themselves earnestly to its realization. Having resolved to build a city with a sky reaching tower, they called their architects and carpenters and set to work. They built a city such as had not been seen before. In that city they erected a tower whose top to them seemed close against the sky. Everybody who passed their way recognized their marvelous progress. Had you been a visitor to this ancient city, there is no doubt that the chamber of commerce instead of "viewing with alarm" would certainly have pointed with pride to their great achievement.

But in spite of all their progress, their undertaking was in a large measure a failure. In spite of all their well laid plans for building them heaven, we recognize the fact that they were only blundering builders. I think the wisest among them would have themselves acknowledged their failure. Instead of their great building becoming a uniting force, it was rather the occasion of their being divided one from the other. The heaven that they dreamed of building thus became a kind of hell.

We can see at once how up to date this story is. We can realize that it speaks to us in clearer accents than it spoke the day that gave it birth. We, too, have sought to build our cities with their heaven
touching towers. We have made progress too, amazing progress. Our New Yorks and Chicago's are as far ahead of their ancient city as a Sherman Tank is ahead of their bow and arrow. It is as far ahead as our four-motor bombers are ahead of their ancient war chariots. And, too, our cities are far more sanitary than theirs. They have far more churches and hospitals. We know even better than they, that while sanctified science can help to build heaven, science without sanctification can make a short cut to hell. This tells us, the progress to be valued must be in the right direction. If I am headed toward an abyss, I would prefer an oxcart to a high powered car.

II.

Now, since these ancient builders blundered, since their fine dream failed to come true, it is wise to see the reason. Why did they fail? They did not fail because of the madness of their undertaking. It was a daring undertaking for them to seek so much to contact heaven that they should enjoy some of its privileges in the here and now. Yet that was more than a mad impossibility. The greatest seers of the century have shared their dream. In fact, they put a far richer content into their dreams than did these ancient builders. With Jesus such a hope was a veritable obsession. He called it the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven. He believed such a kingdom could be established in the here and now. He taught us to pray for its realization, saying: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." These people, therefore, did not fail because their ambition was mean and unworthy.

No more did they fail for lack of effort. They were great dreamers but they did more than dream. They put their best thought and best effort into changing their dream into reality. The fact that they fell short does
does not mean that they took the easy way. They did more than wish, they willed. They did more than long for that taste of the heavenly life while they lived on this dusty earth, they put their best effort into the realization of their longing.

If Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin, Chiang Kai-Shek, Tojo and Hitler were to have a conference on many matters they would be as far apart as the spaces between the stars. But there would be some points of agreement. First, they would agree that something is wrong with the world that now is. Were one of their number to affirm things were wrong and ought to be set right, every single man would say: Amen.

Then there is another point upon which they could agree. That is that something ought to be done about it. They not only believe this but they are actually trying to do something. All the leaders of all the nations involved in this horrible hell of war are undertaking in their own way to help toward building some kind of heaven. What would be Hitler's idea of heaven would be hell for us but we all have our conception and we are pouring treasure into its realization, treasure beyond all power of account. If we fail, it will not be for lack of sacrificial effort. Why then, I repeat, did these fail?

1. They failed because they left God out. They said: Let us build for ourselves a city with a tower whose top shall reach to the heavens. That was their way of saying: "Come, let us save ourselves. Come, let us show God that we can get on without Him. Come, let us demonstrate the fact that we are the masters of our fate and the captains of our own souls". That language surely sounds strangely familiar. Hitler would find it easily understood. So would multitudes in our so-called Christian America. Building not in a positive antagonism of God, but building with no regard
of the will of God is one of the most familiar facts of our day.

How alike are we to these self-sufficient builders. "Come, let us build", they said. Then this keen-eyed poet, speaking in their own language, "Let us go down and confound them". That is this ancient writer's way of saying: "He that siteth in the heavens shall laugh".

The anger of God is a terrible something, but even more terrible than that is the sardonic laughter of God. "Because I have called and you have refused and have stretched out my hand and no man regarded. Therefore, I will mock when your fear cometh".

It strikes me that we need this sting of salt spray in our faces. Of course, in reality God never laughs when our tragic choices involve us in suffering. Our pain brings as much greater pain to His tender heart than He is greater than ourselves. "In all our afflictions, He is afflicted." Christ on His cross is but the eternal heart ache of God become articulate in time. Yet the woe in which our ignoring of God involve us is just as real as if God were laughing at us in bitter irony and contempt.

The tragedies of the ages, both to the individual and the nations of the world have had their source in man's effort to be independent of God. What was the matter with the rich farmer to whom Jesus spoke. He was a highly successful man, yet the Master called him a fool. Why? He left God out of his reckoning. How amazing! It was as foolish as if he had sought a great harvest while leaving out the rain and the sunshine, the seed and the soil.

During the heyday of his glory, Napoleon seemed destined to conquer the world. He was almost as successful as Hitler. At last, intoxicated by his success he declared "God is on the side of the strongest battalions".
by this he meant that God did not count. I count. My army counts, but not God. Therefore, he said: "Come, I will build a world of my own".

But he that siteth in the heavens just laughed. According to Hugo, God was bored with him. Therefore, he ended upon a little speck in the sea with nothing left but a pair of military boots that he insisted upon having on his cold feet when he died.

2. The second blunder that the builders made follows naturally on the heels of the first. Leaving God out, they put themselves in. Nature abhors a vacuum. If a man ignores God, he makes a god of himself. These men did not look to God for any help in building their heaven. Their confidence was in themselves. The confidence of millions is in man today rather than in God, trusting in themselves, making of themselves a god, thus seeking to glorify themselves, "Let us build"—they said, "thus making a name for ourselves."

How familiar that is, yet how utterly futile! Those who set out deliberately to make names for themselves always fail in the end. "God hath given Him", that is Jesus, "a name that is above every name". How did He win it? He did not do so by saying: "Come, let me make a name for myself". He took this road. "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." He rose the highest because he stooped the lowest. The best way to be remembered by others is to forget ourselves.

Here, for instance, is a woman who is still remembered after 1900 years. She is known wherever the name of her Master has gone. It will always be the case. Jesus said: "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she has done shall be spoken of as a memorial of her". So we remember her today, not
because she set out to make a name for herself, we remember because in loving service she forgot herself. But when we leave out God, we put self in.

3. The final blunder of these builders was that leaving out God and putting self in, they came to leave out their brothers. This old story tells us in the language of finest poetry that they were confounded so that each spoke to the other in a foreign tongue. Speech is a means of communication. It is the way mind meets mind. It is the way heart meets heart.

But these people ceased to understand each other. Ceasing to understand each other, they ceased to care one for another, thus every kind of hate and strife was made possible.

These people decided to build brotherhood even as we of today, but leaving God out, their efforts ended as our must end, if we follow their example, in utter failure. That is a significant word in the Book of Acts that tells us with the out-pouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, every man heard his brother speak in his own tongue, wherein he was born. It was this understanding that brought about their one-ness. "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul". The language of a spirit-inspired goodwill can be understood when words are beyond the listener's comprehension.

Drummond tells us that in the heart of Africa, among the great lakes, he came across black men and women who remembered the only white man that had ever passed that way before. He said further that their dark faces would light up as they spoke of the kind doctor that passed their way years ago. They did not understand a single word that he spoke but they felt the love
that showed in the heart of him, and thus, was to him a brother and friend.
The only real cure for the world's divisions is God. To leave God out is
to leave out both our brothers and ourselves.

III

What then does this ancient story have to say to our bewildered
day? What does it say to you and to me?

1. first, it tells us that God is the one supreme necessity. There
is simply no getting along individually, socially or rationally without
Him. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it;
except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain". It is
just another way of saying with Jeremiah: "Cursed be the man that trusteth
in man, and that maketh flesh his arm, in whose heart departeth from the Lord".

2. But while this story presses home the fact that there is no
getting on without God, it does not teach that there is no responsibility
resting upon ourselves. We are absolutely dependant on God. That truth
needs especial emphasis today. But if God is to accomplish His purpose
in the world, He must have our cooperation. If a branch cannot bear fruit
without the vine, no more can the vine realize its purpose without the
branch. We realize God's purpose, therefore, but then we sit idly and depend
on God to do His part and ours as well. We realize His purpose when in
self dedication we become laborers together with God. This is the way to
the building of our towers and there is none other.

This is true of us as individuals. For years many of us, perhaps
all of us, have been trying to build a Christ like character. We have been
trying to realize the life of heaven in the here and now. Some of us have
succeeded in a fashion, while others are sorely disappointed.
"I remember, I remember the fir tree, dark and high
That seemed to me its splendid top were close against the sky.
It was a childish fancy, but oh! 'tis little joy
To know that I am further off from heaven than when I was a boy."

That is a sob in which many can share. You are shrewder than you used to be, more keen and knowing. You live in a better house, wear better clothes, perhaps. In the language of the world, you have got on. But are you closer to heaven? Has God become more real? Or is He far more vague and shadowy than He was in youth's bright morning long ago?

Many of us are engaged in the big business of home building, but here again some are leaving God out. When you moved from the country or from the village into the city, you brought your treasures with you, your car, your furniture, even your card tables, but some of you left the family altar behind. Some of you left your church membership. Those that have to do with delinquent youth today, according to Mr. Hoover, Head of the F.B.I., tell us in one voice that the breaking down of youth comes with the breaking down of home. Most break-downs in the home come about from lack of vital faith in God. "Except the Lord build a home, they labor in vain that build it".

We are church builders. That is the finest of undertakings. It is the chief thing. I love to remember that, with all its faults, Jesus calls it His bride. He invested His life in the building of it. "I will build my church", He declares, "and the gates of death shall not prevail against it". He built that church out of human material. He built it through human agency. Let us bear in mind that He is the builder and our labors will be largely in vain unless those labors are in the Lord,
Finally, we need the solemnizing realization of this story as we move hopefully toward the brave new world that we are expecting after the war. I am devoutly thankful for the vast number of able men and women who are earnestly planning for a better day. Certainly the best intellects of the century are giving attention to this great enterprise, but brains and statesmanship are not enough. We must have God. In the recent conference held at Cairo, it warmed my heart to read that the Generalissimo of China arose early each morning to give himself time for quiet prayer. "Come", he was saying to all his brothers around the world, "let us build a new world that shall have more of heaven in it than the world of yesterday.

Bear in mind that God cannot do this work alone. Certainly we cannot do it alone. But with God and man working together the impossible becomes possible. There is a story that years ago, the Pope of Rome had a dream. He saw his great cathedral swaying in the wind, threatening to fall into ruins. So sure was he that it would become a wreck that he burst into tears. Then he saw a little man run toward the swaying cathedral and prop it up with his hand, and it stood firm. The next day, this little man wearing a peasant's garb came to see him. The Pope recognized him as the man he had seen in his dream. "What are you going to do?" asked the Pope. "I am going out on a great adventure." "What is that adventure?" was the next question. "I am going to save the church." "How are you going to save it?" "By obeying Jesus Christ". The name of that man was Francis of Assisi. Giving his dedication we can, not only save the church, but the world.

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something, but even more terrible than that is the sardonic laughter of God. "Because I have called and you have refused and have stretched out my hand and no man regarded, therefore, I will also laugh at your calamities and mock when your fear cometh".

It strikes me that we of today need this sting of salt spray in our faces. Of course, in reality God never laughs when our tragic choices involve us in suffering. His pain brings as much greater pain to His tender heart as He is greater than ourselves. "In all their afflictions, He was afflicted." Christ on His cross is but the eternal heart ache of God becoming articulate in time. Yet the woe in which our ignoring of God involves us is just as real as if God were laughing at us in bitter irony and contempt.

During the heyday of his glory, Napoleon seemed destined to conquer the world. He was almost as successful as Hitler during the early days of this war. At last, intoxicated by his success, he declared: "God is on the side of the strongest battalions". By this he meant: "God does not count. I count. My army counts, but not God". Braced by this conviction he went on his bloody way, but not for long. He that siteth in the heavens was already laughing at him. According to Hugo, God got bored with him. Therefore, the conqueror ended upon a little speck in the sea with nothing left of all his conquests but a pair of military boots that he insisted upon having on his cold feet when he died.

2. The second blunder that the builders made follows naturally on the heels of the first. Leaving God out, they put themselves in. Nature abhors a vacuum. If a man ignores God, he is likely to make a god of
himself. These men did not look to God for any help in building their
heaven. Their confidence was in themselves. Thus trusting in themselves,
putting themselves in the place of God, they sought their own glory.
Therefore they said: "Let us build — thus making a name for ourselves".

How familiar that is, yet how utterly futile. Those who set
out deliberately to make names for themselves always fail in the end.
"God hath given Him", that is Jesus, "a name that is above every name."
How did He win it? He did not do so by saying: "Come, let me make a
name for myself". He took this road — "He became obedient unto death,
even the death of the cross". He rose the highest because he stooped
the lowest. He is remembered because he forgot himself. These built
for themselves, therefore they are remembered only for their folly.

3. The final blunder of these builders was that leaving out God
and putting self in, they came to leave out their brothers. This old
story tells us in the language of finest poetry that they were confounded
so that each spoke to the other in a foreign tongue. Speech is a means
of communication. It is the way mind meets mind. But these people
ceased to understand each other. Ceasing to understand each other, they
ceased to care for each other. Thus every kind of hate and strife was
made possible.

These people decided to build brotherhood even as we of today,
but leaving God out, their efforts ended as our must end, if we follow
their example, in utter failure. That is a significant word in the Book
of Acts that tells us that with the out-pouring of the Spirit at Pentecost,
every man heard his brother speak in his own tongue, wherein he was born.
It was this understanding that brought about their oneness. "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." The language of a God given goodwill can be understood when words are beyond the listener's comprehension. Drummond tells us that in the heart of Africa, among the great lakes, he came across black men and women who remembered the only white man that had ever passed that way before. He said further that their dark faces would light up as they spoke of the kind doctor that passed their way years ago. They did not understand a single word that he spoke but they felt the love that beat in the heart of him, thus knew him as a friend and brother. The only real cure for the world's divisions is God. To leave God out is to leave out both our brothers and ourselves.

III

What then does this ancient story have to say to our bewildered day? What does it say to you and to me?

1. First, it tells us that God is the one supreme necessity. There is simply no getting along individually, socially or nationally without God. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman watcheth but in vain." It is just another way of saying with Jeremiah: "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and that maketh flesh his arm, in whose heart departeth from the Lord".

2. But while this story pressed home the fact that there is no getting on without God, it does not teach that there is no responsibility resting upon ourselves. We are absolutely dependant on God. That truth needs especial emphasis today. But if God is to accomplish His purpose in the world, He must have our cooperation. If the branch cannot bear
I am not sure what you mean by "God's breaktime."
Finally, we need the solemnizing realization of the truth of
this story as we move hopefully toward the brave new world that we are
expecting after the war. I am devoutly thankful for the vast number of able
men and women who are earnestly planning for a better day. Certainly many
of the best intellects of the century are giving attention to this great
enterprise. But brains and statesmanship are not enough. We must have
God. In the recent conference held at Cairo, it warmed my heart to read
that the Generalissimo of China arose early each morning to give himself
time for quiet prayer. "Come", he was saying to all his brothers around
the world, "Come, let us by God's help build a new world that will have
more of heaven in it than the world of yesterday".

There is a story that years ago, the Pope of Rome had a dream.
In his dream he saw his great cathedral swaying in the wind, threatening
to fall into ruins. So sure was he that it would become a wreck that he
burst into tears. Then he saw a little man run toward the swaying
cathedral and prop it up with his hand, and it stood firm. The next day,
a man wearing a peasant's garb came to see him. The Pope recognized in
his visitor the man he had seen in his dream. "What are you going to do?" asked the Pope. "I am going out on a great adventure" was the answer.
"What is that adventure?" the Pope questioned. "I am going to save
the church" was the reply. "How are you going to save it?" the Pope
next asked. "By obeying Jesus Christ", came the assured answer. The
name of that man was Francis of Assisi. Given his dedication to God,
we can save our tottering world.

...
This is part of the story of two good men. I use "good" in the common acceptance of the term, which does not mean very much. Good is a word that has fallen on evil days. It has had its teeth extracted, it has had its tonsils removed and it has undergone several major operations. Hence, it has come to pass that when we can say nothing decent about an individual, we dismiss him with a flimsy compliment, "He is a good man." It may mean very much and it may mean almost nothing at all.

By being good, I mean that both these men were believers in one God. Had they lived in our time, in our city, and belonged to our church, they would both have been on the Official Board. Abram would have been on the Official Board because he deserved to be there. We could not have run the church very well without him. Lot would have been on the Official Board because he was kin to Abram, for you know if we have one good man on the Board, we usually put his kin-folks on to serve as shock absorbers so he can do nothing good nor rash.

Now while these men were born believers, yet in the ultimate outcome of their lives, they are as far apart as night is from day, and as far apart as life is from death. While Abram represents to us all that is most beautiful in sainthood, Lot is an utter failure. When the writers of the New Testament want to tell us what religion is at its best, they are constantly harking back to this strange man who left the plains of Jordan to journey into the unknown at the call of God. They watch him as disappointed with nothing of his great hopes coming to realization still refusing to turn back, still saying, "I know that God did speak to me and that what He says in the last long last must come to pass." But Lot glares upon us across the far space of the years, a charred and blackened ruin. The only message from his dumb lips is this, "Don't live your life as I lived mine. Don't fling yourself away as I flung myself away."

Why this wide difference between these two men? It was not the fact that one was religious and the other irreligious. Both were religious. It was not the fact that
one sometimes prayed and the other never did. They were both men of prayer. Why then the difference? It was in this, while Lot was a religious man, his religion never became the biggest fact about him, his religion never dominated him. Till a man's religion really masters him, till God becomes the biggest fact in his life for him, that man never arrives. He lives his life in the suburbs of Christianity and he never goes into the heart of the city. Abram, on the other hand, put God first. When they mentioned his name in a crowd, the first thought that came into the mind of the hearers was this, "Abram, oh, he is God's friend."

The text brings these two men before us at a time of crisis - a decision is to be made. They have decided to separate. Abram, with a fine generosity says to the younger man, "The land is before you. You may have first choice." And Lot, with an eye for the main chance looked over the field. In one direction was a wild rugged country where a herdsman could find sustenance for his flock if he kept moving. In the other direction, the sight was amazingly beautiful. The story says, "It looked like the garden of the Lord." As Lot looked it over, his palms fairly itched for he saw that he could squander the luscious grasses into wealth.

But as he gazes upon his beautiful country, his brows puckered into a frown -- it was not all beautiful, there was that which repelled as well as that which attracted. "What is the matter Lot?" Abram asked kindly. "The cities of the plains," he replied, "they are wretched places. I have been on their streets. I have been nauseated by their loathsome wickedness. But for them, I might go in that direction. I should certainly make more money, but I might not get on so well religiously. Now, if I take the other course, I should have a better chance at God and a poorer chance at things. Those I love would have a better chance at God, but a poorer chance at things." The call of the spiritual in one direction, the call of things in the other. Which way did Lot go? which way do we go, for it is a choice we are having to make every day? Lot went in the direction of things. He pitched his tent toward Sodom.
Now when Lot set out toward Sodom, he had no thought of making his home at Sodom, he only went in that direction. But it so happens that life's direction is the biggest fact about us. What you are is of vast importance, but what you are becoming is even more important. Which way are you traveling if you keep on going in the direction in which you are now going? What are you going to become? And at what goal will you be when the sundown comes?

Traveling toward Sodom, it is not surprising that Lot reached there. Not only did he reach Sodom, but he became its mayor. In the nineteenth chapter, we read of Lot who is waiting at the gate at Sodom. It is easy to tell how he became mayor. The people wanted a business administration — they always do. I never saw a city that did not desire a business administration. I almost never saw a city that had one. The general rule is that our cities are run by the crooks. But Lot has made a great success. The life of Abram up in the highlands does not seem so glamorous as that of Lot, but before we assess the value of the mayor's success, we want to ask two or three questions.

I.

One day I slip into the mayor's office for an interview. I am representing the Jerusalem Gazette. The mayor puts his pencil behind his ear and says, "What can I do for you?" My answer is, "I have come to ask you two or three questions. They are very simple questions, they lie right on the surface. The first question I ask is this, Have you been living in Sodom for twenty years?" "Why, yes." "What effect has this kind of life had on your religious experience?"

At that question, a shadow falls across the mayor's face. I see the care lines are rather deep in it. It is evident that he is far from being happy. "I am sorry you asked me that question," he replies slowly. "You know, to be perfectly honest with you, life in Sodom has been a disappointment. Oh, I have got on. I have really made a
pile of money, but something fine has gone out of my life. I haven't the sense of God I used to have." I am not reading it to the story what is not there.

A few years ago, I was holding a meeting in a church in Dallas at which I had formerly been pastor. While there, it was my pleasure to meet again the fine Presbyterian elder who had been my neighbor in the old days. In the course of my conversation, he said, "I have made more money this year than in all the rest of my life." "Fine," I said, "I love to hear of a good man making money." But there seemed a lack of enthusiasm, something was wanting. "How is your church getting on?" I asked. "Well," he answered, "I don't attend as much as I used to. I got so absorbed in the oil business that I am not very regular any more." "How is your Sunday school class?" I continued. He used to teach a class of boys in the teen age and he was a master. "Well," he answered reluctantly, "I had to give up the class. I was too busy." "Poor fellow," I replied, "if you had a thermometer for registering real happiness, it would be quite a bit closer to zero than usual, wouldn't it?" He dug his toe into the ground and answered sadly, "You are right. I do not mean I have flung away from God altogether, but I have lost a sense of His presence." This lot had done.

I slip out of the mayor's office and go up in the hill country to see Abram. He lives off the highway a bit. Now company in the city is no great fun. If you were to come to see me unexpectedly, somebody would have to slip out the back door and go buy another paper sack of something. We live from hand to mouth like all city folks, but in the country it is different. As a boy, I used to used to see a buggy track that had turned out toward our home and know that the preacher had come. At once, there would be a new sparkle in my eye and a new elasticity in my step as I thought of all the good things Mother had when the preacher came. After I got to be a preacher myself, and went home, she passed me a lovely glass of apple jelly that looked like a handful of condensed sunshine, but I said, "No thank you, Mother. I never got to taste it as I was growing up. You saved it all for the preacher so I never cultivated a taste for it."
So Abram, living in the country would be glad to see me. "How are you getting on religiously?" I asked, and his face glows upon me. "Famously," he replies. "Why I had three visitors the other day. You would never guess who they were. While two of them were ordinary angels, the other was the angel of the covenant. He came into my tent and somehow the walls pushed back and the ceiling overarched and since he has gone, he has not gone nor the place is sweet with his presence still." And it is true as it was then that it is the presence of God in the home that makes it a heavenly place.

II.

I go back to the mayor's office and ask him a second question. "Mayor, you came down to Sodom and you did not come alone, did you?" "I suppose you brought your family with you." "Yes, of course," he answers, "certainly." "Well," I say, "what effect has life in Sodom had on your family? Has it been a good place in which to rear children? Are they following in your steps? Do they build altars? Have you managed to hold them to your faith?" And the care lines grow yet deeper in the mayor's face. "I have lost them every one."

It would be hard to find a sadder chapter in a man's life than that where Lot, aroused at last undertakes to save his daughter and his sons-in-law, "Up," he says, with a new earnestness, "live your lives." But those sons of Sodom look at him with a mingling of amazement and amusement. "He seems downright funny," they say. We can speak the language of the world so persistently that when we undertake to talk the language of Zion, we blunder over it and fumble and make ourselves sound ridiculous. So it was with Lot. Coming to Sodom, he had lost his own sense of God and he had lost every child that he had.

I go again into the hill country to see Abram. But this time, he is not at home, but I meet his son, Isaac. "Your father is not at home today?" I asked. "No," is his answer. "Well," I replied, "maybe you will do. I am taking a religious census.
of this community. What I want to know is this, is your father a member of the church, as we should say today?" And Isaac looks intently at me for a moment and then breaks into a laugh, "You are a stranger in these parts, aren't you?" he questions. "Yes," I reply. "I thought so. If you had lived in this neighborhood you would never had to have asked that question. Everybody knows where my father stands - he is God's friend." What a benediction to have a father like that. Some of you have such fathers, that is the reason you are here at this hour. That is the reason I am here. I might go back among the hills of Tennessee today and come upon some ugly cabin among the trees, a forbidding looking figure might come from that door to look me over, he might even be a moonshiner. But as he regarded me intently for a while, his hard face would relax and he would ask, "Ain't you old Bill Chappell's son?" "Yes," I would answer a bit proudly. "I thought so. If you want anything from me, you can have it. He was the best man I ever knew." No wonder God said of Abram, "He shall command his children in his household after him." These two men went in different directions - one down, the other up and each carried his children with him - we usually do.

III.

Then, there is one final question I asked Lot, "When you came into the city, mayor, you knew a story that the others did not know. Isn't that true?" "Yes," he answered. "Was Sodom a needy city?" "Oh, yes," he answers. "Were there any broken hearts here? Were there any broken homes? Were there any lives entangled and going to waste in Sodom?" "Oh, all too many," he answered. "And you had a story that might have helped those wasted and wasting lives. Did you tell it?" "Is any man the better for your coming?" "Is there one today that can truly thank God for you?" And with a look in his eyes that was too bitter for tears, he has to say that there is not a man.

Now, it seems to me that the very height of tragedy is to have come and grown and gone and never to have known the majesty and the mirth of helping somebody. I shall
always rejoice that it was my privilege to know the thrill of leading another to Christ in my early experience. I was a boy away at Webb School. Rooming in the same building with myself was a fellow-student—a red-headed chap with a red-headed temper. He had about the reddest hair I ever saw. I am told he had scarlet fever when he was a boy and it had settled in his hair. He was disagreeable and hard to live with. But just a few days after I had become a Christian, he came to me and proposed that we room together.

Well, it was a shock. I did not wish it at all. I had a room a little larger than my trunk. I know this to be the case because my trunk was in it. I took the request as a challenge and the red-haired pugilist moved in. He was a vicious swearer, though he never swore in my presence but once. He was fundamentally a gentleman and knowing I was trying to be a Christian, he respected my efforts.

We had not been rooming together long before the home folks sent him a wonderful assortment of ties and collars. These collars were the folding type. We had been mainly wearing that standup kind that give your ears some moral support. Now, it so happened that my friend did not know how to get a tie to slip through the collar. When he arranged himself daintily before the mirror the next morning and gave his tie a gentle pull, nothing happened, he pulled harder still and nothing happened. Then he dashed out the door. I knew that that meant. He was going to where he could open the safety valve. Some fifteen minutes later, he came back with collar and tie perfectly ruined and he was a bit repentent. But as he looked me over, he said, "I have cussed enough this morning trying to tie this tie to send a whole world to hell."

That was typical of him. But a little later, I was to speak one night at the Y. M. C. A. It was about my first effort. On my way up to our room, it so happened that the door was standing ajar just a bit. Through that narrow opening I looked in and caught a glimpse of my friend. He was on his knees by the bed. The rays of the setting sun were shining on his red face and red hair. To my amazement, I saw he was in an agony of prayer. I slipped back down the stairs lest I should disturb him. I did not see him
again until the meeting. As I entered the door, he was on the front seat and though the service had already begun, he had a secret that was too good to keep and he shouted at me, "Chappell, I got it!" I did not have to ask him what he had. In the classroom, at the boarding house, and everywhere, all who knew him realized that something beautiful had come into his life.

Lot took the lower road. He lost his own peace, he lost his children, he lost his usefulness. But what did God say to Abram, "I will bless thee and thou shall be a blessing." Now, to attain a blessing is a great privilege. There is one far better and that is being a blessing. That is the highest privilege of living. And that is open to everyone of us. But those who bless superbly are those who put God first. Abram dwelt in the heights and God could use him. It is only so that He can use you. "Oh, Zion, that breathe good tidings, get thee up into the high mountains."
"Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom."

Genesis 13:12

This is a part of the story of two good men. Good is a word that has fallen on evil days. It is rather anemic. It has had several major operations and is headed toward perpetual environment. So much is this the case that we only apply it to those individuals about whom we can say nothing else respectable. The man who has succeeded by staying out of jail, but has done nothing else, we usually say, "He is a good man," but nothing else. The woman who Kipling described as "a rag and a bone and a hank of hair," we usually dismiss in the same fashion. From a strong word, good, has become weak.

But in our story it has something big and brawny. By saying that these two men were good, I mean they were both believers in one God. So far as we know they were unique in that respect. Both had left Ur of the Chaldees to journey into the unknown. They were both altar builders. They were both men of prayer. They were both genuinely interested in religion. But in spite of the fact that both were religious they are as far apart in the influence of their lives on their own generation and the generations that followed as night is from day, as life is from death. While one of them represents all that is most beautiful in sainthood, the other glares upon us across the far spaces of the years with nothing but blankness. The only message that comes from his drab lips is,
"Don't live your life as I have mine, and don't throw your life away as I have thrown mine away."

Why then this difference? It was not because one was religious and the other irreligious. It was not that one sometimes prayed and the other never did. The difference is rather in this, that while Lot was a religious man, his religion never became the biggest fact about him. It was never his vocation. It was always his avocation. Till a man's religion becomes the biggest fact about him, he dwells in the suburbs of Christianity. He never goes down where the lights are bright and where the great traffic of the soul is carried on. Abram on the other hand was not only religious, but his religion was the biggest fact in his life. When his name was mentioned in a group, men's faces lighted up. "Ah!" they said, "he is God's friend."

How did this difference come about? It did not come about that these two men had consciously chosen different goals. Had you questioned Lot he would have told you that he was traveling to the same goal to which Abram was traveling. But his fatal blunder was that he was going in a wrong direction. How often we gladly choose our direction when we in our hearts hate the goal in which it leads. The other day a man came into my office who was a confirmed drunkard. He did not set out with his mind made up to become a drunkard. He had no desire for that grim goal. But in choosing the wrong direction he had to take the goal in spite of himself.

The story brings these two men before us at a time of crisis in their lives. It is a time a decision is to be made. I can imagine that they are standing upon a promontory that gives a lookout to all the surrounding country. Abram with a fine generosity offers Lot first choice. "You may go in either direction you desire." Lot with an eye for the main chance looked over the landscape. Away to
the left was a wild rugged country where sparse grass grew, but where the heard-
man could find subsistence for his flock if he kept moving. But over in the other
direction was a marvelously beautiful country. The story says, "That it looked
like the garden of the Lord." Lot looked with his lush gaze, and said, "If I go
that way I can make a pile of money."

But while there was an appeal in this fertile plain there was also that which
repelled. As Lot looks at it I see his brows pop into a frown. "What is the mat-
ter?" I asked, "Ah!" he answers, "the cities of the plain, I have been on their
streets, I have been disgusted with their materialism, with their loathsome wick-
edness, but for them I would go in that direction. The way of this rugged country
however is much safer. If I take the uplands my family and myself will have a
better chance at God. If I take the way of the valley we shall have a better
chance at things.

Which way did Lot go? We read that he pitched his tent in the direction of
Sodom. That does not mean that he intended to go to Sodom. I have yet to find
a man who avows his intention of keeping on till he reaches a wrong goal. All
Lot intended to do was to take a wrong direction. But it so happens that a wrong
direction must inevitably lead to a wrong goal. Because this is the case the
biggest fact about you and me is not how far we have climbed toward the heights,
nor how deep we have dipped to the depths, the big question is that of direction.
What we are is of course important, what we are becoming is far more important.

For instance, when I was a boy on the farm we used to raise horses, and
cattle, and sheep, and chickens, and ducks, and turkeys, and reese. I wonder if
you ever took the time to look at a gosling? If you have you must agree that a
gosling is a beautiful thing. Yet, even as a boy I found it impossible to grow
enthusiastic over a gosling because I always had it in the back of my mind that
if it kept on traveling it was going to be a goose one day. It was headed in a
wrong direction.
On the other hand if some morning toward spring, we were housecleaning and found a worm-like something anchored upon your window sill, if you had started to tear that ugly thing from its anchorage and throw it in the fire, I might have stopped you. "Don't do that," I might have said, "I know it is ugly now, but it is headed out toward something better. That is the cocoon of the Empire Moth. If you will be patient with it one day you will hear a knocking inside of that drab prison. One day the doors will open and a creature of royal beauty will come forth. Though so ugly today, that bit of ugliness is on the way toward beauty. It is headed into Spring. It is on its way to spreading colorful wings under the blue sky where it will drink the nectar of a hundred flowers." So the biggest fact about us is our direction. If we are facing in the wrong direction there is no telling to what depths we may finally go. If we are facing in the right direction there is no telling how beautiful we may be among the tall sons of the morning.

Now the tragedy of Lot was that he went in the wrong direction. "He pitched his tent toward Sodom." Having chosen to travel toward Sodom we need not be surprised when we read in the very next chapter that Lot dwelled in Sodom. Taking a wrong direction he reached a wrong goal. Not only did he come to dwell in Sodom, but he became mayor of the city. We read that he sat in the gate. Hence he has risen from the obscurity of a mere cattle-man to be mayor of one of the largest cities of his day. In the eyes of his fellows he has made a great success.

II.

But before we possess the value of his success let us ask him what it cost him. Therefore I am going to play like I am a reporter for the Daily Oklahoman, or the Dallas News, and I am going in to interview Lot. I work my way past his secretaries and find him seated behind his rose wood desk. He puts his pen behind his ear and asks in business-like fashion, "What can I do for you?" That
means, get to the point and get out. "If you don’t mind," I answer, "I would like to ask you two or three questions. They are not brilliant questions, they are not deep questions. Possibly they are not even original questions. But they are questions that come very close to life."

1. "My first question is this. "You came into this city, I understand, twenty years ago. You have made quite a success. You own this bit of real estate and that. You have been popular enough to be elected mayor. But I am interested to know what effect has Sodom had upon your religious life? When you moved into the city a score of years ago you were the possessor of a great faith. You were a man of prayer. You were an altar builder. What has the city done to your faith? Do you make as much of prayer as you used to make? In this rather forbidding environment do you still look toward the heights?"

The mayor is a bit surprised at this question. As I watch him the light fades in his eyes somewhat. His face becomes very sober. "Well," he said, "I did not expect such a question. That is a private matter. But since you asked me I will give you an honest answer. Life in Sodom has been disappointing. The city has obscured some values that once were clear, others it seems to have wrenched from my hands altogether. Life is less radiant than it used to be." I am not reading into the story what is not there. The Apostle Peter tells us that they vexed Lot’s righteous soul from day to day. He got a few things, but he got restlessness, and weariness, and heart-hunger along with them. In fact the city robbed him of his real wealth and left him looking out upon its busy streets with gaunt and hungry eyes.

I slip out from the mayor's office up into the Hill country where Abram lives. Since he lives a bit in the backwoods where visitors are not very frequent he will doubtless be too busy to see me. Company in the city you know is not such great fun. When unexpected visitors come in the city we have to slip out the back door and get another sack of something. All of us live from hand to mouth. But that
is not the case in the country. Company out there is a thrill. It is a bit like quail on toast.

I remember how as a boy I used to see where the buggy tracks turned off the main road toward our home. I knew at once that the preacher had come. With that knowledge there would come a new spring in my step and a new song in my heart as I thought of all the good things that mother had to eat when the preacher came. Even after I got to be a preacher and went home mother would pass me a glass of apple jelly that looked like a handful of condensed sunrise. "Son, won't you have some jelly?" she said. "No thank you. I never got to taste it when I was growing up, you saved it all for the preacher, so I never cultivated an appetite for it." So Abram would be glad to see us.

Then I asked him a question. It is the same question in a sense that I asked Lot. "How are you getting on religiously? What have scores of years done to your spiritual life?" At that his face lights up. "Why," he said, "I had a visitor yesterday. That visitor was the Angel of the Covenant. He came into my tent and somehow the walls pushed out and the ceiling overarched, and it became a holy temple. And since he has gone, he hasn't gone, for the place is sweet with his presence still." It is a sense of God that makes home a heavenly place. Abram has found increasingly just what Lot has lost.

2. Again I visit the mayor to ask him a second question. "Mayor, what has the city done to your family? When you moved into Sodom you did not come alone. You brought with you your wife and children. What has Sodom done to them? Has it strengthened their faith? Has it helped you hold them true to those spiritual values that abide?" At that question the care lines grow deeper in the mayor's face. "I am sorry you asked me that question," he answers. "Life in Sodom has been hard on my family. In fact it has been so hard that I have lost them every one. Not one of them has held true to the faith that once was the joy and strength of my heart."
Again I go into the hill country to see Abram, but it so happens that he is not at home. However I have the pleasure of meeting his son, Isaac. "Your father not at home today?" I asked. "No," he answered. "I am sorry, but he is not here." "Well, may be you can give me the information that I seek. I am taking a religious census. What I want to know is this, Is your father one of the saints?" At that Isaac looks at me with mingled pity and amusement. "Say," he answers, "you don't live in this country do you?" "No," I replied, "I thought not. If you had lived in fifty miles of my father's church you would never have had to ask a question like that. Everybody that knows him knows that he is God's friend.

3. Once more back in the mayor's office I ask my final question. "Lot, the city seems to have strangled both you and your family, let me ask you one other question. What did you do for the city? When you came into Sodom you knew a story that your fellow citizens did not know, didn't you?" "Yes," he answered. "Was Sodom a needy city?" "Oh yes." "Were there any broken hearts, any lives going to waste? Were there those about you who were missing the thrill of Christian living?" "Oh yes, multitudes," he answered. "What did you do about it Lot? Did you share your faith with them, did you help them to find what you knew they were missing? Is there anybody in Sodom that can clasp hands with you and thank God for the privilege of knowing you?" And Lot had to say, "There is not one." Twenty years he spent in the presence of terrible need, but he never lifted his hand to meet that need. What tragedy could be deeper than that?

But how about Abram? God said to him, "I will bless thee and thou shalt be a blessing." To receive a blessing is a great privilege. I have seldom been so sluggish that I did not go out of my way to shake hands with a man who was constantly receiving a blessing. But to be a blessing, that is the poetry of living. And the wonder of it is that everybody can make a success at it. Bishop Quayle used to say that it was the only job that he knew at which everybody could succeed. Little children can be a blessing. The man in the stern stress of the middle pass...
Age can be a blessing. Tired old bodies who are coming close to the sunset can be a blessing.

Sometime ago, after preaching a few days in a city, I was making my way on foot to the station to catch a train home. It so happened I was carrying a heavy grip. Suddenly a great, husky man snatched it out of my hand, put his other arm around me and half lifted me off my feet. "Leaving town?" he asked. "Yes," I answered. "I am leaving town." "Well," he said a bit blunderingly, "I have been out to hear you preach the last few nights, and I want to tell you that you have helped me." That was a thrill, and there was no need of him carrying my grip. I felt that if I had had a trunk in one hand and a bale of cotton in the other I could have gone skipping on my way. And God said to this man, "I will bless thee and thou shalt be a blessing." That, I say, is the fun of living.

Sometime ago a minister told me this story. "I was watching by my sick child when I heard a cry in the street. I hurried out to find that a passing car had upset a news-boy. He was lying unconscious in the gutter while his newspapers were scattered about on the muddy street. I picked him up, saw that he was not seriously hurt, and gathered his papers. I then took him in the house and put him on a cot and watched him along with my own sick child. By and by he waked and asked to be taken home. 'All right,' I said. 'I will take you the first thing in the morning. The cars have stopped now and I haven't any automobile, therefore I can not take you till the morning.' When I looked back a moment later the big tears were running down his face. 'Mother won't know where I am' he said. 'I have got to go now.' So I waked my wife up to watch our child. I took him in my arms with his papers and trudged two miles through the city. Then I put him down he looked his gratitude in my face, but said never a word. I told him goodbye and started for home. I had not gone far when he called after me. 'Mister, hold on just a minute.' He came up and gave me a muddy newspaper. 'Mister, this is
the Saint Louis Republican. I want you to take it home with you and read it. It is the best paper in the world.' I thanked him and started again. The second time he called after me. 'Mister,' he said, 'Here is the Saint Louis Democrat. It is the next best paper published in the southwest. I want you to take it home with you and read it.' Weeks passed by and I forgot the incident altogether.

Then one day I took a car for the station. At a certain corner a bunch of newboys got on. Then a sudden silence fell over them. As I was preparing to look back, two dirty boyish hands came over the side of my face. Those hands found each other, and I began to feel myself treated to a hug that I was sure was not meant for me. So I turned around and looked at the little newboys. 'Son,' I said, 'you don't know me.' Then he laughed and put his hands up side my face. 'I don't know you mister, why you is the man what brought me home. I aint never forgot you. I never will forget you.'"

The city cheated Lot of his faith, cheated him of his family. It also cheated him of his usefulness. He did nothing for the city but to help it to rot. The only chance it had was at the hands of a good man, Abram by name, who lived in the Hill country. The measure of our power to help the world is the measure of our victory over it. "O Zion that bringeth good tidings, get thee up into the high mountains."
"Abraham dwelled in the land of Canaan and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent toward Sodom." Genesis 13-12

Here are two men with whom every Bible reader is familiar. You know them almost as well as you know your next door neighbor. They are men who in many respects were very close akin. In many of their hopes and aspirations they were so near to each other as to rub elbows and clasp hands. But in other respects they were very wide apart. They were so wide apart that while one of them glares upon us across the far space of the years a charred and blackened ruin, the other leads to show us what is most beautiful and meaningful in religion.

I

Look at the men as they come before us in this scene.

1. Wherein were they alike? They were alike in that they were both religious. Not only were they religious, but they were religious in a way superior to their pagan neighbors. In their day people believed in many gods. In fact, gods were almost as numberless as the stars. But these two men had come to a finer faith. They believed in one God, the creator of all things. The rising of that great sun of conjecture had banished all the lesser gods as sunrise banishes the stars.

Being believers in one God, they acted accordingly. They both, as we should say today, belonged to the church. They both attended church. They both contributed to the church. Possibly they both served on the official board. Abraham served because he was needed in such a position. Lot served because he was kin to Abraham. They were both men of prayer. They builded their altars and worked with wistful expectation toward God.

2. But while they were both religious, there was this difference.
While Lot took a real interest in his church, while his faith was a matter of some importance to him, while religion had a place in his life, it never occupied the supreme place. Serving God with him was almost more of an avocation than a vocation. His religion influenced him but it did not control him. The will of God was of some importance to him, but it was not of supreme importance. There was one will that counted for more, and that was his own will.

With Abraham it was different. He really put first things first. It was his conviction that what God willed for him was far better than anything that he could will for himself. Therefore, when he stood at the forks of the road in the small and great crises of his life, he did not consult his own wishes. He rather sought to bring every decision in conformity to the will of God.

Now, that difference may seem small at first glance but it is fundamental. It decided the richness and worth of the lives that these two men lived. We look today at the half hearted man Lot. His marred face glares upon us across the far space of the years. The one message that comes to us from his dump lips is "Don't live your life as I lived mine and don't throw yourself away as I threw myself away."

But in Abraham we see religion at its best. It is a striking fact that when the writers of the New Testament seek to show us in terms of personality the meaning of sainthood, at its best, they go back to this great soul. They show him to us as he leaves his native city with its wealth and splendor to journey into the unknown. Because he believes that God is making a new beginning in and through him. We see him as he waits the fulfilment of this promise through lean and disappointing years, but he never turns back. He affirms "I know that God did speak
to me. I know that what God promises, at the long last he must perform."
Thus he stands, leaning his back against the promises of almighty God, unshaken they, failure of all his hopes. That, say the writers of the New Testament, is religion at its best.

II

How do we know this about these two?

Here, then, we have two men, both religious. But one put his faith first, and the other gave it an important place but put something else first. What effect did this have on these two men? On what they did?

1. Crisis reveals it does not make.
On what they became?
1. One chose for living.
2. Other by God chose for living.

Hence they went.

1. Threw them to go in different directions. The text brings these two men before us at a time of crisis in their lives. A choice is to be made. These choices come to us sometimes in great crises. At other times they come day by day. When we see a man who has come to a position of great spiritual power, we may know that he did not fly up there and light down like a bird. The place he has won is the result of endless right choices.

Now, this crisis that came to these two men did not make them what they were. A crisis does not make character. It reveals it. What you do in the face of a great temptation depends not on the temptation itself, but what that temptation or trial finds in you. This crisis, with its necessity of making a choice then, reveals the essential difference between these two men that we have just mentioned.

We read that Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom. Now Sodom was a rich and corrupt city. It represented the most degrading influence of that day, and it was in that direction that Lot decided to go. We may be sure that he did not intend actually to reach Sodom and live there, but
he wanted to get close enough to avail himself of whatever material advantage it had to offer. So he went in that direction.

That sounds harmless enough, but such is not the case. This is true because the biggest fact about any of us is not how far we have climbed toward the heights or dipped toward the depth, the biggest fact about us is not what we have become, it is rather we are becoming. What we are is of importance. What we are becoming is far more important. If you keep on in the direction in which you are now going, where are you going to park when the sundown comes?

Now and then we affirm that human beings never change. If we mean by that that we are the same that our fathers before us, that the heart of humanity remains unchanged through the centuries; the same great need, the same great love and longing, then that is true. But if you mean that the individual does not change, then nothing could possibly be further from the truth. The power of the individual to change for the better or for the worse is all but infinite.

Some years ago the scientists were fond of seeking to belittle man by telling us how alike the embryonic man is to the embryonic monkey. It would be impossible for the layman to tell one from the other. And yet, while looking so much alike, they are infinite distances apart. This is the case because they are traveling in different directions. The embryonic monkey is heading toward a life that is essentially of the earth, earthy. He had no power to dream, to love, to become Christlike. But man, made a little less than God, is traveling toward the possibility of becoming so utterly noble that they will take note of him that he has been with Jesus.

Naturally, this power to ascend is matched in some measure by the
power to descend. An oyster never becomes very good. That is compensated for by the fact that it can never become very bad. But with us it is different. Your road may climb to where the light will be when the sun is setting. It may also dip into the very depths of hell. Judas and John worked side by side but they traveled in different directions. John's name is today a synonym for love, Judas'a synonym for treachery.

Burbank said every weed is a possible flower. Even so, every sinner is a possible saint. That is something to lift the soul and set the heart to dreaming. But there is a grim side to it. If every weed is a possible flower, it is also possible for human flowers to degenerate into weeds. Sam Hadley met an outcast woman one day and that woman became so radiantly Christlike that the perfume of her life has not vanished to this day. But I am thinking of one whom I used to know who took the other direction, and her feet took hold on hell.

Lot went in the wrong direction. That was his tragedy. We read that he chose him. By this the author means that he chose with reference to himself alone. His one question was what do I get out of it and where do I come in? Even in his religion he was merely seeking his own interest. Abraham, on the other hand, did as Jesus in the garden. He allowed his God to choose for him. Therefore, one ascended and the other descended. But as many as received him, said the apostles, gave he power to become the sons of God. God puts his infinite might at the disposal of the man who is willing to become his best, but if he heads in the wrong direction he becomes his worst in spite of the will of God. Now, since Lot went in the wrong direction, since he pitched his tent in the very midst of Sodom, we need not be surprised that he reached Sodom. When we turn to the very next chapter, we read "Lot, who dwelled in Sodom." When we turn a
little further in his store, we read this: "Lot, who sat at the gate of Sodom." Lot had not only reached Sodom and taken up his residence there, but they had elected him mayor. And so he had got on famously and was far better known than his uncle, who still lived in the hill country.

III

Now, what effect did these different choices of different directions have upon the character and lives of these men?

1. Let me imagine that I am a reporter for the Observer or for the News and I slip in and interview Lot. "Mayor, I understand that you have been living in the city for some twenty years, that you own quite a bit of real estate. You have a house on the avenue. You are a director in a number of banks." All of that is good. God never frowns upon success. He never smiles upon failure just because it is failure. But while I am interested in your material and political success, the real question I wish to ask is this. What effect has this success of yours had upon your religious life? You used to be an altar builder. You used to be a man of prayer. There was a time when God was a reality to you. How about it now?"

And Lot frowns and shakes his head. Then comes the tragic answer.

"I don't know that it is any of your business but since you ask me, I am going to tell you because I want to talk to somebody. My life during these past years hasn't measured up. Of course, there have been bright spots in it but on the whole it has been vastly disappointing, dull and drab and unexciting." I am not reading into the story what is not there. The records say that vexed his righteous soul from day to day. Not a bad man, but an empty hearted and disappointed man.

But how about his companion Abraham, the man who shared his faith? When I slipped out into the hill country to visit him, I find myself in a different atmosphere. He tells me that he has recently had a visit from
no less a person than the Angel of the Covenant, the unborn Christ. He tells us that while his life actually might not seem so exciting as that of his nephew in Soddm, that he has become a friend of God. He is the first man in the record to receive that high distinction. This is the difference between the man who put first things first and the one who put first things second. It is the difference between living richly and living a starved and disappointing life.

2. There is a second question I asked Lot. "When you moved into Sodm you brought your family?" "Yes." "What effect has Sodm had upon your children?" Here the care lines deepen in the mayor's face. Here his eyes become big with unshed tears. "I haven't held them to my faith," he said. "That has been a keen disappointment. I have lost them every one." And that, I take it, is about his supreme loss. What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own child? Lot won a bit of Sodm but paid for it with his peace of mind and with his children.

But how about Abraham? Listen then to what the story said. "I know Abraham that he will command his children and his household after him. One day this great saint mistakenly thought that God wanted him to offer his boy in sacrifice. With a broken and bleeding heart he went about it, believing that God would still keep faith with him, that even if he did offer up Isaac, God would raise him from the dead. He was not allowed to go through with it but Isaac never forgot. He knew in all his after years what came first in his father's life.

From the faith of xIx a father like that Isaac, though a far weaker man, could never break away. He transmits that faith to his/children and Abraham to this day is tugging the world up closer to God. That is the reason we are here at this moment. Generally speaking, children are not won by half-heartedness. They are won by those who
whole-heartedly have touched reality.

3. If these two men were far apart from that in their personal life, if they were far apart in their influence upon their own families, so they were far apart in their influence upon the world of their day and upon the generations that have passed since that far off long ago.

Lot removed into Sodom and he left the cities and the saving salt so that he lost his church and lost his children. One other question: "What did you do for the city?" When you came, you found the city in need, did you not? Oh, yes, he answered. "You had a faith that had it been shared would have met that need. Isn't that true?" "Indeed, it is." "Did you share it?" That was the sharpest thrust of all. If he had only reached one single soul, even two a year, he might have salted the city. But he gave all those priceless years to the flitting and the passing of the secondary and went out with hands as empty as the pockets of a shroud.

But how about this foolish, disappointed man? This man who put the will of God first. Listen to what is said to him: "I will bless thee and thou shall have a blessing." I will bless thee. That is what God is trying to do for me every instant of my life. That is what he is seeking to do for you. At this instant he is holding out to us hands for our blessing. He is saying to us, "This is my body, my all, my everything, and it is given for you." Abraham accepted that blessing.

Now, having accepted it, he did not try to keep it all for himself. He heard the other part of the command, that is also a promise. "Thou shall be a blessing." Now, being a blessing is the poetry of life, that is what life is for. Some time ago I held the hand of a capable young chap whose life was not counting for much and he knew it. Calling his name I said, "Is there a man, woman or child of your acquaintance who can hold
your hand as I am holding it and look you in the face as I am looking you
now and say, "you are helping me, you have made Christ more real. You
have been a blessing." And his eyes filled with tears, as well they might,
as he answered, "There is not one."

The man who is God's friend will be a blessing. He will do so unconsciously just by being what he is. He will help us as naturally as honeysuckle spills out its perfume. He will also help us consciously. He will spend himself to that end. The words to bless and to bleed come from the same Anglo-Saxon root. To bless superlatively means the dedication of life.

Some years ago a man told me that he was watching one night in a
certain city by the sick bed of his boy. Past midnight he heard a cry in
the street. He hurried out to find that a hit and run driver had struck a
little newsboy. The little chap was lying unconscious in the gutter with his
papers scattered about him. He picked up and picked up soiled
papers for it was a murky rainy night. He then took the boy into the room
where he was watching his own child and deciding that he was not desperately
hurt, he laid him down on the sofa.

About two in the morning of that rainy night the little chap came
awake. He sat up and asked where he was. Then he said, "I must go home. My mother will be uneasy about me." And the gentleman said, "I will take you in the morning. I have no car and the street cars are not running in this section." But the little chap began to cry and unable to resist him, he awakened his wife to watch their sick child and he took the little fellow and carried him most of the way across the city at two o'clock in the morning.

At last he set him down at his own door and the little chap looked
his gratitude in his face, and as the man started for him he had not gone
but a few steps until he called after him: "Mr., O Mr., hold on a minute.
And reaching up he handed him a soiled newspaper saying, "Mister, this is the St. Louis Republican. It is the best paper published in the Southwest. I want to give it to you so you can take it home and read it." The friend took it and thanked him and set out again for home, but a moment later the boy called after him once more and said, "Mister, hold on a minute." As he caught up this time he handed him another paper and said, "Mister, this is the St. Louis Globe Democrat. It is the next best paper published in the Southwest. I want to give it to you so you can take it home with you and read it." And taking these two papers, he made his way home and forgot all about it.

Then he said, some six weeks later he was going down on a street car to get on the train. He heard some noisy boys talking behind him. He started to look around to see who they were when silence fell over them. Then he said two arms came over and clasped him neck and he was being treated to a hard hug that he was sure he did not deserve and that was given on a misunderstanding. So he turned about and looked into the face of the freckled faced little chap and said, "Son, what are you hugging me for? You don't know me." Then he unclasped his hands and put them up beside the man's face and laughed and said, "I don't know you, Mister? I don't know you? You are the man what brought me home. I ain't never forgot you. I never will."

We shall miss the heart of the story if we fail to see that the difference in richness of living and in the richness of service on the part of these two men was just the difference in their degree of dedication. The more thorough the dedication of the individual, the richer will be his life. We can win in no other way. "Old Zion that